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Bruce W. McClendon, Anthony James Catanese. *Planners On Planning: Leading Planners Offer Real-Life Lessons on What Works, What Doesn't, and Why.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1996. xxii + 320 pp. $30.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7879-0285-8.

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The Job and the Joy of Planning

This is a collection of essays by twenty-two practicing planners, one of whom, Bruce McClendon, is also a co-editor of the book. Their individual chapters are preceded by a Foreword by Eugenie Ladner Birch and an Introduction by McClendon; the work closes with a Conclusion written by Catanese and an Afterword by Ted Gaebler.

The editors represent an unusual combination of the practical and the academic aspects of urban planning. McClendon is foremost a practitioner, currently serving as planning director for Orange County, Florida, and previously as planning director for the City of Fort Worth, Texas. He has in addition written two books on urban growth management and frequently presents workshops on this subject throughout the country. Catanese is the president of Florida Atlantic University and has previously held both faculty and administrative positions at Georgia Tech and the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee. He has published eleven books and numerous articles, many of which have addressed the politics of local planning and the role of planners as urban change agents.

From the mini biographies provided in the front of the book, it appears that the contributing planners have each worked at least twenty years in varying, mainly urban, settings. Several have spent thirty or more years in the field. In total, their experience extends from 1965 through 1995, a period of turbulence for both the profession of planning and the communities that its members served.

The 1965 to 1970 period saw the decline of the federally supported efforts to revitalize the decaying and obsolete areas of America's cities and the rise of community participation as a major element in local decision making. The 1970 to 1980 decade was the time when the growing concern for the environment became translated into major public policies and initiatives. Between 1980 and 1990, federal funds and programs that had supported the implementation of community plans were cut back, and economic development became a widespread and increasingly competitive activity at the local level. And, since 1990, planning has become involved in the efforts to make local government more efficient and responsive.

Within the framework of these societal changes, the contributors to this volume were invited to reflect upon their years of practice and to discuss what significant lessons they have learned. Most of them describe principles and strategies that have proved to be successful in managing change in the various settings in which they have worked. Some of them draw equally useful lessons from decisions and actions that failed or did not turn out quite as intended.

The essays fit comfortably and logically into four categories. Those in Part One emphasize the personal characteristics that will help planners be effective. In Part Two, attention turns to the implications of planning as an activity performed within a political environment. The chapters in Part Three stress strategies and techniques that can help planners achieve results. In Part Four, the increasing importance of taking an entrepreneurial approach to planning emerges as a major theme.

As with any such collection, the individual contributions vary considerably in quality and interest. Some are dull, others convey a strong sense of excitement, and most are in between. However, such variations reflect the range of activities and responsibilities that engage the attention of planners laboring at the local level throughout a typical week. And, taken as a whole, the essays convey a strong impression of the variety of opportunities and challenges that make a public service career so rewarding. They also highlight a variety of tenets, tactics, and techniques that can help planners become skilled at managing change. The resulting book provides an overview of the ways in which theory and experience

can interact positively in the practice of planning. This makes it an unusually useful addition to the urban planning literature and should recommend it to a broad audience.

For planners who are just embarking on their careers, *Planners on Planning* serves as a practical guidebook. It will show them that many of the theoretical concepts they learned in planning school do have some utility in the real world. It will give them insights into ways in which they can influence decision making processes at the local level. It will alert them to the kinds of hazards and possibilities that may come their way as they move from entry level planner to director of an agency.

Planners who are already well along on the career ladder can compare their experiences and ideas to those described by the twenty-two authors in this book. They will probably find much that parallels the situations, successes, and failures that they have encountered. They will also find things with which they disagree, but in doing so they may evaluate their own ideas and either change or reinforce them.

One of the best features of the book is that it can have a significant impact in the classroom. This is the first time that the reminiscences of a relatively large number of contemporary planners have been compiled into a single volume. Further, these planners have taken time to reflect upon their twenty or more years of work and to present whatever wisdom and warnings they can distill from all that they have encountered along the way. The result is a book that can quickly arouse the interest and stir the imaginations of students.

I recently used the book as a required text for a graduate course on planning management and implementation. One of the purposes of this course is to evaluate the applicability of a range of theoretical concepts to the real world demands of managing change in urban areas. In relation to this purpose, *Planners on Planning* proved to be a perfect choice. It was clearly apparent that the students enjoyed both reading and learning from it.

It worked especially well in tandem with *Making City Planning Work*. This classic account by Allan Jacobs of his tenure as the Planning Director for the City of San Francisco was another of the required texts. The two books complemented each other synergistically. The McClendon and Catanese book provides a broad spectrum of professional experience, but in doing so the authors are of necessity limited in the amount of detail they can reveal. Such detail, however, is provided in abundance by Jacobs, especially through his analytical case studies.

In addition, students were also able to use the individual narratives in *Planners on Planning* to test some of the concepts reviewed in class. For example, we had discussed four classic role models derived from the planning literature, namely the technician, advisor, broker, and mobilizer. Following this discussion, the students reviewed the experiences and ideas of each of the twenty-two contributors to the book and assessed which of the models seemed best to fit each person. They concluded that a significant majority of the authors seemed to perform the role of advisor or broker, with most of them actually performing either role at different times and in different situations. Only one contributor fit the technician role, and three tended to be mobilizers. Such analysis is by no means exhaustive or conclusive. It does, however, help students to close the gap between abstraction and reality.

One general point needs to be made about the nature of this collection of essays. In some of the introductory and closing material, certainly not in the essays themselves, there is an implication that the twenty-two authors are the most innovative and entrepreneurial planners at work today. Individually these authors certainly deserve recognition, and their practice-based wisdom is well worth sharing with a large audience. However, their approaches and accomplishments are not unique. Anyone who has practiced planning for a number of years can compile a list of colleagues who have achieved comparable results to those presented in this book. In other words, the twenty-two authors are more the norm than the exception. As such, they are representative of the rich variety of experience and experiment that characterizes contemporary planning practice. This is yet another factor that adds to the strength and relevance of the book.

In summary, this is a book that should be welcomed, read, and consulted by students, educators, and practitioners, as well as by anyone interested in making planning effective and productive at the local level. McClendon and Catanese have done the planning profession a great service by persuading their contributing authors to engage in such constructive retrospection, and by organizing and presenting their responses in such an accessible format.

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