

THE EDUCATION AND CONTINUING EDUCATION OF URBAN PLANNERS

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ABSTRACT

Rapid urbanization and its accompanying development require an understanding of a variety of aspects of planning in order for sustainable land development and a high quality of the urban environment to become a reality. Within this context, planning professionals and educators in both China and the United States have much to gain from collaboration in higher education. In this paper, an effort between the University of Cincinnati (UC), USA and Shandong University (SDU), China in the creation of a collaborative Master Degree in Urban Planning and continuing education program for practicing planners is presented. This includes a discussion of some of the cultural differences that were encountered in developing the new joint Master program between the two universities. The collaboration between UC and SDU provides a platform that can establish the link between planning education and planning practice, as well as the integration of Chinese and American planning theories and practice. The collaboration between American and Chinese faculty in planning education can expand the faculty pool and, at the same time, encourage knowledge exchange between the two countries.

INTRODUCTION

Rapid urbanization and its accompanying development require a thorough understanding of a variety of planning elements in order to achieve sustainable land development and maintain a high quality of the urban environment. The term urbanization has been used primarily to describe either the proportion of the population of a country residing in urban areas or the process of population migration, which results in an increase of urban population. Many consequences of poorly planned or unplanned development are readily observable in China, the United States and other countries around the world. In recent years, China has been experiencing extremely rapid economic growth and urbanization. To sustain the urbanization process, the social, environmental and physical impacts of urbanization must be carefully examined in terms of land use development as well as in terms of economic gains.

Within this context, planners in both China and the United States have much to gain from collaboration in higher education, and this paper contributes to the literature on this subject. It describes an effort between the University of Cincinnati (UC), USA and Shandong University (SDU), China in the creation of a collaborative Master Degree in Urban Planning, as well as a continuing education program for practicing planners.

The paper will first provide an overview of planning education in the United States and China in relation to urbanization. From the overview, an outline of the similarities and differences of urbanization and planning education in the two countries will be presented, which will lead to the discussion of the UC-SDU collaboration. The paper will conclude by arguing that the collaboration will provide mutual benefits. American experience is valuable to planning education in China, and the knowledge of planning in China will help to advance planning education in the United States, particularly in this era of globalization.

URBANIZATION AND PLANNING EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES

Being knowledgeable about the general development and pattern of American urbanization can help one to understand planning education in the United States. This process of urbanization is part of a comprehensive phenomenon of American societal change (Gilbert and Gugler 1981), which can be briefly described in four phases. The first phase is the pre-industrial era from the late 17th century to 1820, during which two types of cities were formed: political centers where the administrative sovereign lived, and commercial and financial centers where agricultural surpluses were assembled, traded and redistributed (Melosi 1980). People gathered in those cities for security, or to exchange goods, services and ideas. Those cities became economic, political and cultural centers.

The second phase of urbanization started about 1820 when industrial cities emerged as the dominant urban form. This was the beginning of the industrial revolution in the United States. Factories concentrated in cities, and workers followed. This pattern increased the gross national product significantly. The value added by manufacturing increased ten-fold in the first half-century of this millennium, almost trebling the increased value of farm products (McKelvey 1963). For the most part, proximity to large cities meant the difference between economic success and failure. At this time, neither the city authorities nor businessmen did much to confine factories to industrial areas or to segregate the most polluted industries from residential communities. People of different income levels lived next to one another in the same neighborhoods.

The third urbanization phase started about 1920 as a product of the accelerating technological revolution spurred on by such developments as electric power, the automobile and the telephone. If the industrial revolution helped attract people to concentrate in cities, the technological revolution did the opposite, making it possible to diffuse people and industry over a much wider area (Hauser and Schnore 1965). Manufacturing plants in cities were moved to rural/suburban areas, cities in less developed regions, or to cities in developing countries. The original industrial cities became transformed into much larger metropolitan areas functioning as the country's social and economic centers. Moreover, their importance grew beyond mere local significance, and they become part of the regional, national and world economies. While the cities experienced this increase in their influence and power, substantial numbers of city residents moved to suburban regions (Mohl 1997 p211). For example, between 1950 and 1990, St. Louis lost 54% of its population and Detroit lost almost one-half of its 1950 population of about 1.8 million, while Pittsburgh and Cleveland lost 45% of their populations. In the central cities, financial institutions and the various components of the service sector, such as retail businesses, offices, restaurants, government agencies, educational providers and medical care suppliers, etc., gradually replaced manufacturing industries. The unique feature of this phase (1950-1990) is that the central city urban populations stopped increasing while areas with urban services (suburbs) kept expanding. Many service

sector institutions, such as government agencies, businesses, schools and medical care, moved to the suburbs. While new jobs were created in the urban region, the job opportunities in the central cities kept declining. Meanwhile, the need for face-to-face transaction and for centrally located office space diminished (Lampard 1983).

As a result, the difference between the urban population and the population in suburbs became fuzzy. Someone working in a factory or a financial institution might live thirty miles away from the central city in a detached house with all the services that used to be found only in central cities, i.e., telephone, electricity, tap water, sewage service, garbage pickup, neighborhood parks and entertainment. While some cities have maintained service and financial centers, many others are left with hollow areas of abandoned buildings and industrially contaminated land. The increasing number of towns within or beyond metropolitan boundaries is a major element of this pattern. What is commonly known as the “Edge City” phenomenon (Garreau 1988) has given rise to the creation of a new urban landscape characterized by the loss of sense of place and identity, the rise of urban sprawl, and, particularly, expanded office development beyond the central city. According to Garreau (1988), “by the mid-1980s, there was far more office space in Edge Cities around America’s largest metropolis, New York, than there was at its heart — midtown Manhattan.”

The fourth phase of American urbanization started in the last two decades of the 20th century. The resurgence of the urban movement or the “back-to-the-city movement” (Sanchez and Dawkins, 2001) has been concomitant with a series of government policies that encourage city living. The revitalization of inner-city areas, gentrification of some distressed neighborhoods, public-private partnerships, Enterprise Zone programs, and infill development projects have all targeted old, deteriorating downtown areas of many American cities. While these programs have targeted a wide range of urban problems, they vary significantly in terms of their scopes, scales and success. For example, the Enterprise Zone programs, which have attempted to lure businesses into poor neighborhoods, have been uneven in impact. In contrast, gentrification policies, which aim to create more appealing residential enclaves and social amenities to attract middle and upper income populations to live in the distressed inner-city neighborhoods and the central city, have been gaining momentum.

Given this context, the planning profession evolved in the United States, as did planning education. Planning has been practiced in America since the British drew up town plans in the colonial era. Well-known early examples are James Oglethorpe’s 1733 plan for Savannah and William Penn’s 1682 plan for Philadelphia. The French architect L’Enfant drew up the plan for Washington, D.C. early in the 19th century.

As the density of urban development increased through the middle of the century, problems of sanitation, the loss of urban open space, housing quality, overcrowding, and traffic congestion increased. The call for urban reform for sanitation, open space, and housing reform began to build. Men like Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvin Vaux’s created New York’s Central Park and provided the inspiration for other parks and an improved quality of life in other cities. The big push for city planning, however, occurred with the design by Daniel Burnham and Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. (the son of the designer of Central Park) of the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago. The effect of this exposition was to set off a wave of planning activity in American cities.

However, it took some more time for the profession to emerge formally, and the first National Conference on City Planning and Congestion Relief in Washington, D.C. was not convened until 1909. The American Institute of Planners was founded in 1917, and the American Society of Planning Officials was established in 1934. These two leading planning organizations consolidated into the American Planning Association (APA) in 1978.

Planning emerged as an exciting new profession, and planners had a variety of backgrounds. They came from the academic disciplines of architecture, landscape architecture, geography, public administration, engineering and the social sciences. The need to develop planning further as a full fledged profession and to set standards of planning education was recognized by the American Institute of Planners, which initiated in 1956 the American Institute of Planners School Recognition Program. In 1978, the National Education Development Committee was created in. Both of these bodies granted recognition, a process that continued through 1984.

In 1984, the Planning Accreditation Board (PAB) began a formal process of accrediting planning programs at American colleges and universities. The Planning Accreditation Board has three sponsoring organizations: the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP), the American Planning Association (APA), and the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ASCP). Accreditation is granted through a

planning program's self-study process and validating reports by a team of peer reviewers from accredited universities and from the certified professional practice organization (AICP). The standards by which a program is assessed encourage quality education for the preparation of the planning profession's future practitioners.

Thus, the creation of accredited planning education programs by PAB, as well as the certification of professional planners by AICP through a comprehensive examination were the methods that American planners used to professionalize their roles and to gain recognition in the same way that other professions were recognized. Accredited planning education programs contribute to that process by producing high quality, well-qualified professional planners.

As the profession has developed, so has the education of planners. Planning education in the United States has evolved into an interdisciplinary program grounded in the academic disciplines of design and the social sciences. This developed through a collaboration of academics and planning practitioners who identified the skills and knowledge necessary to prepare students for entrance into the planning profession. The profession itself in the United States has evolved through the various planning experiences of the 20th century to recognize that planners must be trained to search for the unintended consequences of their recommendations. Thus planning education has expanded to include public participation, social science research, practical field experience and a focus on professional behavior.

There are currently 73 PAB accredited universities in North America. Both bachelor and master degree programs in planning are accredited. However, the master program is the preferred level of education for entry into the planning profession. There are also numerous unaccredited planning programs in the United States.

Parallel to this development of planning education has been the certification of individual planners by the AICP. Persons may take the certification exam who do not have planning degrees, but they must have a specified minimum number of years of required work experience in the planning profession prior to taking the exam. Persons who complete the exam can add the certification title AICP after their names. Along with demonstrating their technical competency as planners by passing the exam, they are expected to comply with a set of ethical standards adopted by AICP. The purpose of these processes is to professionalize the practice of planning and to enhance respect for the profession and discipline.

URBANIZATION AND PLANNING EDUCATION IN CHINA

Just as with the United States, the urbanization process in China can be described in phases. In the Chinese case, three phases can be identified. The first phase can be traced back thousands of years in that many Chinese cities have long histories of serving as political, cultural and market centers.

Industrialization initiated the second phase of urbanization in China at the turn of the 20th century as foreigners started to build factories in China. Meanwhile, Chinese entrepreneurs started their own industries to compete with foreign enterprises. After the Communist Party took over the country in the middle of the 20th century, the central government adopted a central-planning approach and set up a national goal of "self-sustained" economy. Many cities were developed as "productive" cities along the coast, as well as inland, as part of a national defense strategy. Special emphasis was placed on heavy industries including iron and steel, mining, and machinery. Chinese officials clearly considered industrialization as a precondition for creating productive cities. A new wave of industrial cities began to develop in China in the late 1970s as a new group of fourteen coastal cities emerged primarily to produce goods for export. The enactment of the new policies and the rise of the market economy in China (Ng and Xu 2000) accentuated rural-urban migration and helped provide new employment opportunities in urban China (Liu and Wei 1997: 96).

The third phase of urbanization in China began in 1990. Since then, Chinese cities have taken two different paths. On the one hand, several mega-cities, such as Beijing, Shanghai and Guangdong, are becoming truly global cities serving as financial and political centers. On the other hand, many small cities have been developed to increase diversity in commercial and residential urban areas. Meanwhile, there has been an increasing push for consumption, especially in mega-cities. Examples include the promotion of automobile usage and household services.

In sharp contrast to the ancient roots of urbanization in China, planning education is still relatively new in the country. Although planning programs may be traced to the early 1950s, the designation of planning as an independent university department only occurred in the 1980s. In the Chinese academic

disciplinary classification, urban planning is still a sub-field of architecture. Nevertheless, an examination of existing planning programs reveals two distinct types of higher education in planning in China.

The first type of planning program is engineering-based, either civil engineering or architecture. Such a program emphasizes architectural training, and the underlying meaning of planning is design. Some of these programs may have some landscape architecture components. Planners with such training are well prepared to design physical structures on a piece of land, but they normally are not trained to deal with social, political, economic, and environmental constraints and consequences.

The second type of planning program is built upon geography. The geography discipline traditionally has a strong interest in the urban environment, especially human - environment interactions and the spatial distribution of economic activities. The sub-fields of urban geography and economic geography are examples of how serious geographers consider the city. Planners trained from such program have a regional perspective and a good understanding of the complexity of an urban system. However, they normally lack design skills.

Although planners in China are preparing both comprehensive plans and detailed plans, a true interdisciplinary planning program has yet to emerge. While American planners are often concerned with broad issues related to human settlement such as land use, social policy, historic preservation, transportation, housing, economic development, policy planning, environmental protection, urban design and international development, Chinese planners are narrowly trained in both types of program and lack a comprehensive understanding of urban problems. American planners are educated to be visionaries working for a better future through improvements in the quality of urban life in one or more of these areas. Chinese planners have not yet developed this vision.

Planning as a field is closely related to human activities that shape social interactions as well as the physical environment. In principle, planning education must cover factors that affect the plan making process, such as land suitability, social and environmental justice and carrying capacity. At the same time, planning education must cover planned or unplanned development consequences, such as water and air quality, crime, and poverty. Finally, planning education must cover the planning process itself. Because of the dynamic nature of the environment in which a plan is made, the social, economic, and environmental reaction to a plan, and the available tools for plan-making, the content of planning education has been a subject of constant discussion among American planning educators and practitioners. The emphasis is on planners as problem solvers. This type of discussion has yet to take place in China despite the dynamism so apparent in its urbanization, economic development and social transformation. However, the collaboration between Shandong University and the University of Cincinnati outlined below is a first step in that direction.

THE UC-SDU COLLABORATION

While urban planning and management are key municipal functions in the United States, in China, rapid urban expansion has far outstripped the capacity of city governments. Huge, difficult to manage multi-centered mega-cities continue to emerge worldwide along with the proliferation of thousands of other cities in a range of smaller size, and China is a prime example of this development. Nevertheless, the attraction of urban life has never been greater. With more than 50% of the world's population living in cities at the turn of the 21st century, this century has emerged as the world's first truly urban era.

The review of the urbanization process in the two countries shows that for both of them urban functions have been transformed from being initially administrative/commercial to industrial and, finally, to service-oriented. Nevertheless, there are major differences between the two. In America, this transformation has impacted the geographic distribution of cities; a relatively small number of dominant, concentrated cities have been radically altered to include in effect several smaller cities at its metropolitan borders. This describes one variant of urban sprawl. Thus, in the United States, the urbanization process has reached a point where momentum has changed from concentration to decentralization. In China, however, the urbanization process is still attracting people to central cities. Another factor that distinguishes the urbanization process in the two countries is the global informational, political, economic, technological, and environmental context. During America's accelerating urbanization phase in the twentieth century, there was no other part of the world that had gone through the same process. Americans had no model to learn from, and there was no strong global effect on American cities. This is not the case for China. Currently, there are international organizations that provide support and assistance for economic growth and urbanization. In addition, many technologies that were not available decades ago are now readily available for solving urban problems. The most significant is that the American lessons and experiences, i.e., those of another large, populous and

diverse country, can be used to support a less painful and more desirable urbanization process in China.

In this comparative urbanization context, American planning education would profit from addressing the urbanization phenomenon in China, and Chinese planning education would progress by learning from the interdisciplinary nature of planning education and practice in the U.S. Consequently, in the Fall of 2004, Prof. Xinhao Wang, one of the authors from the University of Cincinnati, located in Cincinnati, Ohio, visited Shandong University in Jinan, Shandong Province to explore a possible collaboration with this Chinese institution. During the visit he and Prof. Sheng Huang, the author from Shandong University agreed that they had a common interest in developing a planning program that would be unique in China. Together, they developed five areas for further discussion. These were:

1. Institutional collaboration for graduate student training;
2. Regular teaching and research visits of University of Cincinnati faculty to Shandong University;
3. Collaboration in the Digital Shandong Environmental Protection Project;
4. Collaboration between the UC School of Planning and the SDU Environmental Institute and Architecture Department, and
5. Establishment of a graduate planning program at SDU, with the goal of eventually developing a doctoral degree program in planning.

It is also worth noting that the President of Shandong University and the Director of the Jinan Planning Bureau had discussed a similar topic at about the same time. Thus, the collaboration proposal quickly won support from the SDU administration. In September 2005, invited by Shandong University, two of the UC authors spent three weeks on the Shandong University campus.

The UC planning faculty members presented lectures, taught classes and met with university faculty and students, as well as local planning practitioners. Through intensive discussions, a consensus was reached about the significance of collaborative planning education and practice between the USA and China. To implement such interactions, the Americans and Chinese proposed the establishment of parallel programs of the Master in Community Planning degree at SDU and UC. In addition, planning agencies in Jinan, China and Cincinnati, U.S.A. would also play an important role in the continuing education of practicing planners. With support of the two institutions, various forms of mutually beneficial exchange programs would be developed to involve students, faculty, practicing planners and planning administrators. In addition, the two sides are exploring expanding the collaboration to other disciplines – centering on the theme of the Built Environment, which would also cover fields such as architecture, design, transportation, and construction.

During this visit, the President and the senior administrative staff of SDU expressed their desire to establish a collaborative relationship with UC. The Shandong University President said the goal of the university is to become an internationally recognized institution. As one indication of that, he successfully sought funding to bring fifty international scholars to the university during the 2005 - 2006 academic year. In addition, he is planning on sending one hundred of his current young faculty overseas each year to seek further education and to become knowledgeable about international practices in their various disciplines. He also plans to invite faculty from overseas universities to teach from a quarter to an academic year at SDU to expose both Chinese students and faculty members to international practices.

While in Jinan, the two UC professors met with SDU, city and provincial officials. The City Planning Bureau expressed an interest in joining with Shandong University to sponsor a Master in Urban Planning degree, which would help it to recruit new planning staff members and provide for the continuing education of the current staff. The bureau also is interested in collaborating in an interdisciplinary research center to be called the Joint Center for Urban Research with both Shandong University and the University of Cincinnati. This would be a tremendous resource for its staff, especially for long-range planning and policy analysis.

In late September 2005, Shandong University approved the Master in Urban Planning program and sent the application to the Ministry of Education for review. Shortly after the ministry approved the application, in Spring 2006, the University of Cincinnati Vice Provost International led a delegation of six college Deans on a visit to Shandong University. During the visit, administrators of the two institutions discussed in detail the Joint Center for Urban Research. Once it is formally established, UC and SDU will start its

first activity, i.e. setting up the recently approved Master of Urban Planning program at SDU. This program will be modeled on the Master of Community Planning program at UC and will accept its first graduate students in the fall of 2007. In the initial stage, SDU will recruit new planning faculty members, and several UC School of Planning faculty members will offer selected planning courses at SDU as part of the faculty exchange component of the collaboration. Shandong University would like to offer a Master in Urban Planning program that parallels the University of Cincinnati's program so that both students and faculty could be exchanged with a minimum of disruption. This will strengthen the collaboration. SDU also wants to have a program that is modeled on a successful program in the United States, which will give it a unique niche among planning programs being developed in China. Meanwhile, this summer UC and SDU will commence a program of joint grant writing and will begin to establish a coherent, fundable research agenda. Consequently, two of the American authors of this paper will return to Jinan in July of 2006 to initiate talks on the common research agenda.

THE MASTER IN COMMUNITY PLANNING PROGRAM AT SHANDONG UNIVERSITY

Negotiations on how to adapt the UC School of Planning's Master of Community Planning curriculum to fit the Chinese culture and its economy's needs were challenging. The initial work was done in a meeting that involved a Chinese faculty member from Shandong University, the Director of Planning for the city of Jinan (who had received graduate training in planning in the U.S.) and two American faculty members from the University of Cincinnati School of Planning. Each brought to the table important information that was vital to the development of the curriculum for the graduate program in China.

An example of the challenges faced is that some of the UC School of Planning courses were found to be inappropriate for a Chinese curriculum. Planning Law and Public Finance are two. The legal systems and methods of finance in the two countries are radically different. Moreover, planning law is in its infancy in China and could easily be included in another course (You might say the planners are the law when it comes to development in China), while governmental financial affairs are not transparent in China and are apparently not appropriate for a college course. Nevertheless, the conferees were able to work out a course that would fit, called Public Policy and Plan Implementation.

Another example is the UC course, Politics and Ethics in Urban Planning. This, it was finally agreed, would be included only if taught by an American professor. The Chinese absolutely did not want a local party official (who might be a faculty member) to teach the course. Evidently, no one (faculty member or student) wants to listen to another lecture on behavioral expectations from a party official). The course was then renamed Professional Planning Organizations and Behavior.

In the end, however, a final proposed curriculum of the three-year Master of Urban Planning (MUP) degree was put together, which is in large part parallel to the University of Cincinnati's master degree program, but with only two specializations instead of the four available at UC. The Chinese wanted to focus the program more narrowly and agreed on only two degree specializations. These are Comprehensive Planning, and Urban and Regional Development. Nevertheless, most of the core courses in the UC program are found in the SDU program. Potential faculty members from UC were then identified who could assist in the teaching of these courses, at least in the first few years.

Because planning integrates knowledge from many disciplines, a student may enter SDU's MUP program with an undergraduate degree in any field. The student brings his/her previous knowledge to a curriculum, which provides complementary scientific knowledge; analytic, design, and problem formulation skills; and an understanding of the legal, political, economic, and physical context within which planning occurs.

Chinese students in the Shandong University program will be able to benefit as well from an exchange program to be instituted with the University of Cincinnati and an internship program to be organized at the Jinan Municipal Bureau of Urban Planning and other planning organizations. All students will gain meaningful professional experience prior to graduation, which will enable them to be highly successful on the job market.

Another key feature of the program is that it will maintain a faculty team of Chinese and American professors and practitioners. There will be one Chinese and one American faculty member for each of the courses taught. The courses will be taught in both Chinese and English. At any time of the academic year, there will be two UC scholars resident at SDU as visiting professors.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE COLLABORATION

In a general sense, the rapid urbanization of China requires urgently well-trained professional planners, and the collaboration between UC and SDU provides a platform that can establish a link in China between planning education and planning practice, as well as integrate Chinese and American planning theories and practice. The urban environment in China is a perfect lab for training future planners. However, there are not enough planning faculty members in China to train its future planners. Thus, this collaboration between American and Chinese academics in planning education can expand the faculty pool and, at the same time, encourage the exchange of planning knowledge between the two countries.

More specifically, Shandong Province is in a strategically important place at the lower reaches of Yellow River, with a long coastline and a rich cultural, historical, and architectural heritage. Well-trained urban planners can make a significant contribution to the sustainability of this region. With planning still a relatively new field in Chinese higher education, and looking at the spatial distribution of existing planning programs, one can easily see that the new planning program at SDU fills a planning education void in the mid-eastern region of China.

In conclusion, the future of urban development in China remains questionable. As the most populated country in the world, China's urban areas are highly dense, with this density increasing due to heavy rural-urban migration. Moreover, this trend has intensified due to the rapidly growing and diversifying market economy (Ng and Xu 2000). Whether the market driven urban landscape in China will exhibit high levels of pollution, poor housing for many, high levels of crime among those migrants to the city excluded from China's rising prosperity, as well as other social ills is a question China's planners can help answer. The intention of the collaborative research and education activities of SDU and UC is to contribute to this undertaking.

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