

NOTES

The Transactive Style of Planning

1. The institutional setting for transactive planning will be taken up in Chapter 8.
2. The language in which the memorandum was written was reasonably straightforward and non-technical, so that the failure to understand the quantitative manipulations and conceptual refinements contained in many planning reports was not a point at issue here.
3. There are problems so technical that the authority of experts will be accepted at face value. These problems are usually close to the operational level, such as the design specifications of a bridge. Mutual learning is not applicable to these cases. It is useful only where the personal knowledge of the client is an important component of any solution that may be offered.

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Planning Practice

John Forester

The ultimate objective of repoliticization . . . should be to resurrect the notion of democracy, which is far too important an ideal to be sacrificed to capitalism. . . . The problem is not that capitalist societies accumulate, but the way in which they do it. In order for the beneficiaries of accumulation to remain a narrow group, a boundary is established beyond which democracy is not allowed to intrude. . . . The time has come to think, not about demolishing accumulation, but about democratizing it. The way to eliminate the contradictions between accumulation and legitimation is to apply the principles of democracy to both—to give people the same voice in making investment and allocation decisions as they theoretically have in more directly political decisions.

—Alan Wolfe

Planning theory is what planners need when they get stuck: another way to formulate a problem, a way to anticipate outcomes, a source of reminders about what is important, a way of paying attention that provides direction, strategy, and coherence. In this chapter we will argue that the talk and listening of planners is at once practical, interpretive, and deeply political. To be rational, effective, and ethical, too, planners must anticipate and counteract pressures that stifle public voice, that manipulate democratic processes of consensus-building, and that ignore the many in need so that a few may prosper. In this chapter we will also formulate

a broader research agenda: What questions must we explore to understand still more insightfully the pitfalls and possibilities of planning in the face of power?¹

Practical Planning Theory

This chapter draws in part from the author's field research in an environmental review office of a metropolitan city planning department.² The planning staff assessed development proposals for the city, reviewed them for "significant adverse environmental impact," and then issued either a "negative declaration" or a requirement for an environmental impact report. Some of the proposals obviously did not involve significant impacts, but a few others were so large that full-blown environmental impact reports were clearly required. Most proposals, however, fell between these two groups. In such cases, the planners had to check likely impacts quite carefully, often having to negotiate with the project sponsor or developer for design changes that would minimize potentially adverse environmental impacts. In such cases, the review planner was reviewing, to be sure, but he or she was also actively participating in project planning and redesign. Using simple examples of such project-review activity, this chapter presents a more ambitious general argument: that a critical theory of planning practice can be empirically based, practically fitting, and ethically instructive, too.

In a nutshell, the argument is as follows: A critical theory of planning helps us to understand what planners do as attention-shaping, communicative action rather than as instrumental action, as means to particular ends.³ Planning is deeply argumentative by its very nature: Planners must routinely argue, practically and politically, about desirable and possible futures. If they fail to recognize how their ordinary actions have subtle communicative effects, they will be counterproductive, even though they may mean well. They may be sincere but mistrusted, rigorous but unappreciated, reassuring yet resented. Where they intend to help, planners may instead create dependency; and where they intend to express good faith, they may raise expectations unrealistically, with disastrous consequences.

But these problems are hardly inevitable. When planners recog-

nize the practical and communicative nature of their actions, they can devise strategies to avoid these problems and to improve their practice as well. In addition, they can recognize the organizational and political contexts of their practice as structures of selective attention, of systematically distorted communications. Both developers and neighborhood residents are likely to withhold information; access to information and the ability to act on it (i.e., expertise) are unequally distributed; the agendas of decision making are politically and selectively structured; and citizens cannot participate equally in decisions affecting them.⁴

We need to know more than whose ends or interests planners may serve. How do planners politically shape attention and communicate? How do they provide or withhold information about project alternatives to affected people? Do planners speak in a way that people can understand, or do they mystify citizens? How do planners encourage people to act, or rather discourage them with a (possibly implicit) "Leave it to us"? What can planners do (working with others, no doubt) to counteract unnecessary, deeply ideological formulations of community problems? How can they work or organize to enable citizens' learning, participation, and self-determination?

A Critical Theory of Planning Practice

Critical theory, as we draw on it here, assesses social and political-economic structures as systematic patterns of practical communicative interaction.⁵ These relations of power and production do not merely transmit information; they also communicate and reproduce political and moral meaning, organizing support, consent, trust, and political belief.⁶ The critical, ethical content of the theory focuses attention on the systematic and unnecessarily distorted nature of communicative interactions, on the promises, appeals, reports, and justifications that so shape the lives of citizens of our societies. In the United States, for example, citizens are faced with such influences when politicians or administrators present a political problem as simply a technical one; when private, profit-seeking interests (such as the nuclear construction industry or the pharmaceuticals industry) misrepresent benefits and dangers to the public; when professionals (such as physicians, planners, or

social workers) create unnecessary dependency and unrealistic expectations in their clients; or when the established interests in a society avoid humanitarian social and economic policies (such as comprehensive health services) with misleading rhetoric and falsehoods, claiming, for example, that "the public sector is always, inevitably, less efficient than the private sector." Such distortions are profoundly practical communicative influences—instances of hegemonic power—with immobilizing, depoliticizing, and subtle but effective disabling consequences. To isolate and reveal the power of such systematically distorted communications, critical theorists contrast them with the ordinary communication of mutual understanding and consensus that makes any shared social knowledge possible in the first place.

The central theme of critical theory involves the precariousness of social action in general and democratic action in particular. Bureaucratic and market pressures alike threaten participatory political processes and communities of trust and solidarity. Social interaction too depends in part on the possibility of mutual understanding. Were such understanding not possible, neither political criticism nor the most elemental technical analysis would make much sense. Thus the prerequisites of mutual understanding suggest a critical but abstract reference point, the possibility of democratic argumentation "free from domination," which can help us to assess the distorting influences of concrete productive relations and the structure and policies of the state. Recall that some communicative distortions (e.g., imperfect information) are unavoidably present in the structure of any political economy as well as in face-to-face communication. Nevertheless, as Chapters Three, Four, and Five argued, many distortions are avoidable, politically contingent, and thus alterable. These distortions are artificial, and the illusions and misinformed consent they promote may therefore be overcome.⁷ Such distortions include, for example, the self-serving legitimization of great inequalities of income and wealth; the consumer ideologies inherited from and generated by the way capitalist productive relations are organized; the manipulation of public ignorance in defense of professional power; and the stultifying racial, ethnic, and sexual type-casting to which we are all subjected daily. Such politically debilitating influences are political artifacts and not natural necessities; they can be overcome. These

sources of needless suffering are thus the targets of critical social and political theory and, as we have argued, of a progressive planning practice.⁸

Critical theory thus sets the stage for an empirical political analysis that exposes the subtle ways in which a given structure of state and productive relations functions: (1) to legitimate and perpetuate itself while it seeks to extend its power; (2) to exclude particular groups systematically from decision-making processes that affect their lives; (3) to promote the political and moral illusion that science and technology, through professionals and experts, can solve political problems; and so (4) to restrict public political argument, participation, and mobilization regarding a broad range of public welfare-oriented policy alternatives that are incompatible with existing patterns of ownership, wealth, and power. Because of the hegemonic power of such distorted communications, citizens of advanced capitalistic societies may remain ignorant of their own democratic political traditions and oblivious to their ability to take corrective action. Inequality, poverty, and ill-health come to be seen as problems for which the victim is responsible or as problems so "political" and "complex" that citizens can have nothing to say about them. Yet democratic politics or planning requires true consent, and such consent grows out of uncoerced collective criticism, political argument, and dialogue, not from silence or a party line.

A critical theory of planning must therefore suggest how existing social and political-economic relations actually operate to distort communications, to obscure issues, to manipulate trust and consent, to twist fact and possibility. In this chapter we will identify how basic types of distorted communication in the planning process subvert understanding and knowledge at face-to-face, organizational, and political-economic or structural levels of analysis.⁹

Attention-Shaping Through Communicative Action

Any action works not only as a means to an end but also as a promise, shaping expectations. Planners can be effective not because they put words on paper, but because they can alter others' expectations by doing so. A planner's formality may tell city resi-

dents more than the actual information he or she provides. The quality of the communication counts; without it, technical information would never be trusted, and cooperation would be impossible. With no one listening, effective work in the planning office would grind to a halt.

Consider a local planner's description of a proposed shopping center project to a neighborhood group. If the project is described in primarily economic terms, the audience will see something different from what they would see if it were described in mostly political terms. The audience would see something different still if the planner described the project in the most simple, ordinary language. But each of these descriptions would be about the same project. Which account should the planner give? Which account should be believed?¹⁰ Planners and residents alike must make choices: what to say and what not to say, how and when to say it, and so on.

The problem is this: The planner's ordinary description of a project, for instance, is a communicative action in itself. Like all action, its success depends on intentions, interests, and an audience. Without an audience, the project description would be like a play on opening night when no one came, and it would be absolutely uninteresting and worthless, almost by definition, without intentions and interests setting it up. But with interests that make something worth describing, intentions that make the describing worth doing, and an audience to listen, the planner's description of a project can actually help get ordinary work done.

Planners do much more than describe, of course. They *warn* others of problems, *present* information, *suggest* new ideas, *agree* to perform certain tasks or to meet at certain times, *argue for or against* particular efforts, *report* relevant events, *offer* opinions and advice, and *comment* on ideas and proposals for action. These are only a few of the minute, essentially pragmatic, communicative actions that planners perform all the time, the "atoms" out of which any bureaucratic, social, or political action is constructed. We can call these acts "speech acts."¹¹ Without them, we could not even ask one another, "What did the project sponsor say?" Precisely because such communicative acts are effective, the phrase "Watch out—he doesn't like planners" has meaning. The pragmatic meaning to planners is: You watch out.¹² Without these elementary communicative actions, the intelligibility of our ordinary

social world could not exist. Planning problems would be inexpressible, and practical action would be impossible.¹³

Such elementary communicative actions are at the heart of the possibility of any ordinary, cooperative working relationships—in everyday life, in planning, in political movements, and in society generally. Communicative action is fundamental to practical life; without it there is no understanding, no common sense, no shared basis even for disagreement or conflict.¹⁴ Without shared, commonly structured communicative abilities, we would not be able to say "hello" and be understood, nor could planners say, "The meeting's Wednesday at seven-thirty. Come prepared." These communicative actions are ordinary and often taken for granted, but they are politically potent nevertheless.¹⁵ Because the planners' communicative acts perform both technical and political work, we need now to understand how this work gets done.

The Structure of Practical Communicative Action: From "Enabling Rules" to Organizing Practices

These elemental communicative actions of ordinary planning practice do not just happen. They are social actions, performed in languages we can speak together. Words and noises do not just come from our mouths; we speak. We tell, or ask, or promise, or greet, or argue. And by doing these things, we act. When we speak, we participate in a structured form of social action—ordinary communicative action, which is, like all social action, already normative and rule-structured.¹⁶ It is not up to us to decide whether or not we want to follow the rules of ordinary language use—not if we want someone else to understand what we say, promise, warn of, or call attention to. If we want to tell someone that a project-review meeting is likely to be especially important, we cannot just make up a special word to get the point across; rather, we must try hard to say what we mean, using the language and whatever frame of reference we share. If we want to be understood when we speak practically, we must follow (or put into use, or work through) the enabling rules that structure our ordinary language—or what we really mean to say will not be what anyone listening thinks we mean. The rules here are not restrictions; they enable us to act to-

gether.¹⁷ They help us know that "Please check out the proposal" is not likely to mean "We're all done with it."¹⁸ We can communicate pragmatically—though there are important exceptions—because when we speak or listen, we test a common set of presuppositions with one another.¹⁹ Listening critically, we try to gauge the extent to which another speaks.²⁰

1. comprehensibly, for we can presume neither clear statements nor obfuscation;
2. sincerely, for we need to assess the speaker's trustworthiness;²¹
3. legitimately in the context at hand, so we can assess the propriety of the speaker's claims; and
4. accurately, so we can assess the truth of what we hear.

Mutual understanding depends on the satisfaction of these four criteria: comprehensibility, sincerity, legitimacy, and accuracy or truth. Without comprehensibility in interaction, we have not meaning but confusion. Without a measure of sincerity, we have manipulation or deceit rather than trust. When a speaker's claims are illegitimately made, we have the abuse rather than the exercise of authority. And when we cannot gauge the truth of what is claimed, we will be unable to tell the difference between reality and propaganda, fact and fantasy.

These criteria of pragmatic communication are often taken for granted. They are part of the subtle foundations of common sense. If we do not meet them, or if others do not, we face puzzlement, mistrust, anger, and disbelief; mutual understanding, trust, and cooperation are all likely to suffer.²² Moreover, if these pragmatic criteria are not met, our shared experience and our common social and political worlds disintegrate.²³

In planning, these criteria are particularly important for two reasons. First, planners often have little formal power or authority, so the effectiveness of their communicative actions and practical arguments becomes all the more important. Second, planners who seek to serve the public confront particular private or class interests (e.g., in corporate development) that are likely to violate these criteria systematically. Planners then have to face the results: a community group snowed by a developer's consultant, an inquisitive citizen confused by apparently "necessary" public works cutbacks, or a working-class community organization led to ac-

cept delays while wealthier neighborhoods receive prompt attention from city government. The lesson: Planning staff must learn to anticipate the practical effects both of the class-based communicative actions and practical arguments of others, and of their own argumentative practices as well.

Two Dimensions of Action: Content and Context

How does such practical communicative action work? Theorists seem to agree on one simple but fundamental point: that all practical communication requires skillful attention to both content and context. *What* a planner talks about is the content of what is said; *when* and *in what situation* and *with whom* the planner talks belong to define the context.

To communicate *content*, planners and their audience need to share a language—of word or gesture—first, to be able to call attention to particular things in the world, and second, to be able to say something coherent about them. A building site presents an infinity of detail, and in speaking about it, a planner not only must selectively refer to soil conditions, economic values, and so on in a particular terminology, but also must say *something* about each of these factors: for example, the soil is not stable; the cost figures are inflated; no low-income housing units are to be provided. So the content of practical communicative action involves two components:

- (a) *a factual claim*: A planner may report at a staff meeting, for example, that the neighbors are worried about congestion, traffic, and noise at the site; and
- (b) *a rhetorical (or comprehensibility) claim*: At a council or staff meeting the planner calls attention to something by framing it in a particular way. For example, a planner refers to "neighbors" rather than "several disgruntled families," or says they are "worried" rather than "scared to death" about a proposed project. The "same" facts can be expressed in significantly different ways.

The *context* of what a planner says is defined by the historical, political, and social relations that provide the planner with a stage

from which to speak in the first place. When planners speak, they speak as actors on an organizational-political stage rather than on a Broadway theater stage—practitioners' allusions to the "theater of the absurd" notwithstanding. When planners present a report at a planning commission meeting, or a meeting of a neighborhood association, they talk "in context." If planners presented the same report in the same way in the middle of the intersection outside, however, they would get taken away to a local hospital for observation. Context counts; content alone is practically meaningless.

The context of what is said depends on more than the structural, legal-political relations that constitute the institutional and historical settings in which planners and others talk. In ordinary speech we understand joking, exaggeration, whining, parody, satire, anger, or hopelessness in another's words. Understanding here depends on our reading of the other's intentions, their expressions of self, their personal stance.²⁴ When we listen to others, for example, we may think, "They're angry," or "They're kidding," or "They've got an axe to grind"; our evaluations of their *intentions* help us place their words in context. At a planning commission meeting, the professional intentions of the staff members who present a report may be taken for granted by the commissioners, yet be distrusted by building developers and neighborhood residents alike. Institutional rules and roles may be clear, providing one aspect of the context, but developers may nevertheless wonder if staff members really sympathize with the neighborhood. Neighborhood residents, in turn, may wonder if the staff members are acting in collusion with the developers.

What is said and done, then, is evaluated and understood in the context at hand. But that is just the problem; the context is never simply given. The contextual or relational side of practical communicative action involves two additional components:

- (c) *a claim to legitimacy*: To be understood and persuasive, a planner must speak differently in different institutional settings; what is appropriate at a formal Chamber of Commerce luncheon may well be inappropriate in a neighborhood church basement; and
- (d) *an expressive claim*: When planners speak, they inevitably color what they say with their own intentions and emotions,

however suppressed. In addition to whatever they claim factually, they may show sympathy, impatience, arrogance, worry, or concern.

The practical importance of these four claims becomes clear when any of them fail. When a planner's factual claim fails, the result is the listener's disbelief. When his or her rhetorical claim fails, the result is confusion. When the planner's claim to legitimacy fails, the result is a lack of consent. When a planner's expressive claim fails, the result is distrust.

These pragmatic claims are structural elements of the anatomy of action, but none takes place in a vacuum, separated from social actors supporting, challenging, fighting, agreeing with, or caring for one another. This analysis of action can be quite useful, not only in assessing planning and policy talk still further (ordinary language philosophers might do that), but also in investigating the character, vulnerability, and contingencies of actual planning practice. When planners listen, no less than when they write or speak, they must attend to the ways that these four communicative claims are raised; otherwise they may fail to accomplish even their simplest objectives, as we will see.²⁵

Dimensions of Social Reproduction

When planners tell a neighborhood group about a proposed project, they can easily communicate more than they intend.²⁶ They may lapse into bureaucratic language, confusing and mystifying people.²⁷ They may present information but have no way of knowing what it will really mean to the audience. They may try to be even-handed, but their detached or formal manner may instead create distrust and resentment. Trying to produce results, they may instead reproduce yet other problems.²⁸

Because satisfying the four criteria of mutual understanding (comprehensibility, sincerity, legitimacy, and truth) is so problematic, it reveals the ways in which everyday interaction is contingent, precarious, and subject to distortion or failure. We can use the four criteria, therefore, not to suggest imperatives for all situations (Be sincere! Tell the truth!) but to help formulate questions about the possible influence of planning practice.²⁹

1. How comprehensible or obscure are the ideas and information the planner presents? Can others understand what the city, a developer, or a neighborhood group has in fact proposed, challenged, threatened, or agreed to do? What framing of problems does the planner reproduce?
2. How forthright is the planner, and with what consequences for the reproduction of others' trust? How does the planner suppress or express feelings or intentions, which others may suspect or resent, trust or distrust?
3. How does the planner legitimate his or her actions in the context at hand? Is he or she improperly taking advantage of professional status? For example, if a planner advises a developer or community organization member, "You'll have to live with this design; there's nothing you can do to change it," this may be a purely personal judgment that wrongly invokes and seeks to reproduce the legitimacy of professional authority.
4. How factually accurate is the planner? Is there evidence supporting the planner's claims? What do other accounts say? Are listeners being offered information on which they can safely act, or are they being misinformed, however unintentionally? What beliefs are being reproduced?

Asking these diagnostic questions helps us to explore how planners' talk can have practical productive and reproductive effects in the different dimensions of citizens' beliefs, consent, trust, and senses of problems.³⁰

Communicative Distortions by Planners

At times, planners will not only face but also produce communicative distortions. In bargaining and many adversarial situations, planners may not tell "the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." But even when others might expect planners to distort the practical claims discussed above (to exaggerate, for example, early in a bargaining process), they will most likely also expect, in order to compensate, to be able to *check* what the planners say with third parties—for instance, to check with trusted friends or contacts in other agencies, who can be expected *not* to distort those basic claims.³¹ This expectation—that the conditions of mutual understanding can indeed be satisfied—makes any checking possible.³²

Thus, when bargaining or adversarial behavior typically results in exaggeration or misrepresentation, the requirements of ordinary understanding suggest compensatory checking strategies that help to protect us from being misled. In these situations, the four diagnostic questions (regarding comprehensibility, sincerity, legitimacy, and truth) become *more*, rather than less, important because they help us to check claims we face. To understand the duties of planners as responsible public servants, we must understand not only how at special times their misrepresentations might be justified, but also what results such actions can produce and reproduce.³³ These questions are particularly important also because of the bureaucratic and political pressures that operate on planners. Planners may often feel compelled to be less open than they might wish, but they should not be surprised, then, when they find members of the public at times suspicious, resentful, or angry.³⁴

Distorted Communications and Planners' Responses

The foregoing analysis is only a slight beginning. Planners' distortions are important, but hardly more important or influential than the systematic, political-economic distortions of argument and voice that both planners and the largely unorganized public face together. How do planners face the structural management of public attention? Consider the legacies of racism and sexism that subvert the voices of women and people of color; the concentration of capital that enables a few to attend to their own needs while the needs of many go unmet; the institutional complexity that can be navigated only by those with the most organizational resources or high-priced legal representation; and the politically selective control of information. When ordinary communication is structurally and unnecessarily or deliberately distorted, democratic political action will be crippled.³⁵

The socially and politically distorted claims that citizens and planners face every day can be assessed schematically (see Table 5). For each entry in Table 5, a practical question arises about how planners can work with others to prevent such distortions. Table 6 suggests strategies of response that expose or counteract the distortions in Table 5.³⁶ These strategies of response are varied, but

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they can be summarized in one word—"organizing." This can be a planner's response to disabling distortions of practical communications: the careful, political organization of attention that can counteract these influences.³⁷ Not only do these strategies address a wide range of obstacles to democratic political processes, but they are pragmatic as well. They seek to marshal information, to cultivate support, to work through informal channels, to counteract monopolies of expertise, and to use many of the organizing tactics discussed in previous chapters.³⁸

Enabling and Disabling Practices in Planning

Now what of local planning practice? Where is the practical benefit for planners? Once we recognize planning practice as communicative and argumentative, we can reassess several organizational problems that planners face. It becomes clear now that problems will be solved not solely by technical experts, but also by pooling expertise and nonprofessional contributions too; not just by formal procedure, but also by informal consultation and involvement; not predominantly by strict reliance on data bases, but also by careful use of trusted resources, contacts, and friends; not mainly through formally rational management procedures, but through internal and external politics and the development of a working consensus; not by solving an engineering equation, but by complementing technical performance with political sophistication, support-building, liaison work—all this, organizing—and, finally, intuition and luck. Only in the most isolated or most routine cases will future-oriented planning problems be resolved by a technical planner acting alone.³⁹

As we have argued throughout this book, a planner can be technically skillful but politically inept. A planner might make a formal economic calculation impeccably, but the mayor may not really "trust the numbers." Even the most technical actions (calculating a solution, making a demographic projection, reviewing architectural plans for flaws) communicate to those they serve that "this solution serves your needs" or "with this much done, you may still wish to change this parameter (devise another scenario, look and

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see for yourself). In planning contexts, unfortunately, this communicative character of technical action has often been overlooked.⁴⁰ Its practical implications, particularly its costs, have often been neglected. The most well-meaning technical planning activities have at times communicated, if unintentionally, that planning is the exclusive domain of the planner, implicitly saying, "You can trust me. Leave the analysis to me." In some cases, this implied message reflected an agreed-upon division of labor, but often, it seems, it has led to trouble. It has worked to separate planners and planned-for; it has made information less accessible to those affected by plans; it has minimized planners' abilities to learn from project-review criticism; and it has generated public mistrust of planning staff and reinforced planners' apprehensions that public participation will inevitably be disruptive. As long as this communicative dimension of (even the most technical) planning practice is ignored, planners and citizens alike will suffer the consequences.⁴¹

The communicative character of planning practice involves much more than how clearly planners write or speak.⁴² What planners choose to say—and choose not to say—is politically crucial. If planners take the role of "informed technocrats," for example, they can focus attention on technical issues but obscure important political relationships. Or if planners present themselves as neutral mediators, they can encourage premature consensus-building when empowerment and organizing strategies, pre-negotiation strategies, are more appropriate. If planners adopt roles that ignore the political world, they will seriously misrepresent public problems and opportunities. They will distract attention both from relations of power and, more important, from the ways that affected citizens can act to change those relations of power. Ideologies are systematic distortions of communication in precisely this sense of obscuring political possibilities. Ideologies are powerful distortions not because they are unclear. Rather, they are so clear, so transparent, that they effectively misrepresent social and political reality just as they obscure alternatives, cover up responsibility, encourage passivity and fatalism, and justify the perpetuation of needless suffering.⁴³

Planners will face these problems increasingly if they do not regularly encourage political organizing and debate, the assess-

ment of alternative definitions of problems, and the collective construction of new design and policy proposals.⁴⁴ As planners recognize these problems, they can begin to attend to the inevitably political roles they play: Should they foster or thwart informed public participation; should they preempt or enable public debate and argument; should they encourage or discourage design, project, or policy review and criticism?

Planning organizations routinely face the same problems faced by individual staff members. Those organizations may—perhaps against their best intentions—discourage public participation. If they ignore the effects of bureaucratic language, planning organizations will perpetuate the exclusion of all but the initiated. If they are perceived by the public as less than straightforward or as untruthful, planning organizations will continue to breed suspicion and hostility to professional public servants, and this will poison the possibility of future cooperation. More subtly, if planning organizations preempt community involvement by defining problems as overly technical or as too complex for nonprofessionals to understand, they may engender political passivity, dependency, and ignorance.⁴⁵ They must systematically search for project alternatives and possible political solutions and do so through community consultation, expertise pooling, and project reviews ranging from brainstorming to mediated negotiations. Otherwise, planning organizations are likely to reach agreements too quickly or inefficiently and thus miss real program or design opportunities.

Ironically, then, the overly narrow focus of technically oriented planning will, in effect, simplify practice in the short run, but will lead to inefficiency and waste. It can separate planners from the political constituencies they serve, weakening them both as they face the designs and agendas of powerful economic forces in their neighborhoods and cities. Such planning can also undercut the public accountability of planners, neglect political friends, and keep affected citizens uninformed rather than politically educated about events and local decisions. When action is at stake—not to mention planners' jobs—this can be costly. Thus planners must assess encompassing power structures and recognize how their own actions can work either to discourage or to encourage citizen organizing.⁴⁶ Planners can recognize more clearly the "leave it to us" messages that technical work may communicate. Planners can then

integrate their technical work into larger organizing strategies in a variety of ways, as the following list of options suggests. To complement their technical work, planners can

1. Cultivate community networks of liaisons and contacts, rather than depending on the power of documents, both to procure and to disseminate information;
2. Listen carefully to gauge the concerns and interests of all participants in the planning process to anticipate likely political obstacles, struggles, and opportunities;
3. Notify less-organized interests early in any planning process affecting them (the more organized groups whose business it is to have such information will hardly need the same attention);
4. Educate citizens and community organizations about the planning process and both formal and informal "rules of the game";
5. Supply technical and political information to citizens to enable informed, effective political participation and negotiation;
6. Work to see that community and neighborhood nonprofessional organizations have ready access to public planning information, local codes, plans, notices of relevant meetings, and consultations with agency contacts, "specialists" supplementing their own "in-house" expertise;
7. Encourage community-based groups to press for open, full information about proposed projects and design possibilities;
8. Develop skills to work with groups and conflict situations, rather than expecting progress to stem mainly from isolated technical work or from elected officials;
9. Emphasize to community interests both the importance of building their own power even before negotiations begin and the importance of effective participation and negotiation in informal processes of project review; take steps to make expertise available to professionally unsophisticated groups in such project-review meetings;
10. Encourage independent, community-based project reviews and investigations; and
11. Anticipate political-economic pressures shaping design and project decisions and compensate for them, anticipating and counteracting private raids on the public purse by, for example, encouraging coalitions of affected citizens' groups and

soliciting political pressure from them to counter other interests that might threaten the public (Needleman and Needleman 1974; Hartman 1984).

These actions are all elements of "organizing" practices, actively mobilizing concerned and affected persons, that planners can incorporate into their practice in addition to technically calculating solutions to problems. As they work in these ways or fail to do so, planners will call attention to public possibilities or obscure them from public view.

To say that planning is political should begin discussion, not end it. If they anticipate the interests and commitments of affected groups, planners can build political support in addition to producing technically sound documents. Technical analysis cannot stand alone. Vivid studies show that the "technician" role of planning analysis is often frustrating and ineffectual if divorced from the pragmatic considerations of political communication: maintaining trust and "an ear," lobbying, addressing the specific concerns of decision-making audiences as well as the intrinsic merits of the projects themselves, and so on.⁴⁷

The strategies indicated above raise their own problems, however. How much information should be given to which groups, and when? What can planners do to prevent such information from being ignored, misinterpreted, or manipulated? Are there forms of community planning, widespread participation, mediated negotiation, and design review that are both democratic and efficient? These are not new questions for planners, but a critical theory of planning allows us to ask and answer them in new ways: (1) by clarifying the elemental structure of practical communicative action; (2) by distinguishing pragmatic criteria with which we can assess public communications and arguments; (3) by identifying the essential types of disabling distortions to be corrected; (4) by clarifying the planner's role in perpetuating or counteracting such distortions; and (5) by locating a pragmatic and argumentative planning practice within a political-economic structure of power and ideology—treated here as a hegemonic structure of systematically distorted communication of assurance, threat, promise, and legitimation. If the elements of organizing strategies listed above are considered as isolated ideas, they are nothing new. Only

if they are understood and carried out in the context of the structural analysis of systematically distorted communication illustrated in Tables 5 and 6 can they be seen in a new light, focused on new goals and objectives and put into practice in increasingly sensitive and effective ways.

Consider finally, now, the broader theoretical significance of these arguments and their implications for research and practice.

Implications for Theory, Research, and Practice

By treating planning practice as communicative action, we are given a conceptual (and researchable) bridge from analysis to implementation (via the shaping of attention), from information to organization (via the shaping and reproduction of political identity), from cognition to action (via the claims-making structure of communicative action), and thus from the analysis of abstract meaning to a pragmatic assessment of practical professional activity. Research can thus shift from the assessment of more narrow processes of experimentation and testing (social engineering from social science) to the study of processes of argumentation and dialogue, political discourse and design criticism, mediated negotiation, and democratization and organizing.⁴⁸

Furthermore, the analysis of planning practice as communicative action has deep roots in the "ethics of ordinary discourse" we generally presuppose in daily life. We ordinarily appeal to the possibility of communication free from domination when we make claims about facts or rightness—that is, we assume we should not in principle need to coerce others to accept our claims. Similarly, planners are called on to clarify, reveal, and communicate actual possibilities of life-enhancing, emancipatory actions to citizens.⁴⁹

Structural, Organizational, and Interactive Implications

At the structural level, the organization or disorganization of attention takes the form of the ability to invest or control various forms of capital. Just as capital is accumulated, controlled, and invested, so is society's attention concentrated, allocated, and orga-

nized. Such attention may be directed in two ways: first, productively, attending to some goals and not others, to the articulated needs of some and not others; and, second, reproductively, by refashioning existing social relations and conventional commitments, preferences, roles, and responsibilities.

Planners must be able to anticipate both productive and reproductively forms of attention-directing. When planners work on occupational health and safety issues, for example, the goal of minimizing risks to workers' health can be expected to conflict with the productive and accumulative goals of those who control workplaces. Furthermore, planners can expect existing class relations in the workplace to have two effects. First, they will structure such conflicts between the attention paid to safety and health versus the attention paid to profit rates. Second, the relatively powerful will also work to encourage employee attitudes of trust or resignation, of acceptance of health risks as "necessary evils" and "all part of the job," thus often discouraging employees from actively participating in decisions about the labor process.⁵⁰

These two structural processes of attention-directing provide the context in which any planning takes place. One is accumulative; the other socializing (legitimizing, politically integrating or disintegrating).⁵¹ An important political implication follows. To the extent that these processes are contingent and contestable, planners and policy researchers must learn to anticipate this management of citizens' attention. Because these processes are indeed structural, fundamental to the organization of the political economy, they will be regularly expectable: Planners and researchers can therefore anticipate and respond to their influences on actual planning and policy development.⁵² This practical anticipation requires planners to have working theories of the institutional world in which they function.⁵³ Here, of course, the research questions only begin.

How do these structural attention-directing processes work in different planning domains—local, national, or international? How do they actually shape the contexts in which planners act? How well do planners now anticipate and take these influences into account in their practice? How could they do this better? What are the requirements, the obstacles? How might planners' organizing practices strengthen, or subvert, various forms of the

structural processes of attention investment? Such questions must be addressed through careful case studies and comparative institutional analyses.⁵⁴

In *organizations*, formal mandates, informal routines, and various precedents frame participants' attention in complex ways, as suggested in Chapter Five. Planners can expect organizations to achieve particular objectives instrumentally and to shape citizens' expectations communicatively as well. But what kinds of expectations will be created? Echoing Chapter Five, we have argued in this chapter that communicative action works in four dimensions: to shape listeners' senses of truth or beliefs, rightness or consent, sincerity or trust, and understanding or comprehension. Research that explores the management of attention in these dimensions can tell us much about concrete relations of power and possibility in the planning process. An organizational analysis that builds on the study of practical communicative action can also lead to further insights. In each dimension of the always contingent management of citizens' beliefs, consent, trust, and understanding, important questions arise for both research and practice.⁵⁵ How do organizations actually structure and change the beliefs of their members and those of the citizens they affect? How are factual claims substantiated? How is credibility maintained? And similarly, what processes are employed to manage consent? By what organizational processes can trust be strengthened or weakened? How do planners play a part in these processes?

In preparing for a presentation to a planning commission, a neighborhood group, or a union meeting, for example, a planner will want to know what preconceptions or beliefs he or she will have to address. What positions will the audience support or oppose? Will the planner be perceived as a trusted ally, a suspicious professional, an untrustworthy delegate from city hall, or someone with a hidden agenda?

Let us now address these same issues as research questions. To assess the organizational management of *belief* requires an exploration of organizational "intelligence," reporting and information systems, research units, the use of studies and scientific analyses, relations with the press, and so on. To analyze the management of *consent* requires assessments of formal and informal precedents,

mandates, threats, and bargains; the use of symbolism and political rhetoric; and the political, legal, and ideological culture of planning organizations and of the organizations with which planners work. To study processes of gaining *trust* would lead to assessments of myriad mundane social rituals that provide planners, and those with whom they work, with the means of "checking each other out." To study the organizational management of *understanding* leads not only to questions about the use of clear and obscure language but also to far more subtle questions about the abilities of affected citizens to raise and articulate issues and concerns in the first place.⁵⁶

These research questions all have potentially practical payoffs, and planners ignore them at their own risk. Although an analysis of communicative action can help planners and researchers to ask these questions, finding answers remains to be done, across various planning arenas, and more specifically in concrete planning situations. In each case, too, as we have observed throughout this volume, planners should ask how these processes that reproduce citizens' beliefs, consent, trust, and understanding are systematically skewed or unnecessarily distorted. How can these distorting influences be counteracted?

Finally, the critical planning theory presented in this chapter provides a research framework for the empirical, interpretive, and critical study of daily planning *interactions*. In the ongoing stream of their contacts with others, planners make practical claims about facts, legitimacy, intentions, and the formulation of problems. How do they do this? In what other ways, through speech, writings, argument, and silence, can they direct their own and others' attention in their everyday work?

If their statements and reports are not *believed*, planners will feel that they are wasting their time, and they would probably be right. If they cannot establish their judgments and evaluations as *legitimate*, planners will feel *powerless*, recognizing that they are not being taken seriously. If their expressions of intent, their desires and hopes cannot gain the *trust* of others, supreme frustration, not cooperation, is likely to result. And if planners cannot *frame* issues clearly and understandably, they are unlikely to be working as planners for long. Yet how these four dimensions of

communicative action work in practice has hardly been addressed in any systematic, politically critical way in the planning literature.⁵⁷ What, though, is normative or critical about this account of planning practice? We have seen that the analysis of communicative action leads immediately to questions of practical distortions—those that are necessary or unnecessary (unavoidable and avoidable), and ad hoc or systematic.⁵⁸ Practical questions therefore call for research on structural, organizational, and interactive levels of analysis. Planners and students alike must explore the management of citizens' attention: how authorities make decisions, how economic and bureaucratic power sets agendas, and how subtle political and cultural forces shape citizens' conceptions of their own needs. The analysis of communicative action allows these questions about power and hegemony to be asked concretely and systematically: How can affected citizens check and challenge claims that planners, developers, and other citizens make on them? What are the capacities, resources, and requirements citizens need to challenge others' claims about the facts of cases? What are the capacities and requirements needed to challenge claims of legitimacy? How might issues of trust, of false promises, be explored? What enables or punishes the abilities of citizens to articulate their own senses of need, to pose or frame problems in their own ways?

These questions take on a different form at different levels of analysis. At the political-economic level, these issues concern political legitimacy. At the organizational level, they become questions of procedural fairness and accountability. At the level of ordinary interaction they arise as questions of interpersonal ethics. Thus, a critical communicative account of planning practice seeks not only to integrate analyses of action and structure but also to combine empirical and interpretive research with normative and ethical arguments that help us counteract the obstacles to democratic and legitimate planning processes.⁵⁹

Conclusion

By recognizing how planning practice, now understood as deeply communicative and argumentative, may distort or clarify, obscure

or reveal to affected publics the prospects they face, a critical theory of planning can be practical and ethical as well. This is the contribution of a critical planning theory: pragmatics with vision—to reveal true alternatives, to correct false expectations, to counter cynicism, to foster inquiry, to spread political responsibility, engagement, and action. Critical planning practice, technically skilled and politically sensitive, is simultaneously an organizing and a democratizing practice.

A critical, argumentative account of planning practice integrates structural, organizational, and interactive levels of analysis. Planners can expect at every level to find a politics and an economics of citizens' attention: a political-economy of attention and argumentation, whose foundation is not only traditionally productive labor but social interaction more generally. At every level, planners will find dynamics of power and needless distortion that jeopardize democratic participation and autonomy, and they can recognize, anticipate, and work to counteract these influences.

Recall, finally, that this book presents an account of planning practice—an account of just one, but nevertheless essential, piece of the puzzle of creating a more just, decent, and healthy society. Inevitably, the book omits attention to closely related and crucial concerns: Political-economic dynamics, historical roots, professional variations, and psychodynamics are among the most obviously absent analyses here. But local practice counts. In their daily work, the communicative actions of planners can shape political arguments, and those arguments in turn can help to shape larger political strategies. We can hardly blame planners for the failures of social movements or credit planners for their successes, but we should recognize the part that planners, policy analysts, public administrators, and other planning analysts can play in assisting (or obstructing) larger, encompassing political forces that seek social betterment.

This book, then, is intended not as a definitive "last word," but as a step toward the renewal of structurally sensitive, practically engaged, ethically and politically critical planning theory and practice. In the face of power, justice and equality are hopes, solidarity is a source of strength, and, however daunting the odds, there is freedom in the struggle.

NOTES

1. This chapter draws on several strands of modern social theory, particularly a critical communications theory of social action, to assess the practical and political character of planning practice. "Critical theory" here refers predominantly to the work of Jürgen Habermas and the interpreters of his recent work (1970a, 1971, 1973, 1975, 1979, and 1984). Excellent interpreters of Habermas's critical theory are Richard Bernstein (1976, 1983), Thomas McCarthy (1978), and Trent Schroyer (1973). See also Thompson and Held (1982) and, for a range of applications, Foster (1985). Note, however, that we are using "strategy" in its ordinary, rather than in Habermas's restricted, sense; cf. notes 8 and 11 in Chapter Five.

2. Chapter Three drew from the same field research. Other relevant field research, including that reported in Chapter Six, assessed the com-

municative behavior of planning staff in the face of local land-use conflicts and planning strategies in health planning processes.

3. For one distinction between instrumental and communicative action, see Habermas (1970a, 91f.). Weber's concept of "meaningful social action" is a precursor to communicative action, as Habermas argues (1984). For one approach to the systematic structuring of attention (rooted in the sociology of knowledge), see Berger and Luckmann (1966). For a lucid analysis of the important noninstrumental aspects of ordinary meetings, see Bailey (1983).

4. See Lukes (1974) for the treatment of the structural distortions of communications and information considered by E. E. Schattschneider, Peter Bachrach, and Morton Baratz; Murray Edelman's work (1971, 1977) provides another view of distorted communications. Schroyer (1973) and Claus Mueller (1973) attempt to bridge Habermas's analysis of communicative action (and its distortions) and more traditional treatments of power and political structure. See also, for example, the lengthy introductory essay in Habermas (1973). Cf. Alvin Gouldner's misleading reading of systematic distortions of communication as "censorship" (1976). Cf. also Paulo Freire's powerful and moving *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), which provides many fascinating parallels with Habermas's work, as suggested by Misgeld (1985) and O'Neill (1985) and in Chapter One, above. See also the striking work of Michel Foucault, as discussed cogently in Hoch (1987); Foucault's broader claims about power are in part belied by his own political agency, a contingent, staged agency that this book attempts to reveal for planning analysts.

5. See note 1, above. For a related, though less critical and nominally systematic, account, see Giddens's account of "structuration" (1984). Cf. Bernstein (1986).

6. Thus, in the language of modern social theory, the critical theory articulated here is a theory of hegemonic power and counter-hegemonic action. Chapter Five has presented an extended analysis.

7. Anyone who doubts that systematically yet unnecessarily distorted communications might have enormous influence should consider the problems of achieving "informed consent" in medical-care settings. A striking contribution to the understanding of power could be made by the researcher who assessed the obstacles to informed consent in medical care and assessed the parallel obstacles and their contingencies in a variety of planning and policy-making processes.

8. Such distorted communications mediate, in Marxist terms, the contradictions between working and ruling classes, between the means of production and the social relations of production, between labor and

capital. In more ordinary terms, these distortions hide from citizens the end results of their labor, the possibilities of collective improvement that now exist in modern cooperative organization and technology, and the social costs of the private control of investment and labor. For a parallel analysis, but one that lacks the analysis of the pragmatics of speech and interaction that we present below, see Giroux (1983).

9. Critical theorists are devoting increasing attention to empirical research into these systematic distortions of communications. See, e.g., Misgeld (1985). As Chapter Two suggested, the empirical "micro-political" promise of critical theory is to carry forward the classical Marxist "critique of ideology" into a subtle and refined analysis of the structurally, systematically distorted pragmatic communication and language use, the concrete social actions, that constitute, mediate, and find expression in the social relations of production, politics, and culture. Habermas and Foucault thus have related projects, however much they differ in their strategies of execution. Cf. Fraser (1981), Ingram (1986), and Roweis (1988).

10. This question is especially important to the extent that the listener has no opportunity to engage the speaker and question the given description—thus enabling a richer account to be given. But when the listener is uninformed and trusting, even the recourse to conversation and interaction may not change matters. The offered account, selective as it must be, will effectively stand. (The planner, for example, may say to the community organization member or developer, "There's nothing much you can do." It's helpful to remember, of course, that planners are not omniscient and that such statements, like others, may or may not actually be true; they may nevertheless have real effects, real influence.)

11. The classic analysis of "speech acts" appears in the work of John Austin (1965) and John Searle (1969). For an accessible introduction, see Wardhaugh (1985).

12. Nonverbal communication counts, too, but this idea must be developed further elsewhere. In face-to-face interaction, nonverbal communication can take the form, for example, of tone, gesture, or deadpan or lively facial expressions. At the organizational level, nonverbal communication is effective in the structuring of agendas, meetings, work programs, and the character (e.g., more or less formal, comprehensible, or encouraging) of the planning or policy-formulation process. At both levels, what remains unsaid may be as important, and effective, as what is said. See, e.g., Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson (1967).

13. Habermas calls the theory of these speech acts "the theory of universal pragmatics": universal because all social communication seems to depend on the structure and possibility of such acts, and pragmatic be-

cause these acts are contingently performed and concretely practical—they make a difference in our lives. See the chapter “What Is Universal Pragmatics?” in Habermas (1979). See also note 10, above.

14. See, for example, Karl-Otto Apel’s “The A Priori of Communication and the Foundation of the Humanities” (1977). Consider Hannah Arendt: “There may be truths beyond speech, and they may be of great relevance to man. . . in so far as he is not a political being, whatever else he may be. Men in the plural, that is, men in so far as they live and move and act in this world, can experience meaningfulness only because they can talk with and make sense to each other and to themselves”; “Speech is what makes man a political being. . . wherever the relevance of speech is at stake, matters become political by definition”; quoted in Pitkin (1972, 330-331).

15. Watzlawick shows that even a threat depends on effective communication; the minimal conditions for a threat to be successful are that it must “get through” and be believable (1976, 197ff.).

16. See, for example, Cavell (1969), especially the essay “Must We Mean What We Say?” Cf. Pitkin (1972).

17. See Searle (1969) for the difference between regulative and constitutive rules. Charles Taylor develops some of the political implications of this difference for politics and the study of politics in his “Interpretation and the Sciences of Man” (1971).

18. “Please check out the proposal” may have many nonliteral practical meanings, too. It may mean, “This proposal isn’t documented properly,” for example. But our understanding of such nonliteral meanings presupposes that we know how to apply the ordinary rules of language use. Otherwise, we would not, at the first level, be able to recognize the literal meaning, its possible implications, and then, at the second level, its fit or possible misfit with the context of its use (i.e., whether or not we should take it literally).

19. Extended analysis of such presuppositions and anticipation of the “universal pragmatic” norms of speech can be found in McCarthy (1978). Cf. Shapiro (1976). See also Ben Habib (1986) and Fay (1987).

20. See “What Is Universal Pragmatics?” in Habermas (1979, 50-68). Cf. Chappell (1964).

21. To gauge another’s sincerity differs significantly from assessing the truth of what that speaker says. Sincerity refers to the more general expression of the speaker’s inner dispositions; truth refers to the fit or misfit of statements, references, or representations of reality with the reality supposedly represented. A speaker may be sincere or insincere; a statement may be true or false. (One might say, though, that an expression, as an indication of a speaker’s intentions, is sincere or insincere.) The differ-

ence here is quite practical: a physician may be utterly *sincere* in prescribing a medication to alleviate certain symptoms, but the medication may nevertheless not *truly* alleviate the symptoms. A planner may be wholly sincere in saying that a street widening will draw twice the existing traffic flow, but the widening may not, in fact, have those consequences. In each case, the speaker is sincere, but what is said is not true. Insincerity threatens and subverts trust; inaccuracy weakens and subverts knowledge. Part of our competence as listeners depends on our abilities to make these distinctions: for example, “He really did (not) mean well, but we should check his figures anyway.” Note that the force of a lie depends on the listener’s failure to gauge the speaker’s sincerity and accuracy.

22. “Since our ability to cope with life depends upon our making sense of what happens to us, anything which threatens to invalidate our conceptual structures of interpretation is profoundly disruptive” (Marris 1975, 13).

23. Fred Dallmayr argues that the violation and the respect of these universal pragmatic criteria for communication may be taken to ground a “communicative ethics” and a normative political vision (1974). Compare Chapter Two, above. For debate here, see Lukes’s criticism and Habermas’s reply in Thompson and Held (1982), and Simpson (1986). See also, as noted, Trent Schroyer (1973, 162-163) for the argument that Habermas’s critique of systematically distorted communications is a refined form of the classical critique of ideology.

24. To date, unfortunately, no one has studied how planners make such judgments.

25. This analysis suggests how issues of pressing normative ambiguity can mistakenly be reduced to questions of cognitive certainty or uncertainty. I draw here from Forester (1983b). Whether we use the language of economy and society or productive forces and productive relations, efficiency and equity or accumulation and legitimation, the environment of planning nevertheless structurally presents planners not just with uncertainties that call for more information, but also with ambiguities that call for more explicit value judgments. Faced with uncertainties, planners look for clues and evidence. Faced with ambiguities about rules, obligations, promises, mandates, duties, and so on, planners must look for precedent, tradition, a source of legitimacy, a consensually based interpretation, or more generally, an appropriate, fitting response (Moch and Pondy 1977).

Ambiguity and uncertainty are just not the same, and they require planners to act differently in response. That an event will take place may be uncertain but not ambiguous; a pun is ambiguous but not uncertain. Questions of purpose and intent, of ethical and political choice, of obliga-

tion and responsibility, of the proper interpretation of meaning—these are issues of ambiguity; planners must look not for certainty in response, but for justification (March and Olsen 1976). Questions of scientific and technical results, of systems performance or the prediction of consequences—these are primarily issues of certainty and uncertainty; planners need to look for evidence, not for interpretations of precedent.

If practical problems of ambiguity and uncertainty are confused, then necessarily ambiguous political, normative, and "value" problems are likely to be reduced to matters of supposed scientific certainty and uncertainty. Practical, "should we?" problems, ethical and normative problems will be rendered technical and apolitical. Planners' and the broader public's attention, too, will then continue to be distracted from the constructive moral, legal, and political processes that exist to address these issues of ambiguous and conflicting needs, desires, interests, precedents, and obligations. Overly attentive to "scientific" questions about certainty, planners will fail to work skillfully in political and social processes (consultation, bargaining, consensus-building, structured argument, and so on) that might actually foster an effectively democratic, and democratic, planning process. Facing uncertainty, planners hope to *discover* solutions; recognizing ambiguity, planners hope to *construct* solutions. Problems of uncertainty might be solved technically; problems of ambiguity need to be managed politically.

Planners cannot avoid these problems, for they are a systematic part of all practical action. When questions of content are raised, issues of uncertainty (at least) appear. When questions of context or planners' institutional relationships are raised, issues of ambiguity arise (Bolan 1980). Uncertainty and ambiguity are not incidental, then; they are, rather, systematic elements present in the very *structure* of practical social action. On the "double structure" of speech, see Habermas (1979, 41-44).

26. Cavell distinguishes the semantic meaning of an uttered sentence from the pragmatic meaning of the same utterance, and he argues that as speakers and actors we are responsible for both. Good intentions are not enough; pragmatics count (1969).

27. From the journal of a young planner in California: "Sitting in Environmental Review Committee meetings, I notice how the applicants interact with the Committee—the 'slickees' know the genre. They speak with professional language, e.g., 'that's correct' for 'that's right.' Others come in and get bounced around by the strange terminology and the unfamiliar process. What a humiliating experience for them" (personal correspondence, S. Bok, Autumn 1978).

28. Cf. a Public Health Department director, facing a planning commissioner's proposal of additional formal interagency meetings: "What

you're proposing is a formal structure that'll look great on paper but won't be operational. What we need is ongoing informal consultation and communication so we know what each other's doing—that's what works!" (Tompkins County Comprehensive Health Planning Subarea Council, March 1979).

29. "The normative foundation of a critical theory is implicit in the very structure of social action that it analyzes" (Bernstein 1976, 213); for a critical discussion of this idea, see Ben Habib (1986), Simpson (1986), and Fay (1987).

30. A central question for the empirical study of planning ethics arises immediately: When planners do not meet the ordinary criteria that we use to gauge mutual understanding, what justifications do they use (or abuse, or fail to give)? The double structure of speech and the associated criteria above provide the basis for the more general analysis of action and social reproduction, e.g., as argued in Chapter Five.

31. When citizens have no actual means of checking the claims of planners, developers, politicians, or even one another, they are particularly vulnerable. They may then accept claims as true, legitimate, genuine, or meaningful when what is claimed is instead inaccurate, improper, deceptive, or confused. For a parallel argument assessing the ways that policy making shapes citizens' abilities to check such claims, see Forester (1982b). Cf. R. R. McGuire: "Insofar as systems of rules and norms contribute to systematically distorted communication, insofar as they exist as systematic barriers to discursive will formation, they are irrational. . . . And insofar as [communication structures] create a fiction of reciprocal accountability, concomitantly creating ideologies by sustaining the 'legitimacy' of these very structures they are irrational. . . . and hence illegitimate—involving no moral obligation" (1977, 44). Cf. Lukes (1974).

32. It is important to make clear, even while presuming that conflict is ever-present in social and political life, that the proposition, P, that all interactions are so conflictual as to be untrustworthy sources of misrepresentation, is untenable, not only because it renders the checking of any one position impossible but also because it would be impossible for the proposition P itself to be credible, for there to be any consensus that P was trustworthy or true.

33. See Sissela Bok (1978) for an extended discussion; cf. Chapter Three, above.

34. Assessing the distorted communications prevalent in modern bureaucracies, Ralph Hummel argues that bureaucratic organizations are characterized not by two-way communication, but by one-way information. "The 'language' through which a bureaucracy speaks to us is not a language designed for problem-solving [together]. Bureaucratic language is a language for passing on solutions" (1977, 158-159).

35. See, e.g., Mueller (1973); cf. note 4, above, and Chapters Three and Five.

36. On responses to distortions in face-to-face interactions, see Chapter Seven. On responses dealing with organizational interactions, see Chapter Five. To correct structural distortions is to challenge the ideological obscuring of citizens' real possibilities and to call for political organizing and the continual democratization of public policy. To politicize planning in this way does *not* mean to encourage a war of all against all, to grind planning to a halt. This misreading of politics encourages an overly rationalistic, organizationally blind planning practice. To politicize planning means instead to diversify alternatives, to strengthen participation and include previously excluded groups, to support progressive social movements, to balance the reliance on technique with attention to regular political debate, negotiation, and criticism (Pitkin 1972; Barber 1984). Recall this chapter's epigraph (Wolfe 1977, 314).

37. The normative goal or ideal of organizing and opening communications should not be dismissed as romantic or utopian, a call for absolute trust or listening forever—for it requires us practically to prevent noise, misinformation, needless ambiguity, and the misleading elevation or lowering of citizens' expectations. See Chapters Three and Four, above.

38. Organizing does not simply mean "getting more citizen input," getting more bodies to meetings. This is precisely how "input" misleads us, for it is not input, but political responsibility, participation, and mobilization that are at issue. For three suggestive approaches, see the work of Krumholz, Cogger, and Linner (1975), and Krumholz (1982); Hartman (e.g., 1978, 1984); and Susskind and Ozawa (1983), and Susskind and Cruickshank (1987).

39. See, for example, on complexity and uncertainty, Benveniste (1977) and our arguments above in Chapter Four for matching solution strategies to contingent contextual constraints.

40. When the context of a planner's description or evaluation is political, that description or evaluation may have a pragmatic political effect in addition to reporting its technical message. Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson write, "The paramount communicational significance of context is all too easily overlooked in the analysis of human communication, and yet anyone who brushed his teeth in a busy street rather than in his bathroom might be quickly carted off to a police station or a lunatic asylum—to give just one example of the pragmatic effects of nonverbal communication" (1967, 62).

41. Let me emphasize that this is not to argue against technical work; it is simply to call attention to its inescapably political character. Cf. Ivan Illich's argument: "Paradoxically, the more attention is focused

on the technical mastery of disease, the larger becomes the symbolic and non-technical function performed by medical technology" (1977, 106). For a lucid and compelling analysis of the profoundly political character of technological systems, see the work of Langdon Winner (1977, 1986).

42. Such a "clarity criterion" falls under only the first of the four universal pragmatic criteria discussed above: comprehensibility, sincerity, legitimacy, and truth.

43. For a useful review, see "Theories of Ideology and Methods of Discourse Analysis," Chapter Three in Thompson (1984). Thompson's work is particularly interesting because it, too, moves in the direction of linking the particulars of practical actors' speech to the reproduction of, or resistance to, encompassing social and political ideologies.

44. This point can be derived from two quite different sources: philosophers and social theorists such as Karl Mannheim (1949) and John Dewey (1927), and the recent literature on mediation and collaborative problem-solving applications to planning processes (Susskind and Cruickshank 1987). Like political critics, planners must worry about getting affected people in the door of decision-making arenas affecting them; like mediators and facilitators, planners also have to worry about what to do once deeply interested, angry, and often fearful people get in that door. Mediation skills offer promise not only for managers and organizers but also for planners, who find that part of their job is to make democracy writ small, work—not just to get results, but to enhance relationships and nurture public virtue, a sense of a political "we."

45. Compare an argument from another professional setting. Jeffrey Galper writes of professional social work practices: "In every interaction in which we engage, we encourage certain responses in others and discourage other responses. Workers who are themselves politicized . . . will offer suggestions and interpretations from this perspective. . . . [These interpretations] must clearly be offered in service to the client and not in service of political ends that are somehow separate from the situation and well-being of the client" (1975, 212).

46. A co-worker looks you in the eye and says in a quick and agitated voice: "Me? I'm not nervous. I'm not nervous." The tone and the style contradict the literal message; they meta-communicate meaning over, above, and beyond that of the literal words. The detachment of the apparently neutral professional meta-communicates in the same way. Think of the importance of dress, here, and other small but hardly unimportant social rituals (e.g., sharing meals, "social drinking"). The style of performance of rituals communicates even more significant meaning than does their literal content. For a brief analysis in planning, see Forester (1983b) and, more generally, Bailey (1983).

47. See especially Szanton (1981), Wilensky (1967), and Baum (1983). See also Meltsner (1976) and Krumholz, Cogger, and Linner (1975). Cf. Needleman and Needleman (1974) and Alinsky (1971).
48. See, on argument, Toulmin (1964), Churchman (1971), Fischer (1980), Mason and Mitroff (1980-1981), and Webber and Rittel (1973); on political discourse, Pitkin (1972) and Barber (1984); on dialogue, Freire (1970); on mediated negotiation, Susskind and Ozawa (1983, 1984), Susskind and Cruickshank (1987), Forester (1988), and Anv (1987); on policy or design criticism, Krieger (1981); on democratization, Habermas (1975), Dewey (1927); and, on organizing, Hartman (1975, 1984) and Clavel (1986).
49. See McGuire (1977), Fay (1987), Dallmayr (1974), Apel (1977), and Chapter One, above. The shift from the treatment of "information" to "attention" is a shift from a Cartesian, rationalistic, and idealistic philosophical tradition to a critical, historical, and phenomenological one, to a critical pragmatism (Bernstein 1976, 1983; Hoch 1987). The deeper roots of such an alternative view (Krieger 1974, 1981) are in the traditions of English language philosophy (Pitkin 1972), German phenomenology (Gadamer 1973; Bauman 1978; Schutz 1970; Bolan 1980), American pragmatism (Bernstein 1971; Hoch 1984), Sir Karl Popper's "critical rationalism" (Popper 1963; Lakatos and Musgrave 1972; Friedmann 1978; Faludi 1986), and Habermas's "critical communications theory of society" (Habermas 1970a, 1971, 1973, 1975, 1979, 1984; McCarthy 1978; Held 1980; and Hemmens and Stiffel 1980).
50. This argument has not presented a specific account of class or social structure. Class analysis will often be appropriate when workplace issues are at stake; yet when workplace issues of race and gender arise, class alone will not suffice to explain—and, more significantly, to anticipate—possible strategies and outcomes.
51. This analysis provides the relatively macrosociological account of O'Connor (1973) with a microsociological foundation informed by Habermas's theory of communicative action; cf. Forester (1982a).
52. Cf. Lukes (1974), Gaventa (1980), and Chapters Three and Four, above.
53. For one analysis, see Forester (1988).
54. For the developed argument, see Adler (1986).
55. To argue "always contingent" here is not to appeal to pluralism or voluntarism, but to argue that structural, i.e., structurally reproduced, patterns of social interaction depend dialectically at any given time on a balance of forces that work to sustain and to change those structures. Social structures can be altered through the work of social movements, not single agents.
56. See Lukes (1974).

57. Keyed to planners' and citizens' understandings and interpretations, the analysis of communicative action is both empirical (for it specifies a domain of observable speech acts and of nonverbal acts as well) and interpretive, tied to the meaning-giving capacities, strategies, and predispositions of diverse social and political actors; cf. Forester (1988).
58. This was the central argument developed in Chapters Three and Four.
59. Further research should investigate planners' strategies in the dimensions delineated here and at face-to-face, organizational, and structural levels of analysis.

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[3]

A Planner's Day Knowledge and Action in Communicative Practice

Tony Hesley

This analysis of the communicative acts of a senior planner during two episodes in a working day contributes to the study of planning as an interactive practice. The types and forms of knowledge used and the communicative work undertaken are examined. The paper identifies how-way power is exercised through communication. It shows planners how to make their expertise available and transparent to the clients and communities they serve.

John Forester, whose work has centered on planning as an interactive process, states: "In planning practice, talk and argument matter" (1989, 5). Until recently, discussions of planning method emphasized the technical and cerebral aspects of analysis and design. Communication and knowledge production through discourse or talk were largely ignored as inherent aspects of activities and therefore invisible. Yet any appreciation of the power of ideology to structure the imagery and vocabulary of discourse should alert us to the biases conveyed in various forms of communication. Contemporary interest in language, its structure, and use has helped highlight the importance of the medium of communication in structuring the messages we communicate.

Planning theory and method now recognize the importance of these issues as seen in the interest in negotiation and conflict mediation in planning (Susskind and Cruickshank 1987; Fisher and Ury 1983). But it is only very recently that we have begun to analyze the nature of communicative acts in planning.

This shift of attention reflects the retreat from the positivist tradition with its emphasis on the sole validity of objectified, systematized knowledge coupled with a clear separation of facts from values. We now appreciate that technical knowledge is inevitably infused with biases reflecting particular interpretive predilections and normative values (Barnes 1982; Innes 1989). Systematized, rationally grounded knowledge is now understood to be only one among several knowledge forms. Jürgen Habermas (1984), the German critical theorist, identifies three ways of "knowing, understanding, and reasoning," each with its own principles of validation: rational-technical reasoning, moral reasoning, and aesthetic-expressive understanding.

Planning work engages these knowledge forms with what is sometimes called "everyday knowledge" (Innes 1989, 13-14), or "politicians' knowledge" (Mazza 1986). Planners do not work in isolation, but interact with others in complex institutional settings (Goldstein 1984). In any conversation among experts these knowledge forms co-exist and combine. The participants are actively involved in constructing and filtering understandings and valuations. A full understanding of the impact of what planners do must address their contribution to the interrelated activities of knowing, acting, and valuing (Innes 1989, 31) in interactive situations. This means analyzing communicative acts.

Forester observes that such acts "are the atoms' out of which any bureaucratic, social, or political action is constructed" (1987, 207). This recognition generates a new terrain of planning method, which takes us beyond the interpersonal politics of negotiation and consultation practices to the construction, contexts, meanings, and ethics of communicative acts. This requires an interpretive approach to empirical research (Innes 1989).

Powerful normative reasons also lead to a focus on communicative acts. At one level, experts who operate interactively need to cultivate the habit of "reflective

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