

Advancing Urban Sustainability through the Integration of Planning Evaluation Methodologies

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Abstract : Based on an ethical vision which recognizes the vital role of human rights, shared values, social responsibility and justice, and environmental ethics, planning may be interpreted as a process aimed at reducing inequalities and overcoming marginality. Seen from this sustainability perspective, planning evaluation must utilize critical-evaluative and narrative receptive models which assist different stakeholders in their understanding of urban fabric while trigger reflexive processes that catalyze wider transformations. In this paper, this approach serves as a guide for the evaluation of Mexico's urban planning systems, and postulates a framework to better integrate sustainability notions into planning evaluation. The paper is introduced by an overview of the current debate on evaluation in urban planning. The state of art presented includes: the different perspectives and paradigms of planning evaluation and their fundamentals and scope, which have focused on three main aspects; goal attainment (did planning instruments do what they were supposed to?); performance and effectiveness of planning (retrospective analysis of planning process and policy analysis assessment); and the effects of process-considering decision problems and contexts rather than the techniques and methods. As well as, methodological innovations and improvements in planning evaluation. This comprehensive literature review provides the background to support the authors' proposal for a set of general principles to evaluate urban planning, grounded on a sustainability perspective. In the second part the description of the shortcomings of the approaches to evaluate urban planning in Mexico set the basis for highlighting the need of regulatory and instrumental- but also explorative- and collaborative approaches. As a response to the inability of these isolated methods to capture planning complexity and strengthen the usefulness of evaluation process to improve the coherence and internal consistency of the planning practice itself. In the third section the general proposal to evaluate planning is described in its main aspects. It presents an innovative methodology for establishing a more holistic and integrated assessment which considers the interdependence between values, levels, roles and methods, and incorporates different stakeholders in the evaluation process. By doing so, this piece of work sheds light on how to advance urban sustainability through the integration of evaluation methodologies into planning.

Keywords : urban planning, evaluation methodologies, urban sustainability, innovative approaches

Conference Title : ICUPRDIS 2015 : International Conference on Urban Planning, Regional Development and Information Society

Conference Location : Osaka, Japan

Conference Dates : October 08-09, 2015