



VICTORIA UNIVERSITY
MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA

Irregular no. 28; Dec. 1969

This is the Unpublished version of the following publication

UNSPECIFIED (1969) Irregular no. 28; Dec. 1969. Irregular (28). pp. 1-6.
(Unpublished)

The publisher's official version can be found at

Note that access to this version may require subscription.

Downloaded from VU Research Repository <https://vuir.vu.edu.au/16350/>

An Irregular publication for members of the Town Planning Research Group (not for general publication or republication.)

This Issue:-

Dear Reader: The Editor had ready for publication a special "Xmas reading" edition, on the "Blue Dandenong." when the Government upset his plan by introducing two important "Urban Renewal" Bills to Parliament. Although T.R.G. is not a policy making body it was felt that it would be valuable for members to have some material on the Bills, because quite fundamental issues of planning and democracy are involved. So: this issue is a special on the Bills, or rather: what should be in the Bills.

Also we have been fortunate in obtaining a copy for members of a hastily-prepared analysis of the Bills by the Urban Action Committee. This analysis which was sent to all Parliamentarians, is enclosed. The U.A.C. asked Parliament to adjourn consideration of the Bills until "all interested parties have had adequate time to assess and comment on them."

Members are reminded that the December T.R.G. Meeting will be on these renewal Bills.

We apologise to our friends in the hills and to "Gamma". "The Blue Dandenongs" (we hope), will appear in February.

URBAN RENEWAL

NOTES FOR A MODEL - By "Alpha"

1/28/9 Question "A": Is Consultative Planning meaning consultation by the authority with selected organised articulate bodies enough?

Answer: No. What is needed is:-

A. TWO-WAY-INFORMATION PUBLIC-PARTICIPATION PLANNING.

Neither of the current "renewal" Bills come anywhere near matching the concepts already recommended in the U.K.

"People and Planning" (Publication of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government 1969 H.M.S.O. 15/-) provides the variety of techniques (not dealt with here but see Irregular No:26 11/26/9) for informing and involving the public in planning, which is conceived as a continuous interchange of information and attitudes between planning authorities and the public, including every formative stage of the planning process

Without limiting the generality of this concept, and whilst pointing out the need for "pauses" necessary for the consideration of proposals after their release the Committee identifies 4 stages at which intensive efforts should be made for the wide dissemination of information to the public.

- (i) the initial announcement
(Purpose of the plan. Timetable for participation so that people can see where and when their co-operation will be sought.)
- (ii) Reports of survey
(Surveys on which the plans will later be based e.g. on population, transport, housing and what people want. In two forms: popular and survey information in depth.)
- (iii) Statement of Choices
(Where only one viable solution, should say so and why. Where choices open should be given. Also which choice the authority prefers and for what reason.)

(iv) Statement of Favoured Proposals.

(Proposals based on survey, public expression of views on choices and the authority's consideration of those views. Inter-relation of proposals disclosed - the key document in the process of public participation. Not final, even as to main features.)

The techniques of "Objection-Planning" after the conclusion of a plan and resolving itself mainly into a contest between property owners with competing claims to consideration is widely understood as insufficient.

The techniques of "Consultative-Planning" is advanced in both Bills. Note however:-

- (i) There is no machinery in the Bills imposing an obligation on the renewal agency to give information to the bodies to be consulted.
- (ii) An advisory Committee does not have to be set up but if it is set up it does not have to be given information.
- (iii) The public does not have to be "consulted" at all. Only after the completion of the "urban renewal proposals" is it to be made public.

Stage (iv) of the U.K. recommendations are not the completed proposal.

In the Victorian renewal Bills there is no public participation and only limited consultation in the formative stages, in the U.K. recommendations the whole object of the planning is conceived as a deliberate attempt to involve the public in the planning process.

2/28/9 Ask-First and Act-Second Not Enough.

The Urban renewal Bills hardly get as far as the principle enunciated by Prince Phillip at the 1968 Commonwealth Study Conference. "The best decisions are made from a position of knowledge and understanding with a sympathetic appreciation of the problems facing people affected. I shall be more than satisfied if the conference has developed a habit of asking questions first and making a decision second - communication before action. This is a more sensible approach than the more usual one of instant decision followed a bit later by an enquiry to find out what went wrong." (The Age 4/8/1968).

It is one thing to adopt a process of question-asking to avoid making a series of obvious blunders that have to be later corrected. (which the Bills attempt to some limited degree although not to the extent of asking the public.) It is something qualitatively quite different to tackle the whole problem not as one to be solved by a benevolent authority, but by the active involvement of the public at all levels by participation in the planning process at the formative stages, using the imaginative presentation of alternatives wherever possible and inviting controversy rather than fearing it. Especially in the area of urban renewal where communities and not merely cows or orchards and property values are being disturbed is it the essence of planning, that conflicting and sectional interest of the people are if possible creatively accommodated and the community are not presented with a fait accompli however well-intentioned which they rightly resent. "People on Planning" in fact seems to be a carefully researched systematised expansion of one of the messages brought back from his overseas Churchill Scholarship trips by Cr. A. McCutcheon: the "goals" or "criteria" have to be argued out and alternative planning concepts embracing different criteria have to be presented as options to the public.

SUMMARY OF "A" - Two-way-information and public-participation planning at all formative stages is the necessary principle for urban-renewal, and both Bills are deficient because, from the position of "objection planning" they only half-way go as far as the half-way stage of "one way consultative planning".

(Note: for some ideas on "A Workable Australian Precedent on Public Participation Planning" - See Appendix attached.)

3/28/9 Question "B": Is it enough for Melbourne (we are not dealing with Geelong or other country towns) to have only suburban municipal Councils entrusted with urban renewal?

Answer: No. What is needed is:-

B. A "STRUCTURE" RENEWAL PLAN AND A "STRUCTURE" RENEWAL AGENCY AND A LOCAL RENEWAL PLAN AND A LOCAL RENEWAL AGENCY WITH PROPER PLANNING-SOCIOLOGICAL EXPERTISE ARE REQUIRED.

First it seems inescapable that for Melbourne, there needs to be an overall renewal plan, (or "structure" renewal plan to use the U.K. report terminology) this is required as well as local renewal plans.

If there is no structure renewal plan, it would be possible, for example, that some suburbs (Fitzroy, Collingwood, Richmond?) were "redeveloped" as low-income ghettos, and other suburbs (Prahan, South Melbourne Carlton?) as "better-class" Jennings estates. It would be possible for all-Melbourne facilities (which would be facilities of course, for the inner areas too) to be omitted altogether. It would be possible for a token acknowledgement only of the principle of preserving environmental areas (Parkville, East Melbourne?) and not a consistent over-all policy on such matters. It would be possible for all new housing development to take place only by demolishing old housing (as at present) and not on slum-factory or other land. It would be possible for subsidised higher-density redevelopment to be in disfavour everywhere so that any increase in population in the inner areas would be the prerogative of the rich only. It would be impossible to plan a rational distribution of shopping centres and social centres and recreation facilities.

Minister of Local Government, Mr. Hamer has ordered the M.M.B.W. to prepare such a plan but the Urban Renewal Bill does not provide for such an agency or such a plan let alone for the public to have knowledge and expression in the formative stages. If the public is to have any decisive say in urban renewal, it is above all at this structure level that it needs the say and from the very beginning. Once the structure pattern is set, there will be only relatively narrow limits within which any local renewal agency (such as a local Council) can be really effective.

But the renewal structure plan should include not only the physical surveys and the techniques for preserving environment, but the sociological surveys and the techniques for preserving the communities living in these environments deliberately planning to enable these communities to expand their community activities or "raise the quality of life" in other words.

This is the kernel of the differences between the new and the old. It is precisely because the "community fabric" is the primary element involved and precisely because the nature of any planning in this area cannot prove successful without the active full-hearted endorsement of those affected that public participation at all stages is essential.

For this reason, a top-ranking sociologist and planner must head any structure renewal agency and the structure renewal agency must be charged with the responsibility of producing a sociological physical plan with public participation. Moreover renewal is such a vital part of all-Melbourne planning that is hard to escape the conclusion that the urban renewal agency should be a division of the M.M.B.W. Even if the (Housing) Urban Renewal Bill were amended to set up a separate urban renewal division of the Housing Commission headed by a planner and sociologist (instead of an "advisory committee" as provided by the Bill of which one is a "female having knowledge and experience in sociology"), the Housing Commission would then become a planning body and the extent of its operations would be such as to affect the planning of all Melbourne.

... the ... of ... authority ... would be ... ,
... the ... re-integration of ... it would ... ,

Clearly such a duplication of planning authority would be pointless requiring such a re-integration of plans that it would save time, money, and public confusion to have any structure renewal agency as a specialised team but also as an integral part of the regional planning authority (i.e. the M.M.B.W.)

Local Councils could well operate as local renewal agencies but not without or before a structure renewal plan has been thrashed out and adopted. Local Councils should also be obliged to employ or consult with professional planners and sociologists to prepare a local urban renewal proposal.

SUMMARY OF "B"

A planner and a sociologist should head a "structure renewal agency" as a division of the M.M.B.W. which should adopt a "structure renewal proposal" before local councils (which should have similar expert advice) proceeded with local renewal plans the basic content of which should be the preserving and enhancing of urban community activities and the Bills provided neither for a structure plan nor a proper integration with the regional plan, nor the proper-expertise nor the key principle of regard for community.

3/28/9 QUESTION "C": To avoid the development of an insensitive autocratic attitude on the part of any central urban renewal agency, should there be safeguards in the forms of (a) a local renewal committee representative of local authorities and local citizen organisations as a ^{go-between} /the agency and the people, representing the people and with some influence on the agency (b) system of appeals against decisions of the agency?

Answer: No, neither, What is needed is:-

C. A POLITICALLY-RESPONSIBLE BODY COMPRISING NEW TYPE RESPONSIVE POLITICIANS TO MAKE ALL FINAL PLANNING DECISIONS.

Such has been the feeling of helplessness of sections of the public adversely affected by Housing Commission or Board of Works planning decisions, That the notion has naturally arisen: "if only we had an independent body to appeal to!"

However, any such system could well constitute in practice "an appeal from Caesar to Caesar".

Worse, by giving a false appearance of an independent appeals body, it would tend to absolve the Government for responsibility for its basic planning decisions.

If it is hard enough to shift a Government in planning matters, it would be politically ten times harder to shift a Government sheltering behind an elaborate so-called independent planning appeals Board or the like which could be even less sensitive to public opinion than the Government.

If any appeal were to lie to any of the ordinary courts of law, it would be equally inappropriate. If the proper experts were to head the renewal agency (as advocated above), it would be an appeal from the informed to the inexperienced and uninformed. As well expect a Court of Law to judge an art show or a beauty contest.

A local renewal Committee, with at least some citizens organisations represented on it, might sound more feasible. "People and Planning" however reject this concept, and it would seem advisably. Just which organisations ~~are~~ to be deemed representative of the local citizens? To which we might add, assuming it were possible to represent every possible local interest on such a local committee, why should it be preferred, as a representative of local opinion, in place of a local Council to which nearly every citizen has a vote to elect his representative?

Both Ritter and "People and Planning" regard the Borough Council/the local Council as the legitimate decision-maker which finally adopts or refuses to adopt an urban renewal proposal.

Both of them deal with the idea of the responsible planners directly presenting their plans to the public rather than trying to funnel them through the Council. Only after there has been public discussion and controversies should the people's elected representatives in the Council decide (with Ritter: after each of the three phases criteria concept and code. With "People and Planning" after the fourth preparatory stage i.e. discussion on the publication of the preferred development proposal.)

The Urban Renewal Bill provides, we think correctly (as the Housing (Urban Renewal) Bill does not) for the Government to give final approval to an urban renewal proposal. Such Government approval should apply particularly to any "structure" renewal policy.

All this requires of State Politicians and local Councilors however a radical shift in age-long political habits and in their political style. The old type political candidate offered to the electorats improved physical amenities, he was his own self-made planner, so to speak. The new-type political candidate needs rather to prove that he is capable of being responsive to people's sociological needs and understanding enlightened planning trends, should advance what he thinks are the changes required at the same time he should assist and not hinder the process of public participation in plan making. Sections of citizens who feel they are more enlightened on all these planning and sociological matters than are the local Councils or the State Parliament, have to enter the political arena and battle for their ideas to be adopted.

There is no easy way out. Power resides in the State Government and the Local Councils. There is no way of ensuring an independent enlightened planning elite, either by way of a newly-created local representative body nor an appeals body which would be guaranteed to lie outside the orbit of influence of local or State politics.

Present day conditions are bound eventually to bring forward a new-type political representative who sees his role as helping the people to be informed and to formulate their own environment and community requirements rather than as a Father Xmas figure bidding against rival Father Xmas with bigger toys.

Those present day politicians too fossilised to understand these trends will pass into political oblivion: others may learn how to change. These changes will take place more rapidly the more vigourously the ordinary citizens can be involved in helping shape their own local destiny.

SUMMARY OF "A" "B" & "C"

4/28/9 A. Two-Way-Information and public-participation planning at all formative stages is the necessary principle for urban renewal and both Bills are deficient because from the position of "objection planning" they only half-way go as far as the half-way stage of "one way consultative planning".

B. A planner and a sociologist should head a "structure renewal agency" as a division of the M.M.B.W. which should adopt a "structure renewal proposal" before local councils (which should have similar expert advise) proceed with local renewal plans the basic content of which should be the preserving and enhancing of urban community life and activities and the Bills provide neither for a structure plan nor a proper integration of such a structural plan with the regional plan, nor the proper expertise nor the key principle of regard for community.

C. A politically responsible body either a local Council or the M.M.B.W. or the State Government/^{and} new-type responsive politicians are needed to make all final planning decisions.

5/28/9

APPENDIX

A Workable Australian Precedent on Public-Participation Planning.

It is instructive to note that Cr. Paul Ritter the distinguished former Perth City planner (whose City Council opponents, incidentally, were either defeated or did not run for the 1969 Perth elections) has evolved a somewhat parallel democratic planning procedure to the U.K. recommendations, (although there are certain interesting differences.)

In the booklet "City Planning Perth" (the Ritter Press, 76 Brookton Highway, Kelmscott Western Australia) the sections "Design Method" and "Democratic Planning" at pp13-16 explains that "if we take the democratic planning process seriously, there is lay participation." Then to "avoid all this becoming chaotic", he divides the planning process for each project into three stages. (i) the criteria (the basic aims) (ii) the concepts (the ideas for solving the problem) and (iii) the codes (implementing the concepts) (see Chart "Irregular" No:22 June 1969, 3/22/9.)

At each of these three stages the public is involved before a decision is reached and before the next stage is proceeded with (once again we will not deal with Ritter's publicity techniques which are very similar to the U.K. recommendations.)

On the issue of "criteria" however,. "People and Planning" says (par 136 at p 24) "We have been urged to recommend that the public should be involved from the start in the establishment of the broad aims or goals that the community wish to see achieved. We doubt the necessity for that in this country. We think it implicit in the new development plan that there shall be an examination of the needs of the community such as housing, employment, recreation and the means of communication"

This seems to be a weakness in the U.K. report; however, interestingly and almost inconsistently it quotes with approval the Los Angeles Planning Department "Concept Plan" presented to the public in the form of 4 choices as to what the city should be like in the 21st century (centres; concepts, dispersal concept, corridor concept, or Low density concept (see Appendix 8 at p 66) which quite clearly involved "criteria" in Ritter's meaning of the word.

On the other hand Ritter does not seem to include in his procedure the idea of deliberately presenting planning choices to the public, and in this, does not seem to go as far as "People and Planning" although it must be conceded he was working within a rigid framework of a Metropolitan Regional Plan under an unco-operative if not hostile Authority that silently allowed its planning principles to be over-ridden by a State Government that was narrowly autocratic on Planning issues. /^{eng.} The ring-freeway. . . Maybe, there is implicit in his continual reference to the public at all formative stages and in the idea of considering alternatives if they came from others the idea of producing alternatives although he does not say so.