

The Historical and Theoretical Foundation for the Formation of Public/Private Landscape Planning Partnerships in Massachusetts

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Introduction

Since the mid 1990s a new model of land use planning has been developing in Massachusetts. The planners in this model include the employees of federal and state environmental agencies, local and regional land trusts, watershed associations, regional and town planners, foresters, and private landowners. I propose that this model be called a public/private landscape planning partnership due to its reliance on collaboration between public and private partners and interests, and the fact that its activities are primarily limited to land use and land conservation planning on the landscape scale.

This report summarizes my Master's Thesis, which was completed in August of 1999. This introduction is followed by summaries of each chapter: literature review, case studies, methods, findings and theory.

The literature review describes the evolution of citizen participation models in planning in the 1900s and the incorporation of ecological concepts in the planning of land uses. These two areas were explored because preliminary research into the activities of each case study partnership and another similar partnership in Maine suggested that there were a diverse group of stakeholders represented at the meetings and that landscape ecology concepts were commonly used. The case study section describes two partnerships, the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership and the Taunton River Stewardship Program. The methods section summarizes and explains the choice of qualitative research design, which relied on an analysis of transcribed interviews from ten members from each partnership. The findings section reports the results generated from the research and analysis.

Literature Review

Public/private landscape planning partnerships are a natural outgrowth of at least two evolutionary paths that have integrated in the 1990s. The first path follows the development of organizational models used in public participation efforts in community

and land use planning. The second path represents the gradual inclusion of ecological concepts in the planning of land uses over time.

The Evolution of Models of Citizen Participation in Land Use Planning

The origins of citizen participation in planning were in the City Beautiful movement beginning in the 1880s. Throughout the 1900s, the ways people participated changed (*see Figure 1 on page 3*). Before there were public/private partnerships between concerned citizens, land trusts, and state and federal agencies, citizen advisory committees and boards were common (Curtis 1992; Creighton 1981; Ertel 1972). Analysis of the history of models of citizen participation led me to name four periods, which reflect a shifting relationship between citizens and government. These four periods are 1) *Citizen and Government Initiated Participation*, 2) *The Transition to Broad Citizen Action*, 3) *The Transition to Land-use Issues and Citizen-Action With or Without the Government*, and 4) *Public/Private Partnerships*.

The period, *Citizen and Government Initiated Participation* (1880s to 1940s) saw the development of public participation models during the Reform and City Beautiful Movements in the late 19th Century (Hall 1996), neighborhood block organizing between 1917-1919 (Austin and Betten 1990), and the Great Society Programs and the New Deal Agricultural Policies of the 1930s (Daneke, Garcia, and Priscoli 1993). During this period, community organizing turned from a volunteer endeavor to national governmental policy.

The *Transition to Broad Citizen Action* period (1950-1968) describes the creation of citizen participation models by federal and state government agencies through Urban Renewal programs that began to reflect a sharing of power, but just barely. In 1954, the Housing Act introduced the adjunct citizen advisory committee and the 1964 War on Poverty programs required federal agencies to provide opportunities for the "maximum feasible participation" of the citizenry. Finally, the Community Action Programs (CAP) of the mid-1960s helped to create the participatory bureaucracy of city and local government (Daneke, Garcia, and Priscoli 1993).

The *Transition to Land-use Issues and Citizen-Action With or Without the Government* (1969-mid 1980s) began with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, which helped usher in a new era of public access to the decision-making processes of federal agencies (Caldwell, Hayes, and MacWhirter 1976). Also included in this era were the increasing numbers of public interest groups that fought tooth and nail to hinder or initiate government action on environmental concerns (Williams 1985; Caldwell, Hayes, and Mac Whirter 1976; Rosenbaum 1976). Conservation land trusts, a type of public interest group, became successful at filling the land protection gap created by the

federal government's shifting public dollars away from open space acquisition in the 1980s (Hocker 1996; Browne 1993; Martens and Peterson 1992; Weisman 1980).

My thesis proposes that the last period, *Public/Private Partnerships*, began during the late 1980s and early 1990s when government agencies began to partner with private land trusts in land conservation planning (Gould, Schaiberg, and Weinberg 1996; Hocker 1996; Lapage et al. 1995; Mason 1995; Brown 1993). During that same time period, an ecosystem-based, collaboration oriented paradigm was being transferred from federal to state conservation agencies, especially with regards to the management and protection of land and other natural resources (Executive Office of Environmental Affairs 1998; Sitarz ed. 1998; Sample et al. 1995).

The Evolution of the Incorporation of Ecological Concepts in Land Use Planning

In this second part of the literature review I investigate the incorporation of ecological concepts in land use planning practice and theory over time by analyzing the history of regional, landscape, and greenway planning, and ecosystem *management* (see *Figure 2 on page 5*). My discussion of the evolution of the theory and practice of ecosystem management focuses on the policies of the United States Forest Service. I also researched landscape ecology since some of the planning activities of the case study partnerships appeared to utilize concepts familiar to this body of theory. The literature review demonstrates how the different types of land use planning (regional, landscape, and greenway planning, and ecosystem management) have evolved from similar backgrounds of theory and practice.

Greenway, landscape, and regional planning began in America with the blue line concept in the late 1880s and with the creation of the Adirondack Park (Zube 1995). Then, at the turn of the century, Olmstead planned the Emerald Necklace, a linear string or greenway of parks around Boston (Zube 1995). In the 1920s, the Regional Planning Association was founded on Lewis Mumford's ideas (Hall 1996). For the "betterment of the people," these ideas were adopted through the application of the New Deal policies in the creation of the Tennessee Valley Authority in the 1930s (Steiner 1983). In 1958, the Outdoor Recreation Resources Commission began a planning process to provide urban area parks for recreational use. In the 1960s, transportation planning helped create the need for regional planning authorities and councils of government (Diamond and Noonan 1996). In 1964, Phil Lewis produced his work on "quality corridors" and Ian McHarg's nature-based approach to regional planning projects was put into practice. In 1969, the National Environmental Protection Act required inter-agency cooperation and public participation on federal agency projects (Turner 1986).

The 1970s marked an important time period, during which the planning of land

uses began to respond to the diminishment of natural resource quantity and quality, which also fueled the environmental movement (Diamond and Noonan 1996). In 1971, the United States Forest Service initiated their Unit Planning Program, which was bound to ecological, instead of administrative units (Diamond and Noonan 1996). In that same year, the Craighead brothers recommended expanding the Yellowstone National Park to the ecological boundaries that would sustain grizzly bears (Grumbine 1994). The 1970s and 1980s began to see state growth management strategies and policies across the United States. In the 1980s, the blue line method of creating large parks of many contiguous acres turned into greenways due to increased development and land prices and decreases in federal spending for open space. These factors all supported the creation of urban parks around linear elements such as rivers and abandoned railways (Zube 1995). Between 1985 and 1989, the United States Forest Service created a new mission statement, "Caring for the Land and Serving People" (Kennedy and Quigley 1998), and in 1992 this federal agency adopted a new land use planning and management paradigm: ecosystem management (Golley 1993).

I propose that the 1990s began a new era in regional, greenway, and landscape planning. In 1990, the first interagency attempt at ecosystem management was made in Yellowstone National Park (Grumbine 1994). Richard Forman's, Land Mosaics: The ecology of landscapes and regions, published in 1995, made accessible the science and theory of landscape ecology. In 1996, there were one hundred and five (105) ecosystem management projects in the United States, and of those in the northeast, forty percent (40%) were initiated by non-profits and thirty percent (30%) were started by government agencies (Yaffee 1996).

By the end of the 1990s, Massachusetts' state government had made a significant shift in its land protection policies. In 1998, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs published "The View from Borderland," a report of the Governor's Blue Ribbon panel on land protection. The Panel issued eight challenges to the Commonwealth and its residents. The final challenge was "to protect large blocks of open space and water resources that are linked by a system of trails and natural wildlife corridors and create a border-to-border greenway across the Commonwealth." This is landscape planning steeped in landscape ecology concepts. The focus on large blocks of open space, natural wildlife corridors, and greenways echoes the ecological concepts of Forman's Land Mosaics. A second challenge of the Governor's Blue Ribbon panel was "to establish strong working partnerships between the Commonwealth and its municipalities, as well as utility companies, large landowners, regional planning agencies, and all other land protection groups, for the purpose of increasing statewide land protection efforts."

The final conclusion that I draw from the literature review concerns the two paths introduced: the evolution of public participation models in community planning, and the

increasing incorporation of ecological concepts into land use planning. I believe that ecosystem management and landscape ecology, in theory and in practice, are the ties that bind the two paths together. Ecosystem management requires a multi-disciplinary, multi-scaled cooperative body of federal, state, and local government agencies, and private parties to be able to deal with the complex ecological inter-relationships that occur within the landscape (Grumbine 1994). This sounds very much like a public/private landscape planning partnership. Although ecosystem management is still an undefined body of theory and practice, it has been adopted by federal agencies across the country (Ad hoc Committee on Ecosystem Management 1995). Its concepts are consistent with those embodied in landscape ecology (Slocombe 1998). Locally, landscape ecology concepts, as depicted in Forman's work, now appear in master planning. The joint Buckland-Shelburne, Massachusetts Master Plan includes recommendations to preserve large forest blocks and potential wildlife corridors along ridge lines and flood plains (Buckland-Shelburne Master Planning Committee 1999).

Based on my analysis of the literature, the adoption of ecosystem management and landscape ecology theory by government agencies helped to bring about the partnering of stakeholders with the purpose of planning land uses on a landscape scale. My thesis also proposes that the convergence of the two evolutionary paths is the public/private landscape planning partnership, where the most recent model of citizen participation in land use planning may also be the most effective method for practicing consensus-based ecosystem management.

Case Studies

The North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership (NQRLP) and the Taunton River Stewardship Program (TRSP), are informal and formal organizations representing personal and organizational agendas, hopes, and beliefs. The partnerships' organizational styles are very similar.

The NQRLP is an informal partnership with approximately thirty-five (35) partner-organizations. It has an executive committee made up of individuals representing various constituencies: Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust (MGLCT), Harvard Forest, United States Army Corps of Engineers, the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC), the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management (DEM)/Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA), private landowners, the Orange Conservation Commission, and the Trustees of Reservations (TTOR) (NQRLP 1998). The NQRLP is not an incorporated body. This was a purposeful move to ensure that state and federal agencies would have the ability to attend and contribute (Sam 1999).

The Taunton River Stewardship Program (TRSP) is a formal partnership--a 501

(c) 3 non-profit organization--with a working membership of twelve individuals. These individuals represent the Middleborough and Raynham Planning and Conservation Commissions, the Natural Resources Trust of Bridgewater (NRTB), the Town of West Bridgewater, the Taunton [River Watershed Alliance (TRW A), the Bridgewater Office of Community Development, the Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD), the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MDFW), the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MDEP), and the Wildlands Trust of Southeastern Massachusetts (Wildlands Trust or WT). Like the NQRLP, the primary decision-making body of the partnership represents local and state commissions and agencies and local conservation land trusts. Although the NQRLP does have similar elements within their entire membership, the decision-making committee of the TRSP also includes a watershed alliance, a regional planning agency, and an economic development planner.

The North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership

The landscape in the North Quabbin Region is characterized by "the most rugged terrain of the state's central upland" (Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management 1997). The topography is extreme with elevations ranging from between two hundred (200) and fifteen hundred (1500) feet above sea level. The region is also dominated by the vast protected forests of the Quabbin Reservoir, owned and managed by the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC), as well as large blocks of forestland owned by the Department of Environmental Management (DEM). The NQRLP serves twenty-three communities within a region that stretches from the Connecticut River in Franklin County to Ashburnham and Westminster in Northern Worcester County.

The written mission statement of the NQRLP is as follows: "Members of the NQRLP will collaborate to identify, protect, and enhance strategic ecological, cultural, and historic open space within the rural landscape of the North Quabbin Region" (Townsend 1998).

The mission statement clearly describes the various land-related values that the NQRLP desires to protect (ecological, cultural, and historical). It also describes the unit of their focus, the landscape, and qualifies it further by differentiating 'rural' from other types of landscapes. Further, it defines its primary methods as land identification, protection, and enhancement and it states the mechanism by which all this will be accomplished: collaboration.

Though the NQRLP is a self-described informal and unincorporated working group, it does have a mission statement. It also has a part-time coordinator, an executive committee, and several working groups, each of which meet separately from the partners'

meeting. The partners' meetings involve up to forty (40) individuals representing a diverse group of constituent organizations and landowners within the landscape. The working groups are focused on linkages, advocacy, map corrections, and outreach/communications.

Ten members of the NQRLP were interviewed for this thesis representing seven constituencies: landowners (2), statewide environmental agencies (2), a federal environmental agency, a local water supply advisory committee, a conservation commission, a statewide water supply agency, and a local land trust.

The Taunton River Stewardship Program

The Taunton River Stewardship Program's 'landscape' is the Taunton River Watershed in Southeastern Massachusetts, though they focus on the Upper Taunton River Corridor. The Taunton River Watershed is the second largest basin in Massachusetts, at over 530 square miles (Napolitano 1989; TRSP .n.d.). The Upper Taunton River Corridor begins at the confluence of the Town River and the Winnetuxet River in Halifax, Massachusetts. The Upper Taunton River represents the shared town boundaries for Bridgewater, Middleborough, Lakeville, Raynham, and Taunton as the river slowly flows southwest. Over its entire length of forty-four miles, it has no dams (Reid, Anderson-Hall, and Shultz 1998) and only drops twenty feet in elevation (TRSP n.d.). One of the members explained the ecological differences between the upper and lower sections of the Taunton River:

The Taunton River main stem is forty-four miles long and it runs through eleven communities and it sort of is broken into two different sections ecologically with the Upper Taunton and the Lower Taunton with the City of Taunton more or less being the divide. The Lower Taunton is wider with more of a current and they have a tidal influence and some of it has a brackish salinity and all, and the Upper Taunton is shallower with more rocks in it and it has a different recreational value in that the fisheries are different and probably the water chemistry is different. Plus it has also more of a change in water chemistry because of the tributaries that dump into it... (Sue 1999).

It is important to note that TRSP's concentration is on the Upper Taunton River Corridor. This appears to be due in part to the existence of the 1998 Taunton River Corridor Natural Resource Inventory and Conservation Plan, which focused on that part of the watershed. The study and its associated maps depict a corridor roughly two thousand (2,000) to six thousand (6,000) feet wide, along its entire length (Reid, Anderson-Hall, and Shultz 1998). The corridor is mostly forested, with twenty-five percent (25%) of the land in agricultural use. Sparse residential development is found mostly as frontage lots on both sides of the roads, which act as the perimeters of the

corridor. Within the corridor there is very little land protected, yet a variety of rare and endangered species and their habitats were identified in the conservation plan.

Like the NQRLP, the TRSP partnership focuses on land protection. In TRSP's pamphlet, "Rivers... worth protecting...", the first two panels inside contain three main sections. The first contains information on the river's native fish and wildlife populations. The second contains three messages describing the Taunton River's beauty, the fact that it is threatened, and the purpose of the *TRSP*. The third section describes the mission statement of TRSP:

The Taunton River Stewardship Program (TRSP) was formed in 1996 to promote the preservation of riverfront land along the Taunton River and its tributaries. The Stewardship Program is a collaborative effort of involved riverfront landowners; local citizens; business people; community planners; elected representatives; conservation agents and land trust professionals. As development pressures increase in river communities, riverfront landowners may feel the only long-term choice for their property is to sell their land for development. TRSP representatives can provide individual landowners with information on the conservation and financial benefits of various land protection methods (at no charge) (TRSP n.d.).

Ten members of TRSP were interviewed: a regional planning agency, a state agency, a conservation commission, a planning department (2), a watershed group, a town, and land trusts (3).

Methods

The qualitative research design for this study used the constant comparative analysis technique to convert transcribed interviews of twenty partnership members to discover grounded theory about the historical and theoretical foundations behind the partnerships' formation. In this case, I used grounded theory .research to understand the participant's own perspectives through careful analysis of the meanings that emerged from their answers to interview questions. This research method is therefore designed to generate theory rather than test it.

I chose the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership (NQRLP) and the Taunton River Stewardship Program (TRSP) to be the case studies because I knew enough about them to be somewhat sure that both were public/private landscape planning partnerships. Finally, selecting two partnerships in Massachusetts provided me with an opportunity to apply my past research on, and personal experience with, land conservation issues and activities in this state.

The interviewing style was developed through two means: through research on

interviewing and through a short pilot session with two people. The questions themselves were developed based on these methods as well as the literature review. I chose questions that would uncover the foundations of the partnerships' formation and clarify certain organizational parameters of the partnerships.

The interviewees were chosen through a snowball sampling technique. A member of the Taunton River Stewardship Program sent me a complete list of all the working members of TRSP. Likewise, a member of the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership (NQRLP) identified fifteen key members from a list of about forty. I wrote each a letter, identifying myself and the reason for my interest in interviewing them. Out of all the people I wrote, the final choices for interviewees were the people I could reasonably reach by phone, a total of twenty people with ten from each partnership.

Researching different qualitative study designs in Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches by Creswell (1994), I discovered that grounded theory could be used in conjunction with the constant comparative method to generate findings from the transcribed interviews. The raw data for the analysis were the transcribed answers to the nine interview questions, totaling ninety-six pages of single-spaced text. There are four steps to the constant comparative method: comparing comments appropriate to each factor, integrating factors that have like properties, creating and at the same time limiting the theory, and writing the theory (Glasser and Strauss 1967).

After reviewing the transcribed interviews, I used a spreadsheet to create a matrix that included eleven different categories. In my research, I considered a category to be a body of factors or concepts that usually pertained to a question in the interview. The categories included personal and organizational motivation, the partner's perceptions of important accomplishments, key factors that led to success, and challenges to success. There were categories that dealt with the applicability of the partnership as a model of landscape planning, collaboration, and citizen participation in planning. Other categories focused on the historical and theoretical foundations that led to the formation of the partnerships and the practice of landscape level planning in the 1990s.

Generated Findings and Theory

The findings generated from the case studies dealt with two main areas: the partnerships themselves, and the historical and theoretical foundations of their formation. The first part of the analysis explored organizational parameters, which described the partners' perceptions of their own partnership's origins. For example, according to the partners, these public/private landscape planning partnerships need certain conditions to form. First, there must be people who are working for local, state, and federal agencies and natural resource related commissions, watershed associations, land trusts, and

regional planning agencies that have the need to collaborate within their job descriptions. Some of the partners must have knowledge of landscape ecology and planning and some of them must have a personal connection to the landscape. Finally, the people who are part of the partnership have employers or organizations that support their participation because of the benefits that they (their organizations) gain from collaboration and from effectively using limited funding and staff time.

How partners perceive success may be important for both current and future partnerships. My research indicates that public/private landscape planning partnerships are considered to be successful when they are led by several strong partners and the partners are willing to work together effectively in a collaborative manner. It is also important that they involve federal and state agencies, which have access to funding. Partners feel successful as soon as the partnership forms because they perceive the partnership itself as a significant accomplishment.

Based on the partners' perceptions, the public/private landscape planning partnership is a model of collaborative landscape planning, a partnership of conservation organizations, local, state and federal agencies and citizens, but without the intentional inclusion of more landowners and private citizens, it should not be considered a model of citizen participation at this time

Not surprisingly, the partners believe they can plan land uses at a landscape scale. Their belief is based on the knowledge that the partners contribute their own expertise and familiarity with a portion of the landscape. In addition, the partners understand, and have experience with, the application of landscape ecology. Their confidence also comes from the knowledge that state and private funders support planning at a landscape scale and that natural resource issues often require it. Finally, landscape planning is seen as a viable method because it is already being practiced by state agencies and included in research papers, plans, and geographic information systems (GIS) maps and data.

The second part of the findings dealt with the historic and theoretical foundations for the partnerships' formation. My thesis proposes that the strongest partners are individuals that have a history of initiating research and experiences which have resulted in collaboration. The state agencies and organizations that have supported past research and collaborative efforts have also become strong partners.

The main theory generated from this research addresses the question of my thesis, "What are the historical and theoretical foundations that led to the formation of public/private landscape planning partnerships in Massachusetts?" The theory suggests that public/private partnerships in Massachusetts began to form because certain conditions occurred in succession. First there had been a local history of people working together in coalitions since the 1950s and 1960s. Then land protection funding shifted from public to private sources in the 1970s and 1980s: the shift was characterized by reductions in government spending followed by increases in private foundation giving.

This was followed by planning processes that involved coalitions of people, agencies, and organizations, some of whom would later become strong partners. The recent accessibility of landscape ecology theory and the threat of sprawl development also led to the partnerships' formation.

Conclusion

To accomplish the degree of natural resource conservation required to support the human communities in New England, concerned individuals will continue to collaborate and, by doing so, dissolve the power barriers between government and non-profits and private citizens. In addition, the understanding and management of ecosystem services will become paramount in acquiring a desired level of sustainability. The public/private landscape planning partnership is a model that may be capable of carrying out the degree of consensus-based decision making required in the practice of ecosystem-based management of regional landscapes.

The North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership and the Taunton River Stewardship Program have already created decision-making bodies that provide a degree of equity between government agencies, private organizations, and individuals. However, the partnerships may need to gain the collaboration of town officials, volunteer boards, and citizens of the communities within their regional landscape to most effectively accomplish their missions.

In addition, the partnerships may need to widen their view of land use values and consider the long-term ramifications of their land protection strategies. In the future, the partnerships may need to incorporate community development planning to be most effective in conserving a landscape's ecological characteristics.

The grounded theory generated from my research suggests that the conditions required for a partnership's formation are common to many areas in Massachusetts. Perhaps the most important requirement for a partnership's formation is a long history of collaboration by strong partners. The strong partners of future public/private landscape planning partnerships are most likely already collaborating on watershed basin teams and in regional land protection focus groups. I challenge these individuals, non-profit organizations, and town, state, and federal agencies to explore the benefits that they would enjoy by building their own public/private landscape planning partnership. I also challenge current and future partners to discover ways of involving all concerned citizens in the pursuit of their goals. Creating sustainable human communities will take all of us.

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