



Comparative Urban Planning Systems in Poland and the United States

INTRODUCTION	2
WHY PLAN?	3
The United States	5
Poland	10
GOVERNMENTAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PLANNING BODIES	15
The United States	16
<i>Local Governments</i>	17
Poland	19
<i>The National Level</i>	20
<i>The Regional Level</i>	21
<i>Local Governments</i>	22
LEGAL ASPECTS TO THE PLANNING PROCESS	23
The United States	24
Poland	28
IMPLICATIONS FOR PLANNING PRACTICE	32
Current issues and future directions in planning	36
Summary	36
SOURCES CITED	37

Abstract

The United States and Poland share very different paths leading to their present systems of urban and spatial planning. While activities representing market intervention occurred in both countries around the same time period in the late 19th - early 20th - century, the implications of Poland's ensuing socialist system dramatically altered its proceeding spatial development. Urban environments in particular – as well as the administrative, regulatory (legislative / political), and legal institutions that guide them – represent the foundation for much of the post-transition market development that has occurred in Poland. This paper will investigate significant events related to the development of those guiding (planning) systems in each country, finally using case studies from countries such as the United States to discuss the implications of the development of spatial and urban planning systems in Poland on Poland's competitive position within European and global markets.

INTRODUCTION

Planning systems throughout the world portray different characteristics, agendas, and histories in the evolution of their respective methodologies and practices.

Accordingly, planning systems have gained a great deal from the simultaneous development of urban and spatial planning practice and theory in these disparate places.

While the direct export of planning practice from one location to another is often problematic due to the inherently local and sometimes reactionary nature of local planning, comparisons between different planning structures can be more instructive.

The United States has included planning activities in the scope of directing its urban and spatial development efforts for a long time now, borrowing much from England, where it is generally accepted that the field of Urban Planning originated around the 19th Century,

or at the start of the industrial revolution (Hall, 2002). Early “planning” activities in Poland, on the other hand, were less organized, due primarily to Poland’s early monarchical political system, and later due to the various wars, occupations, and ideologies that affected the spatial and urban development of its changing territory.

Whereas urban and spatial planning in the United States (US) was born into an age during which the impact of global forces grew to be more and more significant to local urban and spatial planning, planning activities in Poland were cast into this age overnight, requiring Polish planners to adapt quickly (or not) to this new paradigm.

This paper will investigate the development of urban and spatial planning systems in the US and in Poland on a high level, focusing on areas where these disparate planning systems vary, and on areas where planning practice or theory in one country poses potential for adaptability in the other. The United States and Poland have been chosen

for this comparison due to several factors, including their vastly different socio-political, socio-economic, and historical planning backgrounds. Additionally, the United States and Poland have been chosen for this investigation because of recent Polish efforts to adopt a more regional planning focus; a direction in which planning professionals in the US have debated moving for several years now. This paper will first consider the fundamental question of why urban planning is occurring in these countries, as well as a summary of historical events important to the evolution of urban planning systems in the respective countries. Following this section is a summary of important governmental, administrative, and legal aspects to urban planning systems in the US and in Poland, followed by a discussion on some of the implications of the development of these systems. The methodology for this investigation was based primarily on a review of published literature written on different aspects of this subject, as well as on several structured interviews with individuals active within Polish planning circles today. Finally, analysis that is provided here will be based on the author's experience as a volunteer, student, and researcher in Poland, intermittently spanning the years from 1998 to 2004, and assisted by the University of Warsaw's Center for Regional and Local Development (EUROREG).

WHY PLAN?

Modern notions regarding urban planning practice are associated with efforts to deal with the overcrowding that was occurring in big cities, as well as with the resulting negative health effects of highly-clustered, unregulated population growth. The problems were clear: large urban areas were growing too quickly with the influx of populations leaving rural areas for factory jobs in the cities, where new arrivals encountered both

harsh living conditions as well as cities with infrastructures – where developed – that were unable to accommodate the increased capacity. Underlying those issues was the necessity for cities to provide a stable environment for the growth of industry and the perpetuation of wealth – particularly for those who were owners of capital (Klosterman, 2002). At the onset of changing political and economic systems, industrialization – fueled by the spread of free market principles – challenged the typical structural characteristics of large urban areas. As a result of these developments, the field of planning began to develop as a concept: “the main rationale for planning intervention in capitalist countries throughout the 20th Century was the need to correct for the failures inherent in the free market system (Lee, 1981).” (Nedovic-Budic, 2001). Accordingly, cities undertook efforts to organize their growth and to expand public infrastructure systems, eventually forming the basis for two early planning movements: the City Beautiful and City Efficient movements.¹ Nascent “planning” responses to such market failures as excessive pollution or substandard living conditions acted to conserve the stability of the market, thereby permitting the continued and successful creation of wealth.

The development of planning systems as a means to correct for market failures was definitely pivotal in the rise of planning as a practice. But the field of Urban Planning has also evolved significantly since the industrial revolution; hence an answer to the question “why plan?” has changed. The majority of developed areas in both the US and in Poland generally do not lack for adequate infrastructures or design principles to support more sustainable forms of development; therefore planning activities have shifted more to concentrating on fostering stronger, more competitive economies (local, regional,

¹ City Beautiful planners were also cited for their lack of consideration for such things as height requirements, automotive transportation, or housing (Wilson, 1996). In general, City Beautiful marked the formal inclusion of sanitary measures in city planning.

and national), each progressively subject to the changing nature of global competition. It is at this point where planning systems in the US and in Poland diverge. For example, two aspects of urban planning that commonly intermingle in planning theory and practice in the US are spatial planning (architectural / urban design) and the more socially-focused elements of urban planning, such as economic development, land use, environmental and transportation planning, and housing and community development. In Poland, however, these socially-focused elements form the basis of the field of Urban Planning as it is known in Poland – and this is particularly the case when talking about economic development planning. On the other hand, spatial planning activities are not generally considered within the scope of “urban planning” activities (G. Gorzelak, personal communication, November 11, 2004). “Regional planning” in Poland, per se, assumes the meaning of efforts meant to address more macro economic policy issues and is detached from issues related to the physical development of urban areas (Nedovic-Budic, 2001). For the purposes of the comparison presented in this paper, these subsets of the larger issue of urban development will be combined in the same discussion, keeping in mind this apparent divergence between US and Polish planning theory. This divergence is better understood after an examination of some of the historical events that have shaped planning systems in these two countries.

The United States

The affluent, the power brokers, and the urban elites are widely credited with initiating the planning movement in the United States (Oberdeck, 2000; Wilson, 1996; Brooks, 1995). Similar issues related to the concentration of populations migrating from rural to urban areas afflicted the US’s largest cities at the turn of the century, prompting