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Advances in Planning Analysis and Engagement

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ADVANCES IN PLANNING ANALYSIS AND ENGAGEMENT

Planning used to be more art than science. Arguably, it has evolved to be more science than art, though design has an indispensable role in plan-making. This part of the festschrift is comprised of three articles addressing the evolution of data in planning, the evolution and future of fiscal impact analysis in planning, and the role of university research centers in shaping planning through analysis and engagement.

Keuntae Kim opens this part with “From the Abacus to Big Data: The Evolution of Data-Driven Planning in the U.S. and Where the Field Will Be Headed.” Planning balances complexity, uncertainty, and disagreement in addressing current problems as well as emerging needs. Many planning problems are wicked because there is no best answer but a range of second-best answers usually involving problematic tradeoffs. To help them, planners have created multiple data-driven planning tools to exploring the knowns and unknowns of the urban futures, enabling them to craft a set of actions consistent with consensus goals. Kim traces the evolution of data collection, establishing criteria, analyzing data, and where the data-driven planning is headed.

In “The Evolution of Fiscal Impact Analysis and Where it Needs to Go,” Carson Bise and Colin McAweeney observe that communities “need analytical tools and technical support to assess and balance multiple priorities when making land use and development decisions.” Many of these decisions depend on fiscal impact analysis to determine whether change associated with new development would leave the community better- or worse-off in its ability to pay for new development impacts. Their article examines the historical use of fiscal impact analysis and offers perspectives on where the field should go in the future.

Courtney Crosson reports pioneering research into university centers leading to “Four Modes of Engagement: Positioning University Urban Design and Research Centers for the Future.” Crosson’s article is based on a survey of over fifty centers throughout the United States, finding that they align into Advocate, Consultant, Educator, and Scholar modes. Case studies across all modes find such universal challenges as sustained funding, administrative support, and clarifying student and community roles. “As both universities and cities face new paradigms of growth and financial sustenance, models of the university urban design and research center will hold relevance as a vehicle to engage, articulate, and find solutions to the challenges within our multilayered communities.” The article provides guidance to emerging centers as they frame their missions.