



Course Review

11.201 GATEWAY: Planning Action

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Today's learning objectives

1. Review *main ideas*: Planning's origins and dilemmas + what is “the field”?
2. Compare *contexts* for planning, using the cases.
3. Identify some *resources* for learning more—especially about *tactics* for creative work.



Main ideas: Fundamental questions

- ***Ends***: What defines the good society?
Economic gain, human “freedom” defined by capabilities (Sen), something else?
- What are the most effective *means* of intervention? Does “effective” include legitimate?
- ***Who*** decides and ***how***?



Key Dilemmas in “planning action”

- **Place and society: The power and limits of physical design**
- **Unleashing vs. taming the market (e.g. equitable development)**
- **Planning from “above” vs. “below” (democracy, advocacy, participation)**
- **Planning knowledge: Trained professional vs. “indigenous” experts.**
- **Comprehensiveness vs. incrementalism**
- **The role of identity (human diversity)**



Dilemmas are tricky things

- **Defined: “A situation in which somebody must choose one of two or more unsatisfactory alternatives”**
- **“Solutions” versus “resolutions.”**
- **Resolutions versus denial (even questions are guides to action).**
- **Need to identify some *approaches* to resolutions, even partial ones.**



Action requires *actors*: Who plans?

- **Trained professional planners with job titles that say “Planner”**
- **Professionals who plan but without the title**
- **Others who plan, especially civil society advocates (nongovernmental, private)**
 - **Grassroots vs. “grasstops”**
- **Others who shape what is planned (stop or change what professionals propose)**



The first “school” of modern planning

Saint-Simon/Comte, according to Friedmann:

- Rigid, functional division of labor: “Theoretician-planners” and administrators vs. everyone else.
- Politics as “inconsequential,” not a “guiding force”—trumped by immutable scientific laws, including “social physics.”
- Addressed to “the rulers of society.”
- This is the origin and orientation of *modernist* planning: technocratic, self-assured.



But in reality ...

- **Huge erosion of faith in government (in North and South).**
- **Fuzzy division of labor, overlapping expertise, uncertainty common, science an incomplete guide (values debates often unavoidable), communication failures, unrecognized problems appear.**
- **Planners must build support for their ideas, participate in the political process to identify target problems, generate options and criteria, implement.**
 - Many official planners merely “permit”
 - Many plans sit on shelves: Ideas without constituents.
- **Planning not always attached to the state, let alone the elite (“rulers”). Not always “guidance” from above.**



And ...

“Postmodern” planning is clear about what it seeks to replace (technocratic modernism), not always clear on *how*:

- **How to ensure accountability if traditional government recipes are inadequate?**
- **How to reconcile conflicting values?**
- **How to ‘manage co-existence’ in the context of social diversity?**



Two approaches

Resolve dilemmas in *context*: Boston public housing: Physical planning as cause and effect of community engagement, “community building” (new capacity to problem-solve), *not a grand political reform.*



Approaches continued

- **Resolve in context (second example): Narmada dam: New institutions and standards to guide many projects and enhance accountability, *not a project fix.***
- **Or: Partially resolve the dilemmas, as best you can, within particular planning *roles.***



Planning traditions: Point to roles

| KNOWLEDGE TO ACTION | Conservative | Radical |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| In SOCIETAL GUIDANCE | <i>Policy analysis</i> | <i>Social reform</i> |
| In SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION | <i>Social learning</i> | <i>Social mobilization</i> |



Some (sort of) specific roles

- **DESIGNER** (“form giver”)
- **ANALYST** (using data to judge ideas by standards)
- **ADVOCATE** (building support for ideas)
- **MEDIATOR** (helping stakeholders find agreement)
- **MANAGER** (creating and deploying capacity to produce)
- **FUTURIST** (visionary)



And more roles ...

In the context of recognizing diversity:

- **Cultural *historian*:** Relating group histories, journeys.
- **Informal *anthropologist*:** Understanding deeper values and meanings, based on what's on the surface.
- ***Communication specialist*:** Interpreting talk, negotiating norms of dialogue.



Role conflicts and confusion

- Defend technical standards vs. popular ones? *Not all popular ideas are wise, not all wise ones are popular or legitimate.*
- Educate but also advocate?
- Answer to the client or employer vs. constituents, the marginalized?
- Equipped to play multiple roles? (skills and personal resources)



Interpreting a job description

- What's the *unofficial* (de facto) role(s)?
- *Who* will I deal with over what issues?
- What *conflicts* define this role(s)?
- What are this *organization's strategic challenges*? What is hardest about advancing its mission?



Planners in the cases

- **Boston public housing redevelopment:**
 - Physical and social planners at Housing Authority
 - Physical planners at City planning agency
 - Planners working for private developers and nonprofit organizations
- **Narmada dam project:**
 - National and state agency planners, int'l agency planners
 - Planner-activists, advocate-planners
- **Anacostia Waterfront Initiative:**
 - Physical planners at the corporation
 - Physical planners at public agencies
 - Social planners at other agencies
 - Planners working for private and nonprofit organizations or informal civic groups.



Or: Resolve via a *particular* definition of success (partial definitions)

- The **outcome** is sustainable (growth, equity, environment, engagement) and enhances “freedoms” (Sen).
- The **process** was effective (produced the desired output or outcome)
- The **process** built trust and capacity for more collective action
- The **stakeholders**—All? Some? A majority? A targeted subgroup?—are satisfied



Resources for more learning

Some worthwhile reads ...

Forester, John. *Planning in the Face of Power*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989. ISBN: 0520064135.

Power, expertise, planners' interactions with bosses, constituents, values, puzzles.

Comparative Planning Cultures. Edited by Bishwapriya Sanyal. New York, NY: Routledge, 2005. ISBN: 0415951356.

Government, market, and civil society roles in different nations, historical moments, influences across borders.



Resources for more learning

Some worthwhile reads continued...

The Consensus Building Handbook. Edited by Lawrence Susskind, et. al. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1999. ISBN: 0761908447.

“Mapping” stakeholder interests, dealing with value conflicts, “deciding how to decide” (Consensus? Majority rule?” Super-majority?), case examples of negotiation and mediation at work, roles of facilitators.

Kaner, Sam, et. al. *Facilitator’s Guide to Participatory Decision-Making*. Philadelphia, PA: New Society Publishers, 1996. ISBN: 086571309X.

Tactics for small group process, divergent versus convergent thinking, rethinking barrier to participation.



Resources for more learning

Some worthwhile reads continued...

Adams, James L. *Conceptual Blockbusting: A Guide to Better Ideas*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1986. ISBN: 0201100894.

Having better ideas, having them in *groups* and *organizations*, identifying one's own mental blocks.

Senge, Peter M. *The Fifth Discipline*. New York, NY: Currency Doubleday, 1994. ISBN: 0385260954.

Tackling barriers to learning in organizations (“defensive routines”), promoting adaptive capacity, redesigning institutions and their routines.



Resources for more learning

Some worthwhile reads continued...

Heifetz, Ronald. *Leadership Without Easy Answers*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1994. ISBN: 0674518586.

How *leadership* differs from *authority*, why so many authority figures do *not* lead, how to exercise leadership, how to be more personally effective, how to mobilize groups.

Kotter, John P. *Leading Change*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1996. ISBN: 0875847471.

Building coalitions for change, creating room for risk taking, the perils of “under-selling” ideas, why so many change efforts *fail*.



Resources for more learning

Some worthwhile reads continued...

Schön, Donald A. *The Reflective Practitioner*. New York, NY: Basic Books, 1983. ISBN: 046506874X.

Learning from practice, how professions handle dilemmas, the nature of practitioner knowledge (experiential knowledge).



**“We make the road
by walking it.”**