

National-Level Planning in Democratic Countries

*An International Comparison of City
and Regional Policy-Making*

Edited by
Rachelle Altman

FRANCE / JAPAN / ISRAEL / THE NETHERLANDS / UNITED KINGDOM / SWEDEN / REPUBLIC OF IRELAND / GERMANY / DENMARK / SWEDEN / UNITED KINGDOM / GERMANY / DENMARK / FRANCE / JAPAN / ISRAEL / THE NETHERLANDS / UNITED STATES / REPUBLIC OF IRELAND / SWEDEN / UNITED KINGDOM / GERMANY / DENMARK / FRANCE / JAPAN / ISRAEL / THE NETHERLANDS / UNITED STATES / REPUBLIC OF IRELAND / SWEDEN / UNITED KINGDOM / GERMANY / DENMARK / FRANCE / JAPAN / ISRAEL



National-Level Planning in Democratic Countries

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*An International Comparison of City and
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Edited by RACHELLE ALTERMAN

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To Doron, my partner in all,
and to our joint ventures—Edan and Nora.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	page ix
LIST OF TABLES	x
PREFACE	xi
ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS	xiii
1 NATIONAL-LEVEL PLANNING IN DEMOCRATIC COUNTRIES: A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE—<i>Rachelle Alterman</i>	1
2 NATIONAL LAND-USE PLANNING AND REGULATION IN THE UNITED STATES: UNDERSTANDING ITS FUNDAMENTAL IMPORTANCE—<i>Jerold S. Kayden</i>	43
3 STRUCTURES FOR POLICY-MAKING AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PLANNING IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND—<i>Michael J. Bannon and Paula Russell</i>	65
4 RETHINKING SWEDISH NATIONAL PLANNING— <i>Göran Cars and Bjorn Hårsman</i>	85
5 NATIONAL-LEVEL INSTITUTIONS AND DECISION- MAKING PROCESSES FOR SPATIAL PLANNING IN THE UNITED KINGDOM—<i>Malcolm Grant</i>	105
6 NATIONAL-LEVEL PLANNING INSTITUTIONS AND DECISIONS IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY—<i>Gerd Schmidt-Eichstaedt</i>	127
7 NATIONAL-LEVEL PLANNING IN THE DANISH SYSTEM—<i>Stig Enemark and Ib Jorgensen</i>	148
8 NATIONAL-LEVEL PLANNING INSTITUTIONS AND DECISION-MAKING IN FRANCE—<i>Gérard Marcou</i>	168
9 NATIONAL-LEVEL ECONOMIC AND SPATIAL PLANNING IN JAPAN—<i>Paul H. Tanimura and David W. Edgington</i>	197

- 10 DUTCH NATIONAL PLANNING AT THE TURNING POINT: RETHINKING INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS—*Hans J. M. Mastop*** 219
- 11 NATIONAL-LEVEL PLANNING IN ISRAEL: WALKING THE TIGHTROPE BETWEEN GOVERNMENT CONTROL AND PRIVATISATION—*Rachelle Alterman*** 257

LIST OF FIGURES

Chapter 1	
1. Degree of institutionalisation of national planning in ten countries by population density	13
Chapter 3	
1. Overview of principal spatial policy-making institutions in the Republic of Ireland	67
2. The Irish local government system	69
3. Regional authority administrative areas	72
4. Boundaries of administrative areas—county councils and county boroughs	74
Chapter 4	
1. An overview of the public sector and the division of responsibilities for planning	88
2. The framework for Swedish planning	91
Chapter 6	
1. The Federal Republic of Germany: The <i>Länder</i> (states) and the <i>Regierungsbezirke</i> (district administrations)	128
2. Planning hierarchy and plans in Germany	131
3. <i>Bundesverkehrswegeplan</i> (Federal Transport Infrastructure Plan) 1992: the rail network	133
Chapter 7	
1. The Danish four-level planning system	151
Chapter 8	
1. Binding physical planning documents	180
2. Medium-term financial and investment planning	182
Chapter 9	
1. Regions and prefectures in Japan	198
2. National government organisation	200
3. Summary of the planning system	201
Chapter 10	
1. Map of the Netherlands	221
2. The Randstad	222
3. Bodies in statutory spatial ('physical') planning	229
4. Instruments of statutory spatial ('physical') planning	230
Chapter 11	
1. Map of Israel showing neighbouring countries and occupied areas	258
2. Institutional structure under the Israel Planning and Building Law of 1965	273
3. The hierarchy of statutory plans to which a building permit must conform	276

LIST OF TABLES

Chapter 1	
1. Selected physical, demographic and economic indicators in the sample countries, 2000	5
2. The formats of national-level (comprehensive) spatial planning in ten democratic countries	8
Chapter 3	
1. Regional authorities	71
2. Main provisions of Irish planning legislation	79
3. The Community Support Framework for Ireland, 1994-99— principal categories of funding by EU and total expenditure	82
Chapter 4	
1. GDP per capita, as a percentage of the OECD average	86
Chapter 5	
1. Funding of local government expenditure in England since 1981	114
Chapter 6	
1. Contents of the Federal Environmental Agency's Annual Report 1995	137
2. Contents of the <i>Raumordnungsbericht</i> (Federal Spatial Planning Report) 1993	140
Chapter 7	
1 The Danish planning policy framework	150
Chapter 9	
1. National economic plans, 1955-2000	203
2. Summary of the five comprehensive national land development plans	207
Chapter 10	
1. Population and primary functions of the main cities of the Randstad area, January 1994	223
2. Comparison of systems of statutory planning in selected countries	243

PREFACE

This book would not have come about were it not for a particular event—one might say, a coincidence—which brought to my attention the need to study national-level planning. A major crisis in Israel brought to the front burner the need for multi-sectoral long-range planning at the national level.

The crisis arose from external events. During the last months of the Soviet Union, international conditions changed, and mass emigration of Jews and family members was allowed. The estimate in 1990 was that within three to five years, Israel, with a population of 4.5 million at that time, should expect to take in 1.5 to two million people. Understandably, a feeling of crisis overtook government bureaux which were concerned about the impact of such an avalanche on housing, land use, the environment, economic development, and many more issues.

Although national-level planning institutions and powers were—and still are—ample in Israel, by 1990, long-range multi-sectoral planning at the national level, which had its heyday in the 1950s and 1960s, had become a distant memory, gradually withering away. A team of planners and academics decided to take the initiative and show government the way. The team was headed by Adam Mazor, a leading planner-architect and professor at the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology, where the country's major planning school resides. At first regarded as an academic-professional project outside government, the 'Israel 2020' project was later adopted by a consortium of government bureaux, while still maintaining its out-of-government status.

The 'Israel 2020' project (described in detail in Chapter 11) took it upon itself to create a new style of planning at the national level: no longer a blueprint land-use plan and command-style implementation system that Israel was still carrying from the 1950s, but a new style that would take Israel into the twenty-first century. We were attempting to create an integrated policy covering land use, infrastructure, economics, environment, water, agriculture, and social policy.

New modes of plan-making would not be enough; there should also be new ways of institutionalising national-level planning so as to fit better with the trends of deregulation, privatisation and changes in governance styles that Israel, like most other advanced-economy countries, was undergoing. We were therefore seeking to know more about alternative modes of national-level planning as carried out in other democratic countries, and it was my role in the team to find out.

I quickly discovered that the literature on the subject was scarce. I therefore proposed that we create our own knowledge base by studying how national-level planning operates in a sample of ten democratic countries with advanced economies, representing a variety of sizes, geographic locations and governance systems. Using

my prior familiarity with 'planning systems' through my comparative research on land-use planning issues, I was able to locate and contact a highly knowledgeable researcher from each of the ten countries. From the response of each of the prospective authors, I learned that for them, as for me, the challenge of sorting out what planning was being carried out at the national level was a new one. None of us recalled having ever debated this topic in an academic or professional conference. With a set of common guidelines that I developed, the authors were requested to write up their description and assessment of national-level planning in their own country.

We convened at the Technion for a comparative seminar, where we shared what we had found with each other and with the other members of the 'Israel 2020' team. Having discovered the dearth of published research on national-level planning, we assumed that planners, decision-makers and researchers from other countries would also be interested in our findings. The draft volume issued by the 'Israel 2020' project was submitted for review to the Liverpool University Press editors. The anonymous reviewers' useful comments were used as guidelines for the format of this book. After a process of my own editing and, where necessary, rewriting and re-editing, the chapters were updated by each of the authors so as to be accurate to late 2000.

This book represents a unique linkage of research with practice. It was born of the needs of planning practice, albeit a very special and ambitious specimen of planning. I would hazard to guess that there are few cases in which a planning project generates research at such a scale. This unique link should be credited to Adam Mazor. His unsurpassed vision and professionalism have produced not only one of the most ambitious national planning enterprises anywhere in the West, but have also spun off many layers of knowledge. This is one of them. It is therefore a pleasure to thank Adam Mazor and the 'Israel 2020' project for stimulating my curiosity and for supplying the infrastructure that has made this book possible.

My thanks go also to Guy Kav-Venaki, at the time a graduate student of planning and my superb research assistant, who organised the logistics of the joint seminar and the draft volume with the greatest skill imaginable. Special thanks to the editors of the *Town Planning Review* special series and to the three anonymous reviewers, whose comments and guidance were priceless. And not least, I am very grateful to all thirteen contributors to this book, who have been not only most knowledgeable and insightful, but also extremely cooperative and patient, having tolerated my repeated queries and been willing to do last-minute updates.

RACHELLE ALTERMAN, *February 2001*

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