A COMPARATIVE VIEW OF REGIONAL PLANNING

LEO J. ZUBER

Land-Use Planner
Tennessee State Planning Commission, Nashville

Regional planning is not a new star on the horizon. It is one, however, the magnitude of which has increased notably in recent years. A statement of an interpretation of the nature of regional planning and a comparison of regional planning with a recognized science, regional geography, constitute the two-fold purpose of this paper.

It is not the purpose to define, or to redefine, either regional geography or regional planning. This position is not unadvised. For many years, geographers have been discussing the philosophical aspects of their science. Definitions to suit all tastes have been borne of these deliberations. In spite of the fact that many geographers are divided on definition, geography continues quite vigorously along its course. For present purposes, regional planning refers to the work engaged in by regional planning agencies.

The chief regions according to which planning now proceeds are those purely arbitrary ones—the states. Interstate agencies, as the New England Regional Planning Commission, the Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Commission and the Tennessee Valley Authority, are exceptions to the general rule. For all practical purposes, one may assume the work of the Tennessee State Planning Commission to be reasonably representative of the work which the majority of the planning agencies are doing.

In all fairness it should be noted that, in practice, the scope of planning has still to be circumscribed. According to the legislative acts, "The Commission shall have the power of studying and reporting to the Governor or General Assembly on any subject related to the planning of the economic, social, governmental, cultural or welfare conditions or problems of the people of the State of Tennessee."[1]

On the basis of these acts, and within the latitude of the legislative provision, the Tennessee State Planning Commission, since January, 1935, has engaged in investigations which it believes to be in the best interest of the state. These projects classify themselves conveniently, though not exclusively, under three headings.

As samples of projects of a social nature, there is the social security study,[2] the educational survey[3] and the survey of institutions. The

[1]Public Acts of the State of Tennessee, 1935, Chapter 43, Section 6, p. 106.

[2]Social Security for Tennessee: A Study of the Federal Social Security Act of 1935 As It Applies to Tennessee. Bulletin No. 3, Tennessee State Planning Commission, Nashville, Tennessee, December, 1936, 68 pp.

[3]Public Education in Tennessee. Bulletin No. 4, Tennessee State Planning Commission, Nashville, Tennessee, December, 1936, 45 pp., 1 chart.

report, "A Study of the Fiscal System of the State of Tennessee,"[4] recently given wide publicity and wide distribution within the state, is a sample of a project of an economic nature. Another is the aviation report.[5] Others in the same class are the surveys on markets and marketing facilities, a prison industries inquiry and a recreational survey. Two sample reports of a physical nature are those on the major land use problems in Tennessee and the Obion River and Forked Deer River Watersheds.[6]

In regard to the personnel of planning agencies, for the most part they are planners by title and experience only; few, if any, by training. The staff of the Tennessee State Planning Commission consists of architects, economists, engineers, geographers, sociologists, agriculturists, and others.

If, according to the original premise, regional planning is the work done by regional planning agencies, then the aggregate (Fig. 1.*A*.) of the work of these specialists constitutes regional planning. Be it science or pseudo-science, discipline or merely a procedure, regional planning is synthetic. From a dynamic standpoint, regional planning is centripetal.

The pattern of the diagram used for illustrative purposes (Fig. 1.*B*.) is from an article by Dr. N. M. Fenneman entitled *The Circumference of Geography*.[7] The original diagram, and variations thereon, may well serve as the basis for a statement of the nature of regional geography.

In his pronouncement, Dr. Fenneman stated, in essence, that fear motivated the concern of geographers over the purity of geography. That fear was the fear of dissolution—the fear that geography would lose its identity through death. Were geography to die, what would happen to its components? "Geology might easily take over togography, including its genetic treatment, which is physiography—in fact, has never given it up."[8] In the same vein, meteorology would reclaim climatology, biology would reclaim biogeography, and so on around the diagram. One concludes from this that the geography of today, de-

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[4]Snavely, Tipton R. A Study of the Fiscal System of the State of Tennessee. Bulletin No. 1, Tennessee State Planning Commission, Nashville, Tennessee, September 2, 1936, 54 pp., 2 charts.

[5]An Analysis of Aviation in Tennessee and Recommendations for Needed Improvements. Prepared by the Tennessee Aeronautics Commission for the Tennessee State Planning Commission, Nashville, Tennessee, June, 1936, 23 pp., maps and illustrations.

[6]Lucas, Border F., and Callahan, E. P. Major Rural Land-Use Problems in Tennessee; a preliminary report. Tennessee State Planning Commission, Nashville, Tennessee, February, 1936, 23 pp., maps and illustrations. The Obion River and Forked Deer River Watersheds: a report on drainage enterprises and land conditions within the area. Tennessee State Planning Commission, Nashville, Tennessee, March, 1936, 17 pp., maps and illustrations.

[7]*Geographical Review*. Vol. 7, No. 3, March, 1919, pp. 168-175.

[8]*Loc. cit.*, p. 169.

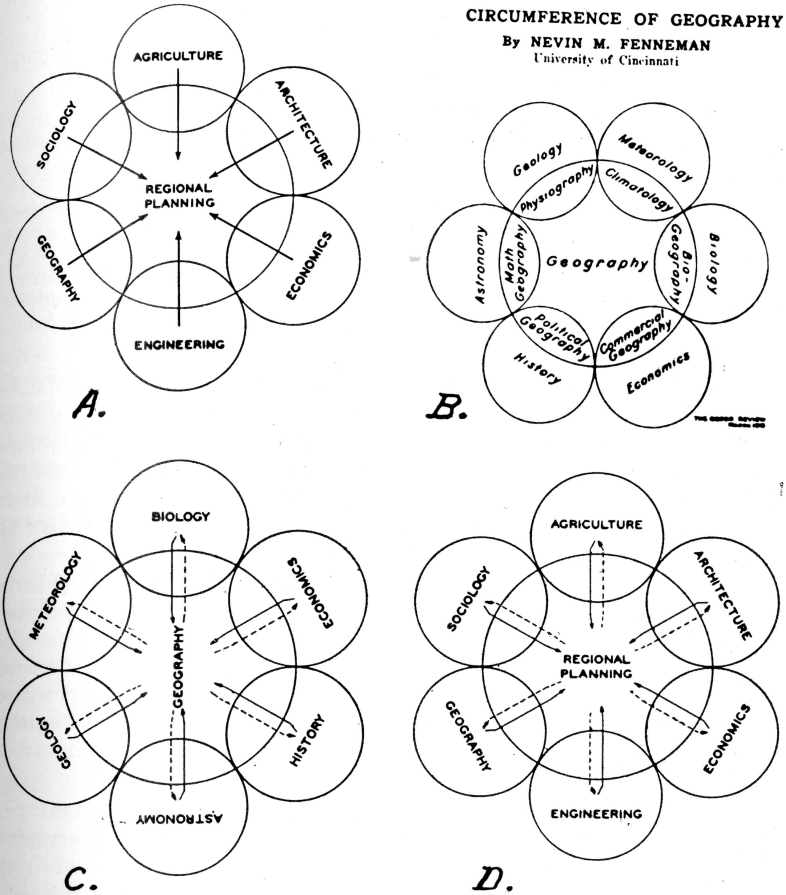

Fig. 1. *A.* Regional planning is the aggregate of the work of specialists. *B.* According to the thesis illustrated by this diagram, there is a generic relationship between geography and other social and exact sciences. (Courtesy of the *Geographical Review* published by the American Geographical Society of New York.) *C.* Early geography was much more comprehensive in its scope than the present day science is. As a result of its former nature, several sciences separated themselves from geography (interrupted arrows) and developed intensively fields of their own. While geography too has cultivated its field with greater intensity, it also benefits now (solid arrows) from the work of these related specialists. *D.* Regional planning is synthetic inasmuch as it relies on sciences and disciplines (solid arrows) other than itself for the data and their interpretation with which it works. As regional planners cultivate more and more intensively their new field, it is entirely possible that they will make original contributions which the other sciences will be able to use (interrupted arrows).

pending as it does on these satellite sciences, is synthetic. From the dynamic viewpoint, it is now centripetal.

To summarize thus far, both regional planning and regional geography, for the present, have comparable natures.

If one investigates the history of geography, either in detail or in general, he will note that the present nature of geography is somewhat different from that of early geography (Fig. 1.*C*.—note solid arrows).

> The science of geography passed on from antiquity by Ptolemy, reestablished by Varenius and Newton, and systematized by Kant, included within itself definite aspects of all those terrestrial phenomena which are now treated exhaustively under the heads of geology, meteorology, oceanography and anthropology; and the inclusion of the requisite portions of perfected results of these sciences in geography is simply the gathering in of fruit matured from the seed scattered by geography itself.[9]

For example, a Greek geographer, the scholarly Strabo (63 B.C.—21 A.D.) traveled over southern Europe and parts of Africa and Asia Minor. He made inquiries and observations and had access to famous libraries; later he compiled one of the classics of the world's literature, the Geography of Strabo.[10] In this encyclopaedic work, one finds ample mention of matters now considered to be within the province of sciences other than geography.

Universality of content seemed a predominant characteristic of early geography. A final and lasting monument to this strained geographic viewpoint is the set of volumes—dealing with parts of Asia and Africa—which constitutes only the barest beginning of what might have become a truly complicated geography. The author, Karl Ritter (1779—1859),[11] a German geographer, became lost in the wilderness of detail into which he had plunged. Death freed him from his laborious toil.

Out of such a latitude of investigation, it was only natural that specialists and specialties should develop (Fig. 1.*C*.—note interrupted arrows). These individualists removed themselves somewhat from the main course and current of the stream and were more content to deal intimately with fewer things than to try to deal with all things. By reason of their stand, geology, sociology, economics, history, astronomy, meteorology and other sciences came into existence. As these satellite sciences cultivated more and more intensively their own fields of inquiry, they became less and less identified with geography. Regardless of the rather distant relationship which exists now, the fact remains that geography, in the vigor of its youth, brought these other sciences into being and nurtured them through their early years. This fact shows that, at an earlier period, geography was analytical.

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[9] *Encyclopaedia Britannica,* Vol. 10, 14th edition, p. 147.

[10] Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press. 5 volumes, 1922-1928, translation by H. L. Jones.

[11] Ritter, Karl, *Die Erdkunde in Verhaltnis zur Natur und zur Geschichte des Menschen,* 2nd edition, Berlin, 1822-1858.

And, from the dynamic viewpoint, it was then centrifugal. Thus, in a general view of geography throughout its existence, one sees wherein its nature has reversed itself. Regional geography and regional planning are now comparable on two bases; (a) regions concern both and (b) each is now synthetic, or centripetal.

Regional geography concerns itself about the general nature and occurrence of phenomena within a region. This knowledge by itself is of value to the geographer. Regional planning can use the information thus provided by geography, and it does use it as a sound, factual basis on which to function. Planning, on a theoretical basis at least, would seem to be highly desirable. If, in practice, planning proves to be desirable, and does not suffer a relapse, it is quite possible that, within its ample borders, there will come into being some specialists. Already, evidence would seem to indicate that this specialization within planning will take form.

If, for example, the geographer, working in the field of planning, finds that this experience enables him to define rather closely the limits within which he can function, he will have defined, approximately at least, the field of geography within planning. One may surmise that in time he will also be able to function within that special field to a high degree of efficiency. And, to carry the assumption one step further, it seems reasonable to expect that academic geography will feel and soon enough reflect the effects and the influence of that specialization. Should this happen, regional planning, to some extent, will have reversed itself also and will have become centrifugal. But these are merely assumptions and assumptions founded on assumptions. What are the facts?

In regard to geography the facts are these. For quite some time there have been geographers in the academic field who have given careful thought and consideration to the planning branch of geography; one refers to that branch in various ways, but principally as land utilization or land planning.[12] These geographers (Fig. 1.*D.*—note solid arrows) had substantial facts and information, as well as a

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[12]Colby, Charles C. Changing Currents of Geographic Thought in America, *Annals of of the Association of American Geographers,* Vol. 26, No. 1, 1936, pp. 1-37.

James, Preston E. Regional Planning in the Jackson Hole Country, *Geographical Review,* Vol. 26, No. 3, 1936, pp. 431-453.

Joerg, W. L. G. Geography and National Land Planning, *Ibid.,* Vol. 25, No. 2, 1935, pp. 177-208.

McMurry, K. C. Geographic Contributions to Land-Use Planning, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers,* Vol. 26, No. 2, 1936, pp. 91-98.

Schoenman, L. R. Land Inventory for Rural Planning in Alger County, Michigan. *Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts and Letters,* Vol. 16, 1931 (1932), pp. 329-361.

Stamp, L. Dudley. The Land Utilisation Survey of Britian, *Geographical Journal,* Vol. 78, No. 1, 1931, pp. 40-53.

Idem. Land Utilisation Survey of Britian, *Geographical Review,* Vol. 24, No. 4, 1934, pp. 636-650.

technique[13] in field work, to offer when national and regional planning were swung into position. This, however, does not diminish the chance that geography will feel and reflect the influence of planning (Fig. 1.*D*.—note interrupted arrows). Time will probably prove the opposite to be true.

For some time, in many colleges and universities, students have been able to take courses in land utilization in departments of geography. The fact that planning has "arrived" will strengthen those courses, and it will serve to create a demand for them in the institutions and in the departments not now offering them. To whatever extent that influence exists, and to whatever extent geographers and others are able to use the information and the publications of planning agencies, to that same extent is planning already centrifugal.

For the present, however, it must be admitted that the major trend is toward, not away from, planning. That is, in terms of content and of technique, geography has invested more in regional planning than it has derived from it. Furthermore, it may well be that there will not be such a complete reversal within planning as there seems to have been within geography. The present evidence would seem to indicate that, for quite some time to come, there will be a healthful state of exchange and interchange of ideas and principles, of findings and techniques between planning and geography.

Conclusion

In summary, both regional planning and regional geography are now synthetic, or centripetal.

Since its inception, regional planning, for the most part, has been centripetal. History illustrates, however, that geography was once analytical or centrifugal. On two bases, the present comparability of their natures, and trends now observable within planning, it seems probable that planning will undergo a change in nature and will become, to a certain extent, centrifugal.

In the case of geography, the reversal probably has been more nearly absolute than relative, whereas, in the case of planning, the reversal will probably be more relative than absolute.

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[13]Finch, Vernor C. Montfort. A study in landscape types. Bulletin No. 9, Geographical Society of Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1933, 28 pp.

Hudson, G. Donald. Methods Employed by Geographers in Regional Surveys. *Economic Geography,* Vol. 12, No. 1, January, 1936, pp. 98-104.

Idem. The Unit Area Method of Land Classification. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers,* Vol. 26, No. 2, June, 1936, pp. 99-112.