The Logic of Planning Practice: A New Focus for The Teaching of Planning Theory

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Planning theory as it is currently taught in the United States is rarely keyed to the problem of how to be effective in practice. The material traditionally covered in planning theory courses (i.e. the history of the planning profession, goal-setting and decision-making, the structure and function of urban areas, master planning vs. contingency planning, and alternative notions of the public interest and advocacy planning) offers little in the way of prescription for everyday action. Even recent additions to the body of planning theory dealing with optimization, political economy, client analysis, and the nature of the good society do little more than broaden a student's perspective.

At best, planning theory courses force a questioning of value premises and raise serious doubts about the efficacy of planned intervention. But these preoccupations in no way provide a means of achieving professional competence. What is the nature of our professionalism? Certainly the prescriptions, guidelines, and models that comprise the body
of planning theory ought to provide some clue as to how to be effective in practice.

We are training practitioners; at least that is our espoused objective. Somehow we must enable our students to make connections between theory and practice. To this end, I think there ought to be three parts to any planning curriculum: (1) an array of courses (which borrow heavily from other disciplines and fields) aimed at summarizing "what we know" about institutional change, the sociology of community life, political economy methods for policy analysis and legal aspects of public sector management; (2) a set of synthetic activities (e.g. field work assignments, studios, tutorials, internships) that helps students formulate and test personal theories of action (e.g. Understand how different personal values suggest different modes of action.); and (3) a set of simulated problem-solving activities that focus on the strategies for policy, program, and plan implementation unique to particular planning roles and situations. The first component -- Analytic Techniques and Useful Knowledge -- is the least developed.* Although we have long since realized that to be useful, sociology,

* This is not to say that many planning departments do not offer courses with these titles. Most, if not all of them do. But the teaching is often in the hands of scholars who have neither practiced nor concerned themselves with the dilemmas of practice. The courses rarely focus on the application of
economics, political science, history, law, and the techniques of the systems engineer, operations researcher, statistician, and architect need to be adapted to the practice of planning, we have not, in the past been successful in packaging this material. The second component -- Synthesizing Personal Theories of Action -- has been described by Chris Argyris and Donald Schon in their new book *Theory in Practice: Increasing Professional Effectiveness* (Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 1974) and by Donald Schon and Tom Nutt in their recent paper, "Endemic Turbulence: The future for Planning Education" in *Planning in America: Learning from Turbulence* (edited by David Godschalk, American Institute of Planners, 1974). They argue that practitioners must learn how to learn from their experience and to confront the value dilemmas involved in formulating ad hoc theories of action.

My focus is on the third curriculum component -- Implementation and the Logic of Practice. While Schon and Argyris talk about "generic skills" -- those common to effective practice in all planning situations -- I am interested particular techniques or knowledge. Instead they are concerned with the method itself or with the emergence of a particular strand of theory. Students are rarely shown exactly how and why this knowledge or these techniques relate to the peculiar nature of planning practice.
in that set of learned responses unique to specific planning roles. These, I think, account for the ability that some professionals have to "get things done" or "to influence decisions" even when they do not have formal authority. While there may well be generic skills that have to do with our ability to learn from personal experience, to confront our own values in formulating a problem or designing a solution, it also seems to me that there are role-specific insights that planning students must have in order to implement policies, programs, or plans. These revolve around what I call "the logic of planning practice."

Roles

Planners perform a variety of roles. Some practitioners find themselves in the same role all the time, others are constantly shifting roles. A survey of recent alumni of the M.I.T. Department of Urban Studies and Planning indicated that, on the average, graduates tend to shift jobs every three years. In many instances these shifts involve a move to very different kinds of job responsibilities. Roles tend to shift whether or not an individual changes the setting(s) within which he or she works. The roles that planners play can be classified in various ways, but not all classification systems have consequences for the way in which we think about the nature of
practice. One of the most common typologies differentiates among various functional areas of specialization. Some planners view themselves as specialists in housing, health care, transportation, criminal justice, education, redevelopment, or social services. I would argue that such problem-focused distinctions fail to capture the most important differences in the nature of planning as practiced by various professionals. That is, among criminal justice specialists, clearly some are better at some roles, others are better at others. How much one knows about criminal justice planning per se is generally not a good prediction of effectiveness. Although housing specialists and criminal justice planners need to be familiar with different subject matters, the style of their planning activity often seems to be the same.

Another approach to classifying planning roles, and one that has served as an organizing device for certain academic planning departments, distinguishes among the various levels at which planning occurs: neighborhood, city, sub-state region, state, multi-state region, national, international. The differences, however, in the nature of practice in each of these settings turn out not to have very important consequences for the set of skills or the kinds of understanding that it takes to be effective in practice. There are variations in the responsibilities and assignments that planners working
at the neighborhood level and planners working at the state level must deal with, but these tend mostly to revolve around different subject matters and not fundamentally different styles of practice or approaches to implementation.

I have opted for a third system of role classification, one that appears to have more important implications for what it takes to be effective in practice. I have identified five very different types of activities that can be used to characterize various planning roles: managing, designing, advocating, evaluating, and regulating. These cross-cut the functional areas of specialization and the array of levels or settings mentioned above. And they seem to encompass most of the activities in which planners typically engage.

It might be helpful to talk briefly about each of these five roles. The planner as manager usually works in a governmental setting, but he or she might also work for a non-profit corporation or a private development outfit. The manager manipulates the flow and timing of certain resource allocation decisions, usually at the behest of some higher board or elected official. He or she must strive to maintain equilibirum or growth in the organization. Thus, the manager's response to proposed changes or innovations is one of balancing future opportunities with caution and skepticism. Managerial decisions are most often short-range in character. The output
of the planning processes in which managers engage is usually a decision (as opposed to a plan or a design). The manager's job is to see to it that decisions have sufficient leverage or support behind them so that the actions desired will indeed take place. Planners who work for city, state, regional, or federal agencies most often perform managerial roles. Grantsmen, redevelopment officials, and project coordinators usually fall into this category.

The designer manipulates concepts and relationships. In most design roles the client is clear -- the user or group of users who will benefit from the design. The designer's role is an inventive one involving a synthesis of statements of need and the creation of a blueprint specifying various relationships. The designer may deal with the spatial environment or with the formulation of social programs. The designer's job is to help his or her client translate felt needs into simplified models of reality. Design decisions often have long-range consequences since they typically involve long-term investments that are expensive to reverse. The output of the planning processes in which designers engage is usually a design, a plan, or an overall image of either. Planners who work for city, state, regional or federal agencies often perform design roles, but most designers tend to operate as consultants since long-term institutional
affiliations are not necessary and in fact may be incapacitating. Their intervention is strategic at points when there is a need for adjustments in ways of doing things.

The advocate manipulates group processes. In most advocacy roles the planner engages in organizational development and image manipulation. The planner operating as an advocate is usually sure of his or her client's needs and interests since these are invariably at odds with the interests of those in power. Advocacy roles often involve short-term, highly intensive organizational efforts (usually aimed at blocking some decision made or about to be made by those in power). The advocate may also be involved in long-term educational efforts designed to enable groups out of power to create effective and sustained demands for certain services or considerations or an effective format for voicing these demands. The output of the planning processes in which advocates engage usually takes the form of some action stopped or rerouted, or a shift in the ground rules for making decisions. Planners who work for non-profit organizations, low-income groups, para-governmental bodies (such as model cities agencies, community action programs, etc.) most often operate as advocates.

The policy or program evaluator acquires and manipulates information. His or her role is curiously independent of any given client. The evaluator rarely has long-term institutional
ties to the client. The evaluator is change-oriented — that is, the policy or program evaluator assumes that the underlying premise of his or her role is to propose changes of one sort or another. Policy and program evaluation is most often a short-range planning activity. The outputs of the planning processes in which evaluators engage are research findings derived from an accepted set of techniques. Planners who work for consulting firms are most often the ones who play these roles, but individuals in one agency or level of government are often-times called upon to evaluate programs or policies in another unit at the same level of government or even at another level of government.

The regulator serves as a general interest advocate, monitoring or shaping public goals or private decisions. The land use controller, for example, is often responsible for making decisions that affect the organization of land uses in a city, town, region, or state. The land use controller as well as planners in other regulatory roles makes decisions that often have very long-term consequences and that are at times irreversible. This role typically generates great confusion about the definition of the planner's client (those paying the bills now? "generations yet unborn"? those whose needs are least articulated?). The outputs of the regulatory process include the choice of standards to be enforced and the relative "quality of life" that various groups
are "assigned." Planners who work for local, regional and state agencies as well as private interests often perform as regulators.

There may be other roles that imply substantial differences in the nature of practice. These five will at least help to illustrate significant variations in the practitioners' response to planning situations. Each role tends to have a characteristic bundle of technical skills associated with it. For example, the manager needs to know about cost-benefit analysis and program budgeting. The designer ought to be familiar with the techniques of defining client needs, testing solutions, communicating proposals, and hard and soft techniques for stimulating the creative processes (i.e. brain-storming, synectics, etc.). If the designer works in particular substantive areas for extensive periods, more precise skills such as site planning, drawing, modelling, and the like are often necessary. The advocate needs to be skilled at community organizing, small group interaction, and the drama of confrontation. The policy or program evaluator is expected to be well-versed in research design, statistical manipulation, and the case study method. Finally, the regulator ought to be especially qualified in predicting the consequences of particular rule making strategies and knowledgeable about techniques of administration and legal research. Many of these skills
spill over from one role to another and there may well be "generic" skills common to all. But many of the skills that lead to effectiveness in each role appear to be unique, as are the temperament, disposition, and value sets of those who tend to be effective in each role.

Implementation

It has been suggested that our profession falls into the category of what Nathan Glazer describes as the minor professions.* Glazer identifies four characteristic conflicts that arise again and again in schools that prepare practitioners in the minor professions (a category that includes social work, education, divinity, architecture, planning and some others.) We characteristically find ourselves in a situation in which a faculty drawn from scholars and researchers, with a base in the academic disciplines, teaches students who will become practitioners. Second, the major role for which students are being taught and trained is itself of inferior status to some ancillary professional roles that are also part of the curriculum. Third, the status of the academic disciplines which provide

the material for much of the curriculum and the training of much of the faculty outranks that of the profession for which students are being taught. Finally, the content of accepted professional knowledge and training is continually undergoing rapid and upsetting change. Glazer suggests that all these sources of conflict may be reduced to one: namely, that the minor professions are not in some sense "true professions", that they presume more than they should, and that the base of knowledge and competence with which students enter practice does not really qualify as professional knowledge.

How can we cope with these allegations? Aaron Fleisher has described planners as those individuals without specialized competence who are prepared to take on any problem while a cadre of skilled professionals with specialized competence in the particular problem area is trained. When this new group, armed with more explicit theories and more powerful methods reaches the battlefront, the planners move on to other skirmishes. I think this somewhat facetious description is very much at the heart of our inability to come to grips with the nature of our professionalism. We are charged with not possessing any specialized competence. But I think that we do -- or at least we ought to. The specialized competence that planners (ought to) bring to a situation is their familiarity with the dilemmas of linking theory and practice,
that is, their skill at implementation.

Planning is a synthetic skill and as such it requires a synthetic theory of action. At the present time, the planning world is dominated by problem-oriented types, those who define their roles in terms of functional areas of specialization. Much as they like to think of themselves as action-oriented, most of these practitioners have had very little success in bringing about badly needed improvements in the communities in which they have worked. They attribute their lack of success largely to the inadequacies of existing models, the complexity of the problem networks involved, and the fundamental difficulty of identifying the "root problems." Eventually they may come to realize that our fundamental inadequacy as a profession stems not from our inability to comprehend the problems that we face but from the lack of a sophisticated approach to implementation that takes account of the fact that we work in complex and fragmented settings that require us to shift roles constantly. To improve in this regard it will be necessary to understand more about the logic of practice in various planning roles and the importance of knowing how to match various professional protocols with certain situational requirements.
The Logic of Practice

My argument is that effectiveness in practice depends on the formulation of implementation strategies appropriate to specific roles. There seem to me to be at least five important considerations that must go into the formulation of an appropriate implementation strategy.* The planner must take account of the following issues:

1. The underlying definition of the client-professional relationships:
   To whom do I owe my loyalties? What responsibilities do I have to my clients? How long do I have to clarify these relationships?

2. Time horizon
   What are my short-term and long-term objectives? How do these mesh or conflict? What range of predicted futures will I be held accountable for?

3. Institutional Constraints
   What variables can I manipulate or cause to be manipulated in the way I want?

* I am grateful to the students in my seminar on the Planning Process for helping me to clarify these considerations. Each planner's answers to these questions reflect personal values and moral judgements. What I am suggesting, however, is that only a certain range of responses will lead to effective action (implementation) in any given planning role.
(4) **Output**

What product(s) must my actions yield in order for me to maintain my credibility? What do I want out of the situation?

(5) **Measures of Success**

Who will judge my performance, what standards will they use, and what risks am I prepared to take in regard to their evaluation of my effectiveness? What do I value?

The answers to these questions depend in part on the values of the individual planner, but they also seem to depend on the role that the planner is playing. For example, a planner charged with the task of implementing a three-year community development revenue sharing plan (the planner as manager) would answer these questions very differently from a planner operating as a consultant (advocate) for a tenants' association trying to mobilize support for a rent control ordinance.

The manager's loyalties are primarily to the city council or the mayor. Although the manager might like to think of the residents of the city as his clients, he owes his job to the elected officials at the top of city government. The advocate's loyalties are to the tenant's association which pays his salary. The manager has a responsibility to protect his "clients" from the pressures that might be created by a totally open-ended citizen participation process in which all contending groups were led to believe that they
could participate equally in the formulation of the three-year community development plan. The advocate knows that he or she needs to open up the process as much as possible — looking to build coalitions, seeking publicity, challenging, and threatening those in power (assuming that they have reservations about rent control) with confrontation.

The manager has a variety of variables with which to work. He or she ought to know the whole city budget and thus have a feeling for the bookkeeping maneuvers that are possible. The relationship between the mayor and the city council can be used as the basis for defining an implementation strategy likely to produce certain results.* The advocate on the other hand has very few chips to play. Perhaps it might be possible to attract media coverage or to trade support with other community organizations in an effort to build a larger coalition. The manager has one overriding short-term objective: to produce a plan within the time constraints imposed by the federal government so that the city is eligible for its money. The fewer the complications

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* This is a very Machiavellian notion (i.e. that the planner can ply one powerful force in a city or organization off against another to achieve a certain end). I think there is something to be said for the "creative use of inter-organization, inter-departmental, or inter-governmental tension", but there are obviously moral and ethical considerations involved. Since my underlying model of the planning process is basically one of powerful and relatively powerless groups and interests contending for control over scarce resources and allocation decisions, I tend to view such means to desired ends (i.e. a more equal distribution of income, power and wealth) as legitimate.
the better; the more controlled the process the better. The manager's long-term objectives -- accomplishing particular components of the overall city development plan -- are much less important in thinking about the design of a process by which the plan can be produced on time. The advocate has a short-term objective -- to attract attention to his/her client's point of view and to help mobilize enough support to influence or bludgeon those in power into supporting rent control. The advocate's long-term objective may be to enable the tenant's group to develop sufficient skill and organization to take on subsequent issues on its own -- without technical support. The manager's short-term and long-term objectives may well be in conflict while this is less likely to be the case for the advocate.

The manager will be held accountable for a very short-term prediction -- "if the plan is done in the manner I describe, the city will receive its share of the money." The manager is rarely held accountable for the actual goals spelled out in the plan. The advocate is responsible for both a long-term and short-range set of predictions: "if rent control is passed, the tenants' association will be better off", and "if we take the following actions the city council will pass the rent control ordinance." Credibility for the manager depends on the ultimate flow of funds into the city.
The output of the advocate's efforts needs to include the passage of the rent control law.

The measures of success that each planner takes into account are also different. The manager's measure of success will be the level of funding guaranteed to the city but also the overall support the mayor and city council win because of the uses of the money proposed. It might be better to say that the manager will measure success by the degree to which political equilibrium is maintained. The advocate will measure success in terms of the passage of the rent control bill and only partially by the degree to which the tenants' association can transform itself into a viable organization.

It is important to note that alternative planning roles are not value neutral. Some people are drawn to a managerial role because of a desire to maintain a stable world. The advocate may be drawn to that role for the opposite reason. Each planning role tends to imply a particular belief and value structure.

The designer, the policy or program evaluator, and the regulator go through a similar process of analyzing the appropriateness of specific implementation strategies. My argument is that the answers associated with each role tend to be different. Regardless of the particulars of any case,
answers for all managers or all advocates tend to be
lar; that is, the manager's loyalties tend to be to the
status quo and maintaining the balance of power. The advo-
is aiming to alter the balance of power. The manager
directly manipulate the order in which allocation de-
sions are made as well as the actual content of such de-
sions indirectly. The manager is often likely to find
short-term and long-term objectives in conflict while this
ness likely to be true for the advocate.

The outputs needed to maintain credibility also vary
bording to role: The manager must produce an original
posal with a good chance of succeeding, while the advo-
pe hopes to alter the plans proposed by those in power.
advocate can afford to take greater risks since the odds
ailing are already overwhelming.

The designer owes his or her loyalty not to the person
missions the design, but to the eventual user. This
generate serious personal conflicts for the planner
rating as a designer. The designer manipulates a much
er range of variables than planners in other roles while
her time horizons are usually longer-range. The designer
't produce a design, a blueprint, or a plan -- a simplified
el of reality. The standards for success in the case of
designer are often externally derived; that is, they flow
m the judgment of peers and not from the evaluation of the
client or the user. This imposes very different constraints on the formulation of an implementation strategy for the planner serving as a designer.

The policy or program evaluator is often quite confused about the nature of his/her client-professional relationship. It is rarely clear who the client is for a policy or program evaluation. The agency or person who commissions it often has no idea of what to expect. This creates an ambiguous and open-ended situation. Yet, the institutional constraints on the evaluator are often quite severe. Programs need to be evaluated in terms of their espoused objectives while proposed modifications need to be construed in light of institutional potentialities and capacities. There is also confusion about the appropriate time horizon for such evaluations. For what range of predicted futures will the evaluator be held accountable? The products of the evaluation must include a presentation of premises and findings leading to proposed modifications. The measures of success in such situations are often derived from peer review rather than user or client reactions.

The regulator has other special problems. Federal, state and regional rules and regulations play havoc with the regulator's intuitive judgments about appropriate action. The time horizon for most regulatory decisions is middle range -- that is, five to ten years (these are usually spelled
out in terms of financial costs and benefits to a community) but in actuality many regulatory decisions have irreversible consequences for individuals or environments. Measures of success are typically client-oriented. The community decides (not any one individual or group of professionals) whether a regulatory decision is well-founded or not, although sometimes the courts provide an independent check on regulatory decisions.

Perhaps I have pressed my point too far. There are undoubtedly planning situations that do not fit my generalizations. These may be exceptions and therefore interesting to explore or they may suggest that my argument is shallow. I have too little empirical data at present. For now my classifications of roles and implementation strategies should be viewed merely as a heuristic. I think that further documentation will indicate that planning theory courses focusing on the relationship between planning roles and the formulation of appropriate implementation strategies would serve our students well. There are several things that can be said about the design of such courses or learning experiences.

Approaches to Teaching

Planning theory courses aimed at exploring the relationship between roles and implementation strategies should
probably be built around simulated problem-solving activities. Such simulations should provide detailed information about particular planning situations and focus especially on the five considerations mentioned above. Each case could stress the decisions that the planners have to make about the formulation of appropriate implementation strategies. At the end of each exercise, students could be asked to prepare brief memoranda to "the client" involved, describing the approach they would have taken. They might also be asked to submit commentaries on the notions of effectiveness that could be drawn from each case.

A semester-long course could involve as many as ten or twelve simulations. I think it is important for students to go through a number of iterations in order to internalize the considerations involved in selecting means and ends appropriate to various planning roles. It might also be desirable to ask groups of students to act as "consulting teams." That is, to require a group of students to hash out their differences and come up with a memorandum or commentary representing a consensus. Since most, if not all planning activities involve group interaction, it is certainly appropriate to ask students to confront each other around differences in their values and approaches. Preparatory readings for the case studies might analyze the methods and techniques actually used in each case. Histories or biographies of
similar controversies or situations might be assigned along with selected readings aimed at forcing students to confront the fact that power in most planning situations has to be devised and created and not merely wielded.

There are obvious advantages to a team-teaching approach to such a course. Planners familiar with the actual cases portrayed or the roles involved would be best equipped to raise the hard questions and to respond to student requests for additional information. My own feeling is that every member of a planning faculty ought to be required to teach such a course once every few years in order to stay in touch with what his or her colleagues are thinking.

It is too soon to know whether or not this approach to planning theory will enable planning students to link theory and practice more effectively. However, three years of experience with the course indicates that many of the students involved have used the course as an organizing device for their other coursework. The focus on implementation seems to boost the students' confidence in their own potential as planners. This is not a cookbook approach and it is not designed to avoid the difficult philosophical, moral, and ethical issues embedded in any effort to train interventionists. The effort to concentrate on the logic of planning practice in various planning roles provides a solution-oriented rather than a problem-oriented foundation for
planning theory which when coupled with the necessary value considerations provides more than just a perspective broadening approach to the teaching of planning theory.