

Land Policy Of The United States And Land Use Changes

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Economic, Social, and Environmental Impacts

Land is considered a source of wealth and is linked with the social status of human beings. But in simple words, it is the solid surface of planet Earth that is not covered with water. According to Rutherford Platt (2004), it is an important element of life, similar to water, oxygen, and sunlight. Without these elements, life would not be possible on earth. Almost three-quarters of the world's land is covered with water, and the rest is the living place of human beings (Platt, 2004, p. 3). The land of earth is divided into different countries, and all countries have some rules and regulations regarding their acquired land. Land policies are created and implemented in the countries for tenure, management, land use, and property rights. In the United States of America, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 is implemented across the nation as their land policy. It is the federal law of the country that administers the public lands through the Bureau of Land Management. According to FLPMA, the three national systems, including the National Park Service, National Forest Service, and the Bureau of Land Management, are responsible for maintaining and managing the land, and their purpose is to preserve the natural resources of the country. Land allows human beings to have several uses, and it allows them to fulfill their different objectives. Land use is considered a basic activity of human beings, and it is a combination of different human activities in which humans create one or more services (Land Use and Land Management Practices in Environmental Perspective, 2013).

In the 21st century, the US Supreme Court decided about the case of *Kelo v. the City of New London*. The result of the case declared that all US states have the right to seize the land from the private owners. It is due to the public of the country as they have the right to use the land. This decision is applied to the fair use of land in the country. The land policies not only provide assistance to the public but also aim to preserve natural resources (Grossman & C. Bryner, 2012).

Benefits and Advantages

Changes in the land use impacts on several important elements. In the last 25 years, major land use changes occurred in the United States that not only impacted its economy but also impacted on the social and environmental factors. Land use changes affect the agricultural system of the economy, as well as urban and rural communities. The socio-economic impacts and the environmental impacts of land use and their policy implications are addressed below.

Production of an economy has three major types, including its land. The other two factors are labor and capital of the economy. All these factors contribute to the production system. The land is used for housing and food production. The agricultural aspects of the economy are based on the land and provide several social and economic benefits to the country's economic system. The agriculture is a way in which humans grow and cultivate their food (Nash & Miller, 2014). Land use and its changing process are significant and essential for the economic growth and development of the country. It also includes the social benefits and welfare of the society. Land use change is simply the conversion of land into something that is useful for the country or society, such as housing or agricultural purposes. Land use change needs cost, and without the cost and labor force, it is not possible. Due to the increased rate of the human population, land use changes occur to convert the farms and forests into housing and urban societies. Due to the land use change, soil erosion, desertification, and many other degradations occur, and it reduces the land quality, which is not effective for agricultural productivity (Lubowski et al. 2006).

Urbanization is a phenomenon in which land use occurs for housing purposes and to accommodate the human population. It offers many challenges to the farmers who are present near the territories of urban areas. It is due to the destruction or damages, such as the destruction of crops and its impacts on the farmer's farms (Lisansky, 1986). In these situations, farmers need the assistance of nearby farmers. The neighboring farmers help them develop their farms, and they also share their farm equipment with the farmers, helping them improve the irrigation system of the farms. All these advantages ended when the nearby farms were converted into urban settings. This leads to the "impermanence syndrome," which refers to the decrease in confidence level and stability in the farming process. It also leads to the reduction of the interest in the farming process by the farmers (Lopez, Adelaja, and Andrews, 1988). When the urban system spreads into societies due to massive changes in the population, agricultural land conflicts arise and become problems.

Land use changes in the process of urbanization also create many profits and give advantages to the farmers. The demands and arrival of new customers occurred and provided opportunities to sell the crops at higher prices. A study analyzed that the farmers who sell vegetables are the ones who are able to receive higher prices in urban areas (Lopez, Adelaja, and Andrews, 1988). Moreover, due to the change in land use, nurseries were created, and vegetable and high-value crop industries were created, increasing the value of agricultural economies. Many farmers adapt to the changes due to urbanization and make their enterprises gain benefits from the new economic opportunities. The area of US farm production has increased due to the pressure of farmers facing urbanization (Larson, Findeis, and Smith 2001).

Conceptual Framework

Due to the increasing rate of urbanization, many government systems have changed land use laws and restricted land use control. These restrictions helped the governments to decrease the level of urban development. The land use regulations and restrictions applied by the authorities decreased

land development between 1982 and 1997 in the United States. The major reduction occurred in Washington State, estimated at more than 12 percent. In Oregon, the reduction was more than 11 percent, California, it was more than 9 percent, in Nevada, and it was more than 2 percent (Wu & Cho, 2007). But it has some potential risks and impacts as well, including the higher prices of houses, and it leads to the fact that houses are not affordable for middle-class people. Land use regulations negatively impact the economy as well, and they reduce housing affordability for the people (Glaeser and Ward 2006; Glaeser and Gyourko 2002).

The land use regulations and laws must be able to balance between the private properties, rights, and the interests of the general public. In the Oregon States, the ballot estimated that there is a difficulty in the balance of the act. Measure 37 was voted by the voters of Oregon State in 2004. It refers to the concept that government authorities should provide assistance to private property owners only when the land use laws decrease the “fair market values.” In the assistance, the government should select the three approaches, including remove, modify, or not to apply. Measure 37 was not implemented but remains unconstitutional by the lower courts. Due to this measure, more than 6000 cases were filed in the Supreme Court by October 2007. Their request was to compensate them; the prices were more than \$19 billion (Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development 2007). However, the modification of Measure 37 was crucial, and the voters approved Measure 49 in November 2007, “ensure that Oregon law provides just compensation for unfair burdens while retaining Oregon’s protection for farm and forest land uses and the state’s water resources” (ODLCD, 2008).

Land use changes provide several economic and societal advantages, but they only occur when an economic cost is ready for it. Land use and land conservation are important elements, especially in the long-term processes. It includes economic growth and sustainable development. Land use policies should also be balanced so that private property rights and public interest can be balanced appropriately.

References

Lubowski, R.N., Vesterby, M., Bucholtz, S., Baez, A., and Roberts, M.J. (2006). Major uses of land in the United States, 2002. Economic Information Bulletin No. (EIB-14)