

PLANNING AND INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

Paul Taylor

ABSTRACT

Up until the 1970s planning was the dominant paradigm for delivering urban development. But it had fallen from grace by the 1980s and since that time planning has rather been in the doldrums. During that period there has been an international debate about the future of planning that has been related to its capacity to deliver results and the costs that it incurs in endeavouring to do so.

One of the reasons for planning's problems has been the criticism that it has been onerous in its institutional requirements, requiring a lot of expensive skilled personnel to deliver sometimes meagre results over long periods. The institutional regime required to implement plans was seen as complicated and legalistic, laying heavy burdens on administrations that were already struggling to cope with explosive population growth and rapid socio-economic change.

As the Global Coordinator of the Urban Management Programme (UMP), which by the late 1990s was world's largest technical assistance programme operating in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America and financed by the World Bank, UNDP, UN-Habitat and many bilateral donors, the author was one of those grappling with these issues.

The UMP was confronted by the need to get to grips with urban administrations that were failing to tackle the problems that confronted them. Planning, because its grandiose ambitions for comprehensive solutions which it frequently failed to deliver, was seen as part of the problem, not the solution. Planning-derived visions often were viewed as utopian delusions with little relevance to the real world. Nevertheless things have changed again since then, and this paper presents a history of planning to identify the themes of the emergent paradigm and identifies problems with current institutional arrangements.