
Cognitive Barriers in the Land Use Planning Process

This paper considers psychological barriers—a term that we use to encompass both cognitive barriers and construal biases—in participatory land-use planning processes. We define cognitive barriers generally as psychological structures, attributes, processes, and predispositions that inhibit the full, rational, creative consideration of information. Construal biases involve the undue or excessive personalization of issues or situations, the failure to properly consider the alternative perceptions or cognitions of others, or the inability to disassociate other parties’ personal views from situational positions or professional roles (if you are a planner or other public servant, you may recognize yourself as a frequent victim of this bias). Both phenomena affect the productive, “rational” consideration of plans and proposals in land use decision-making.

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