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**INTERFACE PLANNING FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT:  
HISTORICAL OVERVIEW, PRINCIPLES, AND BEST AND BAD PRACTICES**

NOTES FOR TALK AND PAPER

1. Definition of “interface planning”

(1) Interface planning is land use planning in which measures taken on one side of the line of contact between Crown and settlement lands affect public interests on the other side

(2) Interface planning is a special form of regional planning; Regional planning is one of the two main forms of public land use planning; Planning is the “organization of hope” (Baum 1997)

2. Early roots of regional Interface planning in Canada

(1) Royal Proclamation of 1763 (no settlement unless permitted by the Crown; No settlement before land purchased from First Nation by Crown)

(2) Railroad era and settlement of the West (no settlement before survey according to national coordinate survey system; school sections; homestead and pre-emption system; railway lands, divisional points, and terminus communities (via Parliament and provincial legislatures)

(3) Ironically, whereas the United States has a Frontier ideology and mythology, it is more in Canada that there have been well-defined interface (frontier) lands

3. Early formal public planning in Canada: Rational-Comprehensive planning

(1) By 1900, both urban and regional planning en route to the dominant planning approach of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, *Rational-Comprehensive planning* (Identification of problem and goals; Survey of conditions and forecast of future conditions; Design of alternative plans to address problem or satisfy goals; Comparison of alternative plans Adoption of one plan; Development of implementation measures; Monitoring)

(2) By 1900, most regional planning (except railroad planning) a function of provincial governments

(3) Regional planning by senior government bureaucrats not academically trained in it (experts by dint of experience, coming from different educational backgrounds but all aiming to be “rational”)

(4) Gradually, influence of Patrick Geddes and the birth of regional planning as a formal discipline; many excellent principles (city should be understood in the context of its region; spatial form and social processes should have an intimate relationship; ‘joined-up governance’ should play a role; planning should reflect “human ecology;” planning should blend art and science;” planners should not be so specialized that their knowledge is confined to separate compartments; “No plan without survey” – survey of both biophysical and social factors; planning should take into account *conurbation* – the relationship of a city with the communities and countryside around it; planning should involve local people; communities should tend towards what moderns call sustainable development)

#### 4. Parting of the paths: Community x Crown regional planning

(1) By the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, community planning increasingly professionalized, regional planning at the provincial level (not the local government level) still mainly learned on the job by persons whose professional backgrounds not in planning

(2) Local governments for both urban and rural settlements remain “creatures” of the provincial Crown – they are not a separate order of government under the Canadian Constitution and they have no legal existence independent of what the provincial or territorial governments assign to them; however, throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century towns and cities are granted, and assume, more and more autonomy, whereas provincial governments continue to do the planning for the rural areas

(3) By the late 1960s and the 1970s, community planning undergoes a transition, indeed almost a revolution: Public participation becomes first inescapable, because of public insistence, then valued; whereas to this day, many Crown regional planners appear to dislike or even resent involvement of the public

(4) Community planning increasingly comprehensive, covering innumerable aspects of human existence; Crown regional planning focus narrower and narrower (regional economic development, conservation planning, environmental impact assessment)

(5) Community planning, originally confined to Rational-Comprehensive theory, adds many tenets of Communicative theory (e.g., planning should not strive to identify a single public interest but rather it should facilitate pluralism, social negotiation among several or many public interests)

(6) For a few years, in B.C., Crown regional planning moves a short distance towards Communicative practice under the Commission on Resources and Environment (CORE), which engendered the Lands and Resources Management Plan (LRMP) strategy; LRMP planning, though, is predominantly Rational-Comprehensive in nature and by the present day is falling into disarray (community monitoring component underfunded and disregarded)

(7) In short, in B.C., Crown land regional planning theory and practice never make the transition to higher levels of public participation and communicative process – many practitioners seem to have no awareness of the theoretical basis for what they are doing, much less technical understanding of Communicative planning theory

##### 5. The turn to stakeholderism and scientism

(1) As an unintended consequence of the LRMP program, in B.C. “stakeholderism” replaces true public participation in Crown land use planning, perhaps because it’s easier and cheaper, but perhaps also because political decision-makers have determined that so long as the three main “stakeholders” in Crown land use planning, namely First Nations, industry, and environmental NGOs, are listened to, the general public is satisfied

(2) Because Crown regional planning never completes the transition to Communicative theory, it remains the realm of political decision-makers and experts; The experts are mainly drawn from a narrow spectrum of professions (economics, forestry, agronomy, and biology); In fact, in B.C. civil service competitions for planning positions have historically tended to be restricted to those disciplines; For example, even BC Rural Secretariat positions, with major responsibilities in rural planning for the Crown-Settlement Interface, seem to be predominantly staffed by professional foresters

(3) Something about the natural science education of many civil servants fosters unwillingness to employ social science in Crown Interface planning; Frequently, Interface planners with a natural science background dismiss social science as “qualitative” (even though social science is no more qualitative and no less quantitative than biology, for example); many Crown regional planners assert that planning should be “scientific,” by which they mean purely rational, evidence-based, free of values, and directed towards goals defined by the natural sciences or economics

(4) However, most problems arising in the Crown-Settlement lands Interface are human problems; Although often it serves political and business interests if the public believes biophysical planning will solve those problems, application of the *wrong* science to planning is bad planning

(5) When Crown planners encounter public displeasure with their Interface decisions, which happens often, because the planning processes they employ commonly have a very weak public participation component, frequently they are surprised, puzzled, defensive, and annoyed; During the environmental impact assessment (EIA) for a mine in the Crown lands beside Smithers, the proponent's consultant used a biophysical model to project socio-economic impacts on the nearest community; The BC Environmental Assessment Office project officer responsible for the EA scolded the Bulkley Valley public, on CBC radio, for thinking EIA is planning, even though EIA is normally a subject taught in university planning schools

## 6. Neoliberalism in the western provinces

Recently the Government of B.C. has governed according to neoliberal political philosophies and economic approaches (e.g., removal of *appurtenance* in forest-community planning; development of new *community forests* (Young and Matthews 2007)); in Neoliberal planning thought, the best form of public planning is to give market mechanisms free rein ("*highest and best use*"); Advent of the Great Recession reinforces this trend and gives it legitimacy in the eyes of the public, because less government means lower taxes

## 7. Conflict of interests; Imposition of provincial will

The provincial public interest is seldom the same as the local public interest; The provincial government has the welfare of millions of people in mind, and it has sovereign power, so it may impose Interface planning measures overriding the will of local residents (e.g., resort development legislation; regional planning for hydrocarbon exploration and development); Alternatively, provincial governments may merely facilitate what they regard as positive planning by local governments (e.g., British Columbia Resort Municipality Initiative; *Best Practices Guide, Vol. 1, Transitions: Planning, Servicing and Local Governance in B.C.'s Resort Communities*); In either case, from a local perspective there is provincial interference with goal setting in community development planning

## 8. Interface principles and best and bad practices

(1) Basic principles still highly applicable to interface planning are laid out in the *Vancouver Plan of Action* Part B, Settlement Planning, approved at Habitat: The United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, in 1976 (available from the Web)

(2) Theorists place a high value on bottom-up planning, which is especially relevant to the Interface context; Excellent examples in Bulkley Valley and Washington State, including the use of public participatory GIS (PPGIS) technology such as MapChat

(3) The Interface Planning Casebook is an attempt to compile a databank on Interface planning practices

(4) One of the most surprising practices in B.C. Crown regional planning is the omission of consideration for human health and hedonic real estate pricing in the Interface

### References

Baum, Howell S. 1997. *The Organization of Hope: Communities Planning Themselves*. NY: SUNY Press.

Young, Nathan, and Ralph Matthews. 2007. Resource economies and neoliberal experimentation: The reform of industry and community in rural British Columbia. *Area* 39(2): 176-185