National-Level Planning in Democratic Countries
**Town Planning Review (TPR) Special Studies**

Edited at the Department of Civic Design, University of Liverpool, by PETER BATEY, DAVID MASSEY and DAVE SHAW

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