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## Advocacy Planning

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Advocacy planning represents a departure from scientific, objective, or rational planning, which was the dominant paradigm of the post–World War II era. It is premised upon the inclusion of the different interests involved in the planning process itself.

Advocacy planning was defined and promoted by planner and lawyer Paul Davidoff. The concept was first widely disseminated to other professional planners in Davidoff's 1965 article in the *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, "Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning." Davidoff sought to provide an answer to a critical question that arose in urban planning in the late 1950s and early 1960s: "Who speaks for the poor, the disenfranchised, and the minorities?" He introduced the question "Who is the client?" into professional usage as well as "Who is the stakeholder or the constituent?" He was concerned that planning decisions significantly impacting urban neighborhoods were made with little or no representation from the residents. Because the residents of the target area of the planning process usually are neither skilled in nor knowledgeable about planning, they are unable to participate effectively in the planning decision process. They require professional representation equal to that of the official planners—those of the municipality or the land developer. Davidoff's view was that each of the interests in the planning process needed to be served and represented by a professional planner with equal knowledge and skill. The fundamental values of advocacy planning in the planning process are those of social justice and equity.

### **Advocacy Planning and its Paradigm**

The advocacy planning paradigm is predicated upon the concept of pluralism in planning. Davidoff argued that the goal of the planning process is to determine which of several alternative scenarios or vision-plans will be adopted and implemented. Each respective outcome has different benefits and costs to each of the groups involved in the planning decisions. Thus there would be no one single plan that would constitute the "right plan" for all.

The central aspect is the use of values as well as facts in making planning decisions. The process is explicitly not value neutral. The choices are driven by political and social issues rather than technical ones. Another significant point is the notion of pluralism in planning. For each planning situation a number of groups with different interests are involved. Given that situation, advocacy dictates that different planners represent competing visions of the future in the planning process. An advocate planner will represent one interest group, and other planners will represent different constituencies, including the municipal citywide perspective. This process, which joins together a geographic area, such as neighborhood, is the basis of understanding a pluralistic plan. The planner is, above all, an advocate planner serving the client groups who are unskilled and lack the appropriate knowledge for making planning decisions.

Davidoff answers his question in his article by designating as the client "the Negro and the impoverished individual." In this situation, one planner represents one special interest group. The advocacy paradigm asserts that a professional whose skills and political status are equal to those of the representatives of the municipality or the land developer will be present and identified as the planner for the neighborhood residents. Different planners, therefore, will represent different special interests in the planning process.

Davidoff led a small group of trained planners for whom advocacy planning was a normative commitment; these planners worked in a number of communities, preparing vision-plans.

Davidoff was the leading spokesperson for these neighborhood residents in both his writing and his practice. A revered and respected activist–academic in the field of modern city planning, he was an unyielding force for justice and equity in planning. Davidoff viewed the city through a pluralistic lens, while he addressed a wide range of societal problems. He challenged academics and professionals alike to find ways to promote participatory, pluralistic planning and positive social change; to overcome poverty and racism; and to reduce the many-faceted disparities in society. He implemented major contributions to the planning field as an educator, practitioner, and intellectual, and his influence on urban planning extends to this day. His work in advocacy planning constitutes a watershed in the theory and practice of American community planning.

### **Advocacy and Rational Comprehensive Planning**

Davidoff contrasted advocacy planning with the rational comprehensive planning process that was the dominant paradigm in the 1960s and the 1970s. A significant distinction between the two models lies in the role of values as a key element of the planning process. The critical questions are “Where do values enter the planning process?” and “Is this a valid use of values clarification?” Another critical question is “Who is the client?” The differences in the two planning models (see Table 1) are found in the definition of *client* and the role of values in decision making. The central issue is whether the planning process is an objective, scientific, and technical endeavor or a normative question.

### **Critique of Advocacy Planning**

Those critical of advocacy planning are traditional planners who are disturbed by the notion of pluralism and the consideration of multiple interests in the planning process. Some contend that many planning issues do not have an optimal solution; this is often reflected by the work of the municipal government, often resulting in inequitable solutions whereby clients are not equally served.

Pluralism and the identification of a client or special interest group are high on the advocate planner's list of important changes to be made rather than planning for the public as a whole. This approach is predicated on the notion of pluralism, whereby there is an acknowledgment of the number and kinds of social and political views available for inclusion into the neighborhood plan. More traditional planners find this a specious argument. Pluralism, they say, is a social myth created by those who would hide the growing economic concentration in cities and direct social and economic programs to the disadvantaged.

The advocate planner is one who is committed to the notion of pluralism in making planning decisions and does not represent central interests. He or she feels that there should be a plurality of plans than rather a single one in order to appropriately represent the neighborhood. The municipal government, when faced with a number of plans for one neighborhood, must select one of them. This kind of situation has led to issues of ethics and loyalty for the planners. When the municipal decision maker identifies with the one view representing the central public interest rather than select a plan from the several plans that have been developed specifically for the different groups in the neighborhood, this attitude can lead to inside-government divisions popularly known as “guerrillas” in the bureaucracy. Representing the public interest is the traditional view of the planner's role and has been the *modus operandi* of almost all planners in the United States. Some think that to change this approach by responding to the various interests rather than synthesizing them into one public

interest would not suit the U.S. urban planning field.

**Table 1** Comparison of the Rational Comprehensive Planning and the Advocacy Planning Models

<i>Processes</i>	<i>Rational Planning</i>	<i>Advocacy Planning</i>
Assumptions	Perfect information Rational outcomes One solution is best City is a system of interrelated functions	Imperfect information Non-value-neutral decisions Pluralistic society Normative planning is rational Each group is entitled to its own planner Different outcomes benefit different interests
Client	Community as a whole Property owners	“The Negro and the impoverished” or poor, powerless, minority persons One or more interest groups
Public interest	Unitary public interest	Plural special interests
Role of planner	Advisor to political decision maker Technician	Expert advice
Locality of planning process	Municipality bureaucracy	Community-wide
Goals of paradigm	Hierarchy of goals Physical land use goals	Access, skills used for pluralistic clients Represent minority interests Citizen participation
Resource allocation	Through planning process	Redistribution of wealth and public power increases the choices for poor
Public participation	Public hearings	Coalition building
Planning methods	Comprehensive rational process Value-neutral Physical land use based	Policy techniques Rational model
Definition	Value-neutral, factual Procedural process Begin with goals Rationality and choice Decision making	Facts and values as decisions Procedural process and pluralistic society Normative planning is rational Each group has its own advocate Client centered and future oriented

Source: Marcia Feld.

The second issue presented by traditional planners argues that decisions in which values are utilized jointly with factual matters are unable to be substantiated in a technical or scientific mode. This approach, rational comprehensive planning, presupposes a series of steps developed by logical sequential thinking not open to the values and loyalties of the political context by which planning decisions are actually made. Unlike the mainstream U.S. planner, the advocate planner denies that planning decisions can be value free. As Davidoff said in his article, “Solutions to questions about the share of wealth ... to go to different classes cannot be technically derived; they must arise from social attitudes.”

## Advocacy Planning in the United States

### Planners for Equal Opportunity

In 1964, just prior to the publication of Davidoff's watershed article, the American Planning Association held their annual meeting in Newark, New Jersey. Walter Thabit, an advocate planner in New York, with strong commitments to Davidoff, attended the association meeting and met with various groups of students, young faculty, and practitioners. Together, under his

tutelage, they founded Planners for Equal Opportunity, a national network of advocate planners. Chester Hartman, an academic and a political activist, chaired it for many years. Present and involved was the architect C. Richard Hatch, who organized the Architects' Renewal Committee in Harlem. These two groups operated primarily in New York City where Walter Thabit, as an advocate planner for the Peter Cooper Square community, led the fight against the Robert Moses urban renewal proposal to wipe out 11 blocks in the Lower East Side. The Cooper Square plan, developed by Thabit and others, was designed to hold 60 percent of all housing units for low-income housing. After many years, it was selected over the Robert Moses urban renewal plan.

Planners for Equal Opportunity formally ended in 1975. Its work has been extended and continued by two sustained efforts: the Planners Network and the equity planning movement. The Planners Network, a loosely held organization of progressive planners has membership throughout the United States and is chaired by Dr. Tom Angotti of the Hunter College Planning School. The equity planning paradigm broadens the notion of client group to all interest groups in the community, broadening the scope of the most important social equity movement in the field, advocacy.

### **Equity Planning Movement**

The equity planning movement was created and implemented by Norman Krumholz, the city planning director for Cleveland, Ohio. Fundamentally the movement is based on an expanded definition of the client for the redistributive resource process. It is the modern response to the racial crisis in urban areas, according to June Manning Thomas and others. It provides a location for all the people who have few if any choices. Pragmatic, not ideological, decisions shape the equity planning agenda. Equity planning is about working within the municipal planning structure to give special attention to the needs of poor and vulnerable populations, who also suffer from racial and sexual discrimination. However, the work need not be limited to the confines of the typical governmental structure nor need it follow past government decisions. Urban planners can break through the bonds of previous years and develop and implement new policies that reach out to the poor and minorities in the urban place.

### **Suburban Action Institute**

As a professional planner, Davidoff put advocacy planning into practice. He founded the Suburban Action Institute, which challenged exclusionary zoning in New Jersey. A precedent-setting case involved the township of Mount Laurel. The case stemmed from an attempt by Mount Laurel to prevent the building of 36 apartments intended for working-class Black residents in the community. In 1975, the court ruled that the township's zoning ordinance was a form of economic discrimination that favored middle- and upper-income people. It was not until 1983, however, that the court issued Mount Laurel II, which served as a companion decision by establishing a formula for providing a fair share of affordable housing. In 1985, a Mount Laurel III (of sorts) took place as the New Jersey State Legislature, acting on Mount Laurel II, established the Council on Affordable Housing. The debate on this issue continues to this day.

### **Global Advocacy Planning**

Advocacy at the global level is a method and process of influencing decision makers and the public perceptions of concerned persons; it mobilizes community action to achieve social

change. The goal is to create an enabling environment—one where laws and public policy protect and promote rights and responsibilities. The strategies include an emphasis on partnerships with nonprofit organizations and on research case studies and policy areas. The content focuses on environmental justice, public health issues such as AIDS, and public housing. Advocacy strategies are emphasized primarily in the field of architecture as well as planning and other urban development professions.

Advocacy planning's global application differs from its application in the United States in several ways: First, the geographic unit treated in Europe and the United Kingdom usually targets national and international levels of government, whereas the United States focuses on neighborhoods and local municipalities. Second, different questions are raised by international advocate planners than by U.S. advocate planners; U.S. advocate planners raise such framing issues as “Who is the client?” and “Which or whose values are considered?” International planners reference the public interest broadly. Third, U.S. advocate planners interact primarily on the ground, whereas European planners shift their methodology to planning and policy analysis techniques. The international model focuses on conceptual distinctions, which differs from the U.S. emphasis on local issues and problems.

- advocacy planning
- mount laurel
- advocacy
- pluralism
- urban planning
- equities
- neighborhoods

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**See also**

- [Citizen Participation](#)
- [Planning Theory](#)
- [Progressive City](#)
- [Urban Planning](#)

**Further Readings**

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