

going into his clinch with Maya Angelou and then stepping down into the sea of interests. What can the variant practices of planning teach us about interest and community?

I am not sure what planners ought to do about this issue. But I do have the feeling that in the old advocacy-planning days we retained a bit too much of the professional's desire to move things to a higher level. Our "common good" visions tended to take the forms of a progressive transportation system, a more egalitarian social system—desirable goals in themselves, but perhaps the goal-setting did not embody the healthiest process.

As usual, Jane Jacobs has something incisive to say about this. "Self-appointed exponents of the common good have done an awful lot to ruin the notion of the common good," she says. Perhaps we, too, sometimes began to drift into the complacent way of thinking that Jacobs identifies with Robert Moses and his favorite saying, "You can't make an omelet without breaking eggs." Jacobs worries about "two words as generalized and as abstract as [common good], which can be corrupted so easily, and turned against the common good. . . . But people understand when you say 'the neighborhood good.' That is not so abstract. 'The good of the city,' that gets a little more abstract, and you can 'justify' a few more eggs broken, usually wrongly. And the bigger and more abstract the subject of this 'good' gets, the more easy it is to make it a grindstone for somebody's axe."¹³

It would be a pity for reformist planners to get so involved in life at the grassroots as to lose sight of larger and longer-term issues and consequences. But it would be helpful, I think, to spend more time on streets and front steps trying to grasp daily life. It would be helpful to try to translate our rather economist language into forms of speech that sound like renderings of experience. I believe that in this way we would come to see more clearly what we, and the cities, are about. I rather doubt that we would ever come to a universally satisfactory definition of the common good, but we might in the process improve our common life.

NOTES

1. Paul Davidoff, "Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 31, 4 (1965): 331-8.
2. Roger Starr, "Advocates or Adversaries," in *Planning 1968* (Chicago: American Society of Planning Officials, 1968).
3. Langley C. Keyes Jr. and Edward Teitcher, "Limitations of Advocacy Planning: A View from the Establishment," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 36, 4 (1978): 225-6.

4. Lisa R. Peattie, "Reflections on Advocacy Planning," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 34, 2 (1968): 80-8.
5. Donald F. Mazziotti, "Advocacy Planning—Toward the Development of Theory and Strategy," Exchange Bibliography No. 241 (Monticello, Illinois Council for Planning Librarians, 1971).
6. Frances Fox Piven, "Whom Does the Advocate Planner Serve?" *Social Policy* 1,1 (1978): 32-5, 37.
7. Lisa R. Peattie, *ibid.*
8. Linda Davidoff, Paul Davidoff, and Neil Newton Cold, "Suburban Action: Advocate Planning for an Open Society," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 36, 1 (1970): 12-21.
9. Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 106.
10. *Ibid.*, 212.
11. Lisa R. Peattie, "What Should UPA Consider to be Adequate Citizen Representation?" memorandum, March 21, 1967.
12. Lisa R. Peattie, "Fellow UPA-ers," memorandum, April 13, 1970.
13. "Jane Jacobs's Response to Patrick Byrne's Presentation," in *Ethics in Making a Living: The Jane Jacobs Conference*, edited by Fred Lawrence (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1989), 187.

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Bridging Interests and Community: Advocacy Planning and the Challenges of Deliberative Democracy

John Forester

Lisa Peattie poses central questions about advocacy planning when she asks about the tensions between narrower "interests" and broader notions of "community."¹ Planners have to deal with Lisa's ques-

tions all the time. They often play interest-seeking, negotiating roles, but they also often play political community-building or broadly mediating roles within the same job at the same time. I will argue here that by looking closely at the work of planners seeking both public participation and better planning products, we can learn how problems of individual interest and community welfare may both be effectively addressed through processes of democratic deliberation.

In day-to-day work, notions of interest and community are politically shaped—not only by planners' imaginations, but by who speaks and who does not, who attends meetings and who does not, which interests have articulate and effective advocates and which do not. Suggestions of "interest" and "community" are constantly put forward and interpreted, constructed and reconstructed; they are politically up for grabs, even though some can usually grab more than others. So even when some groups are more organized, when some have more access, information, and expertise than others, senses of "interest" and "community" alike will often be multiple, internally conflicting, ambiguous, and evolving—a messy and fluid situation which presents planners not just with potential confusion, but with many opportunities too.²

In a wide range of meetings planners have to probe, rather than to take literally, the many meanings of initially expressed "interests" and claims regarding "community" welfare. As a senior planning consultant told me recently, and poignantly, "[Even when they want to,] people don't always say what they really mean." He was telling me about the importance of listening in both public and private practice, for the interests of a person, group, or class do not come all worked out once and for all. As particular causes take shape, as particular options are explored, interests and priorities can be practically interpreted and reconstructed, reordered and articulated in new ways.

In between the naive assumption that interests are always changeable and the head-in-the-sand presumption that they are fixed once and for all lies the arena in which planners actually have to work, and learn as they go. But this is the arena, as Paul Davidoff knew, of democratic politics: of inevitably limited time, poor information, competing views, suspicious and conflicting parties, loud and not always happy voices. Democratic politics and planning processes mean conflict and argument, contention and debate, which are a good deal easier for theorists to write about than for planners to encourage and facilitate—especially when the planners are responsible for getting things done and serving many interests at the same time.

In the years since Davidoff's article, "advocacy planning" has been mythologized, and demonized as

well. Celebrated by a few, it scares the daylights out of others. Where some find it a matter of strategy, others see it as suicidal. But while some question its legitimacy, advocacy planning is virtually mandated whenever planners are to promote anything more than the tokenism of deceptive or manipulative citizen participation. Furthermore, because any planner with an eye open knows that some affected parties have access and resources, expertise and capital, while many others equally affected do not, advocacy planning is far less a matter of formal role than it is one of orientation: virtually all planners know that they take de facto advocacy positions, responding to some concerns but not others, involving some parties but not others, worrying about the voices of some, or the consequences upon some, but not others. Knowing that too, Davidoff wanted to promote a higher quality of public debate, and the better plans likely to result from the competitiveness fostered by improving community planning capacities—hardly a radical suggestion!

Davidoff's appeal for more argument, debate and education of the public as a means of improving planning was a powerful call to open up planning processes. But Davidoff's legal analogy, an advocate for every client, a planner for every community, left planners in the lurch. How was any productive resolution that would actually serve community needs to be achieved? To stick to the legal analogy, who was to play the roles of judge and jury? Who was to do the ongoing work of reconciling and actually refining these "plural plans" into anything more coherent when actual decisions had to be made? Who was going to deal with the legacy of past decisions and mistakes, with citizens' conflicting and strongly expressed senses of having been wronged or not listened to, or neglected or delayed or obstructed?

Calling for "plural plans," argument and debate means asking planners to work in the reality of contentious meetings, where substance competes with exaggeration, where respect competes with racism, where trust competes with accusation, where careful listening competes with irate presumption. Davidoff was no doubt right to call for more debate in the political world of planning, and for advocates who would assist the powerless to plan for themselves; but what does that mean for the skills of planners?

Fostering and indeed democratizing public debate requires special abilities from planners: diplomatic skills of listening, acknowledging, negotiating, mediating, probing, inventing, reconciling, facilitating, organizing, and more. Without these skills, planners will seek refuge in expertise and bureaucratic inaccessibility; they will anticipate the prospect of debating "plural plans" with fear, not relish. Where Davidoff

pointed to opportunities, many planners lacking such skills will see looming dangers instead of the real prospect of improving the quality of plans and programs and making democratic politics a reality.

Public debate is the very heart of democratic politics, but it is also messy: emotional, ambiguous and often unpredictable. Nevertheless, planners in many towns and cities have years of experience in learning from this messiness; they have come to appreciate that emotions can be modes of understanding, and that ambiguity presents not just confusion, but real opportunities to propose well-crafted solutions, especially in unpredictable situations.

Indeed, planners who work with multiple constituencies face the challenges of democratic politics all the time. They have to decide whether and how much to assist affected but relatively unorganized groups. Seeing clearly that some are more organized than others, that some seem to resign themselves to anything while others seem to try to obstruct everything, that power plays are standard, the planners have to gauge how much of their own capital to expend to make the uncertain and risky business of "participation" work. And too often, they know how little they know, since too much is changing too quickly: developers and neighbors declare political candidacies and begin to use planning issues for self-promotion; elections come and go and city council priorities shift; state and city agency staff continue turf wars; the community organization's new leadership is not completely enthralled with the past leadership's agreements . . . and so on.

These problems can arise even if no one is acting maliciously. Everyone appears to be protecting some important value in the face of apparently uncomprehending and self-interested others. Together they form a circle, each and every one pointing to the party on their right and saying emphatically, "*They're* the obstructionist!" all the way around the circle that links them all. And in the face of such righteous protectors of private property, of the environment, of the poor, of their neighborhood, the planners—who of course are themselves part of the righteous circle—are asked to make participation "work," to improve not just the quality of public debate but also actual plans and decisions. No wonder that while their hearts tell them that the "plural plans" and "voice" of advocacy planning are good things, their stomachs get queasy in the face of pointed, verbal attacks, and their heads start to spin with the complexity and fluidity of it all.

These difficulties raise practical issues that Davidoff barely mentioned. The last ten years of practice in public dispute resolution can help us to address those issues. As negotiation and mediation skills have become part of many planning curricula, more atten-

tion is being paid not just to "participation," but to what actually happens when whoever is able to participate actually lets loose. Planners may now increasingly come to recognize not just the plurality and diversity of interested parties, but also their practical interdependence. Planners may also come to understand their roles in new ways: to see themselves not as unappreciated scapegoats, distrusted and resented by irate neighbors or developers, but as active facilitators and mediators of public voice; not just as narrow technicians but as technically competent professionals able to listen to conflicting views, mediate between interdependent parties, and negotiate to protect various public interests as well.³ From the earlier work on racial and environmental disputes to that on zoning revisions, historic preservation, community planning, design negotiations, and broader public policy issues, the planning profession can now draw upon far more experience with the critical use of mediation and negotiation skills to refine plans and improve decisions than it could when Davidoff wrote his appeal to open up comprehensive planning processes.⁴

The practice of encouraging and mediating between "plural plans" requires sensitivities that an overly economic approach to planning can obscure. We know that participants in planning processes are not the "rational economic men" of economic theory. But too often we have interpreted that to mean simply that parties have limited information—and thus to imply that planning was even more important than we had thought. Too often we have ignored another issue: that people with whom planners work can be rational but not all-knowing; rational but not unfeeling; rational but not blind to their own history of suffering, risk, and loss, and of previous betrayal by supposedly well-meaning officials.

Neighbors, developers, environmentalists, as well as other agency staff all bring to the planning process not only their sense of future interests, but their memories of past losses, of having been done to as well as of having been doers. These multiple histories present a subtle challenge to planners that has a practical urgency. With every decision, program, or resolution that they must publicly explain or justify, planners will face a further choice: to pretend that no one loses and to ignore their losses, or to acknowledge respectfully and sensitively the losers and their losses in the specific case at hand. Believing too often that greater benefits would just cancel out any losses, planners have often failed, it seems, to acknowledge articulately the downsides of public decisions; so, despite being well-meaning, they have instead fueled suspicion, resentment, and even contempt! When developers value financial gains, residents value affordable housing and

services, environmentalists value open space and natural resources, those commitments and fears don't simply cancel each other out. Planners who ignore these commitments and fears will be perceived as callous, unresponsive, paternalistic, arrogant, and presumptuous—as bigger parts of the problem rather than as facilitators of real solutions responsive to the many parties affected. In the face of loss, silence on planners' parts may be tempting, but not what's called for, damaging further rather than renewing all too fragile relationships in the city.

To learn about what's involved here, we should look more closely at what participatory planners, coalition builders, organizers, and mediators *actually do*; we might also listen a bit more critically to what they proclaim. For example, we should look critically not just at the obviously self-serving doctrine of the neutrality of the mediator, or at the political rhetoric of "participation (and apple pie)" of community organizers, or even at the doctrines of "equity planning," but also at their actual practice: the ways that the most skillful mediators, organizers, and equity planners we can find deal with the challenges of participatory processes to work through disputes and conflicts to fashion real possibilities, come to recognize parties, and deal with their differences in innovative ways.⁵

To learn more about the possibilities of advocacy planning, we should ask several questions more carefully than we have until now. What capacity for political and emotional responsiveness, for example, is required in participatory work, to face and respond to distrust, resentment, suspicion, and anger at past and present planning practices? What kind of articulate care is involved when planners treat community members not just as clients to be represented, but as citizens—who are justifiably angry and fearful, well-informed in some ways but not in others, vulnerable to the actions of well-heeled groups more powerful than they? The question is not, "What words should be used?" but what are the qualities that would enable planners to make politically insightful and effective responses to these citizens? How can planners both listen to the wishes, demands, interests, priorities, and opinions of "stakeholders" and also respond to those articulating a broader analysis of community well-being? More importantly for research on planning: How do the most skillful planning practitioners we can find anticipate and respond both to specific interests and to visions of "community"? How do they not only respond to "I want . . ." but also illuminate and encourage "We can . . .?"

To ask such questions is a matter in part of rethinking planning education—of recognizing that

planners learn at least as much from insightful *stories* as from social scientists' *studies* of "what works under what conditions." Concerned about how they might act in the face of contentious public meetings, where the organized threaten to drown out the less organized, where the affluent have lawyers and the poor have other things to do that evening, planners can learn in several ways: from reflecting upon their own experience, and also by watching others (even in other fields), from listening to dramatically vivid and emotionally realistic accounts of how another planner handled a case, or from reading thoughtful commentaries on actual cases. If the bad news is that social science provides know-what rather than know-how, the good news is that judgment and practice can be learned and taught, perhaps "coached," not only via quasi-scientific studies, but through insightful stories, relevant examples, and critically examined experience as well.⁶ So planning education must complement model-building in labs with community-seeing in fieldwork, solving technical problems with listening and responding to ambiguous expressions of needs and interests.

Another central problem, both practical and theoretical, remains: dealing with the difference between simple deal-making on the one hand and more democratic processes of mutual learning and deliberation on the other. In deal-making or bargaining, parties negotiate on the basis of given interests. Presuming that they know everything they need to about their own and the other's interests, they go for the best deal they can get. But in deliberative processes, parties are less presumptuous. They know they *don't* know everything relevant, what they really need to know to do well. *So they know they need to learn*, and they try to create the occasions—formal and informal, in conference rooms and over drinks, face to face and through intermediaries—so they can learn about the other's less obvious priorities, their willingness to work together and also their vulnerabilities, feasible new options, consequences for third parties, encompassing public mandates and responsibilities, as well as the possible "deals." Such learning from deliberation can lead to far better outcomes for both parties than the more short-sighted compromises of deal-making; that premise is fundamental to dialogue and democratic politics.⁷

We need to know more about the ways planners can not just facilitate deals, reducing the planning process to a bargaining process, but instead encourage a rich and practical, efficient and productive process of deliberation. The challenge now is to extend advocacy planning to save it, for its formulation as "every community gets it lawyer" promises not improved but paralyzed plans, not democratic deliberation, education

and learning, but rather raised expectations and adversarial drama that lack follow-through and real resolution.

So we need to study the ways skillful planners have met two challenges at once. First, how have they fostered equality of voice or plural planning proposals, to get better information, refine options, and enhance representation and participation? Second, how have they promoted the capacity of affected people to learn together about their common future, about their diverse concerns and about the options they can create together? These questions are at once theoretical and practical. Several theorists have explored the character of such work, but diverse planners, too, have worked for years to integrate advocacy and deliberation, to foster both Davidoff's "plural plans" and actual learning. About the actual prospects of building a deliberative democratic politics within settings of structural political economic inequality, planners have not only a great deal still to learn, but a great deal that they can teach as well.

So we need to complement the most illuminating studies of democratic deliberation with the most insightful accounts of practitioners who have struggled to create real deliberative spaces in the contentious and political world of planning.⁸ Fortunately, we have good work to help us pursue this agenda. Robert Reich, for example, has discussed this challenge as the problem of promoting "civic discovery" in planning and policy analysis.⁹ Benjamin Barber calls it the problem of achieving a "strong democracy."¹⁰ Jane Mansbridge recognizes it as the problem of moving "beyond self interest."¹¹ Lawrence Susskind calls it the problem of carrying out an activist mediation practice.¹² Martha Nussbaum might term the problem one of planners' perception and moral imagination.¹³ John Friedmann calls it the problem of the recovery of political community.¹⁴ Ken Reardon discusses these issues at the intersection of community planning and participatory action research.¹⁵ Seyla Benhabib explores this too, bridging Aristotle and Habermas, practical judgment and critical theory, as the problem of political judgment.¹⁶

Planning and planning theory are in no more crisis today than are the humanities and the social sciences generally. When different "paradigms" compete and pose problems differently, that is a sign of health, not intellectual poverty. We should stop looking for a unified field theory, a single common measure of excellence, or for a happy consensus in which architects and economists will love each other, and we should instead explore the real possibilities to improve planning practices so that they serve human need. Even

with this one issue of democratic deliberation, some will approach the issue via political economy, some via computer-based decision-support systems, some via psychology and group processes, and some perhaps through the uses of the visual imagination. Our task is not to force a choice among such approaches but to learn what is yet possible, to build on the best available work to see *more* than we saw yesterday, to be able to share the results with one another, and to be able to listen and respond, to act better as well.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

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NOTES

1. See Lisa Peattie, "Communities and Interests in Advocacy Planning," *Journal of the American Planning Association*, this issue.
2. On ever-present ambiguity and resulting opportunities, see Norman Krumholz and John Forester, *Making Equity Planning Work* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990).
3. See, for example, Patsy Healey, "The Communicative Work of Development Plans," *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design* 20 (1993): 83-104. I have described how planners integrate, negotiate and mediate in chapter six of *Planning in the Face of Power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989). Mediation and negotiation, of course, are not panaceas; they are no less political or demanding of good judgment than is planning generally. For a detailed analysis, see John Forester, "Envisioning the Politics of Public Dispute Resolution," in *Studies in Law, Politics and Society*, vol. 12, edited by Austin Sarat and Susan Sibley (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1992).
4. See, for example, John Forester, "Activist Mediation and Public Disputes: A Profile of Larry Susskind," in Deborah Kolb et al., *When Talk Works* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994), and Lawrence Bacow and Michael Wheeler, *Environmental Dispute Resolution* (New York: Plenum, 1984).
5. For a step in this direction, to consider the detailed accounts of "equity planners" themselves, see Norman Krumholz and Pierre Clavel, *The Equity Planners* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984). First person accounts are selective self-presentations, but they can be instructive nevertheless; *all* reading requires healthy skepticism.
6. See, for example, Donald Schön, *Educating the Reflective Practitioner* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1988).
7. See, for example, James Fishkin, *Democracy and Deliberation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).
8. I have explored these issues in my last several ACSP papers, which will be integrated into a book on political judgment in planning, tentatively titled *Politics, Pragma-*

- tism, and Vision: Political Judgment in Planning Practice*, with luck to appear in 1995.
9. Robert Reich, "Policy Making in a Democracy," in *The Power of Public Ideas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990).
 10. Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).
 11. Jane Mansbridge, *Beyond Self-Interest* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).
 12. See Lawrence Susskind and Jeffrey Cruickshank, *Breaking the Impasse* (New York: Basic Books, 1987). See also John Forester, "Envisioning the Politics of Public Dispute Resolution," in A. Sarat and S. Silbey, eds., *Studies in Law, Politics, and Society*, vol. 12, edited by Austin Sarat and Susan Sibley (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1992), and Forester (1994), cited above.
 13. Martha Nussbaum, "The Discernment of Perception: An Aristotelian Conception of Private and Public Rationality," in *Love's Knowledge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).
 14. John Friedmann, *Planning in the Public Domain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).
 15. Ken Reardon, "Participatory Action Research from the Inside: A Profile of Ken Reardon's Community Development Practice in East St. Louis," with John Welsh, Brian Kreiswirth, and John Forester, in *The American Sociologist*, edited by Edna Ronacich and Randy Stoecker (Rutgers University, 1993).
 16. Seyla Benhabib, "Judgment and the Moral Foundations of Politics in Arendt's Thought," *Political Theory* (1988): 29-51.

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On Poverty and Racism, We Have Had Little to Say

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It is fruitful to go back to "the classics" and assess their historical importance and current relevance. Planning is in a constant state of flux. To get our bearings on the current state of the profession, it is important from time to time to re-read and re-interpret major books and articles, from a variety of viewpoints: left and right, activist and academic.

Several things struck me as I reread "Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning." First, I was impressed by the optimism and positive tone and message of the Davidoff article, particularly about issues of race and the Civil Rights movement. That was Paul. That was the 1960s. Now I, for one, am terribly pessimistic—about race, about poverty, about cities, about our country. I wonder if Paul, the quintessential optimist, were he still alive, would be so optimistic some 30 years later.

Second, I'm struck by the importance assigned to plans and planning. In my own life and work I do not sense that plans and planning, at least in the broad sense, are very significant in determining how the critical urban and rural issues are being dealt with in the 1990s. The central themes of Davidoff's article are how to make better plans ("make no few plans" would be his variation on the Burnham dictum), how to function more creatively, effectively and responsibly as a planner, and how to better structure the planning function within local government. Such questions strike me as having little to do with the realities of current struggles around racism and poverty: How, if at all, we can grapple with the massive problems of crime, the so-called "underclass" phenomenon, housing affordability, joblessness and underemployment, homelessness, drugs, awful schools, widening disparities in income and wealth—the whole depressing litany of what's wrong in America. Davidoff ended his article by saying that "[a]s a profession charged with making urban life more beautiful, exciting, and creative, *and more just* [emphasis added], we have had little to say." Paul was proposing a way to change that; but today I would write the same thing without his hopeful coda. That assertion, I know, is dispiriting, but so is the state of our present society.

A third observation concerns openness. Davidoff strongly believed in opening up the political process, overtly espousing competition among plans. But again I am pessimistic, wondering whether now that will work, whether in fact being so explicit about tensions exacerbates or relieves them. As an example, let me cite the well-known *Gautreaux* experiment in Chicago, where a reasonably successful degree of spatial de-concentration and racial integration has been achieved by using Section 8 certificates to allow residents of Chicago's ghettoized public housing projects and those on the Housing Authority's waiting lists to find apartments in outlying suburban areas—aided by highly competent private (but federally funded) counseling and assistance. The program's degree of success is subject to some debate; careful studies from Northwestern University show various employment, educational and social improvements for both children and adults, although not of staggering proportions, and