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# Analysing and evaluating argumentation in planning

K Lapintie
Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, Helsinki University of Technology, PO Box 9300, FIN-02015 HUT, Finland; e-mail: kimmo.lapintie@hut.fi
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**Abstract.** Recent developments in textual analysis in the social sciences can be used to analyse the phenomenon called the 'argumentative' or 'communicative' turn by, for example, Patsy Healey. In this paper, modern argumentation theory, in particular the pragma-dialectical theory of Frans van Eemeren and Rob Grootendorst, together with some elements from discourse analysis, are discussed as theoretical and practical tools in analysing and evaluating arguments used in planning. It appears that there are many features in planning texts that are predominantly rhetorical and which have to be taken into account in order to reveal the basic structure of argumentation. I also discuss how planning argumentation could be developed in order to answer the challenges of participation as well as other new demands, such as sustainability.[1]

## 1 Introduction

It is becoming more and more obvious in planning theory and practice that a more elaborate view of communication in planning is necessary. This is also acknowledged in planning legislation in most countries, although the actual discursive practices in public meetings and negotiations may be less ambitious. There may be many reasons underlying this 'communicative turn' (Healey, 1996): the need of experts and politicians to legitimise their work in the face of public criticism (in terms of sustainability and local democracy, for instance), the concern for the widening gap between expert knowledge and local experience, the necessity to introduce new information and new types of argument in the planning process, etc. But there are also theoretical reasons for a serious discussion of the problems and development of communication in planning.

Those informed by Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action (Habermas, 1984; 1987), for instance, suggest that planning is still based on a restricted concept of instrumental rationality and that it is thus integrated only within the bureaucratic 'system' and less within the 'life-world' where communicative rationality prevails (Nylund, 1995; Sager, 1994). This would entail that the discourses of planners and politicians, on the one hand, and laypersons, on the other, can hardly be expected to meet very easily.

Habermas is not, however, the only source in social theory and philosophy that deserves the attention of those interested in the communicative problems of planning. The rise of rhetorical studies informed by Chaïm Perelman's 'new rhetoric' (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1971; Perelman, 1970; 1982), as well as discourse analysis informed, for instance, by Michel Foucault (Foucault, 1971; 1985), will help provide a new look at the way discursive practices operate in social contexts such as planning. There are, however, important philosophical differences between these traditions, which are not

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always discussed or even realised in practical and empirical applications. I shall return to this question in the concluding remarks of this paper.

My main purpose is to introduce a fourth perspective derived from the modern theory of argumentation, in particular the pragma-dialectical approach by Frans van Eemeren and Rob Grootendorst. This tradition is not commonly used in planning theory, although it can, as I shall argue, be used to clarify many of the issues relevant to the discussion about the communicative problems of planning. What is more problematic is that the concept of argumentation is often confused with that of rhetoric. This distinction, which is central to argumentation theory (as represented by pragma-dialectics or informal logic, for instance), is not made in many of the rhetorical and discourse-analytic studies. According to argumentation theorists, argumentation differs from rhetoric in that it presumes the ideal of a critical discussion and is not interested only in persuading particular audiences (or even the Perelmanian 'universal audience').

In recent decades, argumentation theory has developed into an independent field of study, distancing itself from both formal logic and new rhetoric. The objective of this theory can be described as an attempt to develop an 'updated' version of classical dialectic, or a critical discussion aimed at solving differences of opinion. As such it lends itself for use in all fields where critical discussion and practical reasoning become essential features of the communicative situation, although major adaptations have to be made in each particular field.

So far, there have been rather few attempts to apply this type of argumentation theory in planning and environmental policy. Howard Goldstein (1984) has applied Stephen Toulmin's model of rational justification to analyse planning as argumentation, and John Sillince (1986) has used the traditional theory of fallacies to criticise planning practice. Habermas's theory, where argumentation is woven into the theoretical framework of communicative action, is still perhaps the most widely used reference.

The idea that the problems of modern planning could be seen as argumentative problems is, however, recognised by many scholars. For instance, Patsy Healey writes about an argumentative or communicative turn in planning theory and its implications for spatial strategy formation (Healey, 1995; 1996). Healey is not referring to argumentation theory, although some of the basic problems that she, amongst others, refers to could be analysed by using some of the theoretical tools of argumentation.

I shall, in the next section, describe the argumentative situation that planners and planning theorists are facing, by first discussing the above-mentioned argumentative turn by Healey and adding to this some new demands for planning that are derived, for instance, from the environmentalist critique. All this implies that planning is in fact facing new challenges which, according to the norms of critical discussion described later, it should be able to meet.

As argumentation theory is still in a phase of development and is also often confused with new rhetoric and other techniques of persuasion, I shall next briefly review the current state of the art in argumentation theory and, in particular, the elements of the recent developments that I find theoretically sound and useful in analysing and evaluating planning. Because planning argumentation differs in certain respects from most other fields, I shall then discuss the problems of interpretation that are relevant in this connection. I will also introduce some of the tools of modern discourse analysis and suggest that these two approaches are not mutually inconsistent but that discourse analysis can be seen as an enlargement of argumentation theory (or vice versa).

As an illustration I shall provide an analysis of an argument in land-use planning consisting of only one sentence. I shall also discuss the prospects of using this model of analysis and evaluation in planning in order to reveal argumentative fallacies and to

reach for better arguments. I shall also discuss the philosophical differences between the different approaches in the analysis and evaluation of communication in planning.

The 'moral' of this paper is, however, simple enough: developing better argumentation is an essential element in the attempt to answer the challenges of participation, as well as any other conceivable objectives of planning. The only available options for valid argumentation seem to be mere rhetoric or simple use of force. It is evident that both these elements will always be dominant in planning but this does not prevent anyone from analysing and evaluating them also as arguments, and revealing the fallacies used.

As to the ideas of direct participation in planning, the argumentative approach will also give us a new perspective. Even though open forums of communication and participation will inevitably become essential parts of planning in the future (assuming that no great backlash in the direction of centralised planning will occur), we cannot assume that planning will ever become everybody's business. And even when the planner is working alone or in a small group of experts and politicians, he or she should be able to defend, if challenged, the decisions that he or she has made.

## 2 The communicative turn in planning

In the 1990s many planning theorists have sensed the beginning of a paradigm shift in planning and its theory. This is marked by a critique of the rational-comprehensive planning theory and a respect for diversity in urban life, different local traditions, different discourses, and participatory democracy. In this discussion, biodiversity from the ecological discourse, and 'social diversity' from the emphasis on democratic planning in the 1960s and 1970s, are combined. New planning, as well as a new urban policy and politics in general, should be based on respect for the different voices in the urban realm and 'communicative rationality', instead of the 'instrumental rationality' and political-economical rationality of the earlier paradigms (Sager, 1994).

One interesting elaboration of this paradigm shift has been made by Healey. According to her, the key to a new way of planning and urban policy is to find arenas where *inclusionary argumentation* could take place, that is, public reasoning which accepts the contributions of all members of a political community and recognises the range of ways they have of knowing, valuing, and giving meaning (Healey, 1995, page 49). She develops the requirements of the new attitude in planning around five problem areas: (1) finding the *arenas* for discourse where most people have access; (2) developing the *style* in order to "open up" discussion and allow different "languages"; (3) developing a method of *sorting out* the different ideas and arguments; (4) developing a *new discourse* for managing spatial and environmental change; and (5) establishing a *court* where disputes could be solved and where the community could *agree* on a strategy and maintain the argument while subjecting it to critique. In this process, the planner or policymaker becomes a facilitator or mediator.

There are, it seems to me, two distinct problem areas that Healey discusses, both requiring a different theoretical and practical elaboration. The first is the problem of *access*, which is related to the arenas and the language of planning, as well as the inevitably asymmetric power relations. As an 'ideal' speech situation will never be achieved, only a minority of those who will be affected by plans will be able to participate in the planning process, and even those few have a very different ability to express themselves; language will always be used for the purpose of persuasion, and people have very different amounts of cultural capital (knowledge, communicative skills, community support, etc) at their disposal. And even if access could be guaranteed for almost everyone, we cannot *require* that everybody participates in the process. Even if the majority would choose not to be part of the process—and use their evenings for other purposes—the planners and the politicians are still not entitled to disregard their interests.

The other problem area concerns *evaluation*, and this is related to the sorting out of arguments and the possible use of some kind of court to settle the differences of opinion. The problems connected to this are related not only to the necessity to find a compromise solution, but also to the fact that not every agreement or settlement can be deemed acceptable. This is first of all because planning is also concerned with matters of fact, such as the direct environmental and social impacts of the suggested solutions. It is also evident that even normative questions of justice and equality can be rationally discussed; we cannot assume that all our normative problems would be solved simply through local political agreement.

The principal solution to these two problem areas offered by the adherents of participatory planning is to facilitate planning discourse, to make it as close to the Habermasian ideal speech situation as possible. This would inevitably require new skills from the planner, as well as new attitudes from the politicians and the general public. Planning has, however, developed as a practical discipline with its own history, language, and argumentative structure, offering one type of expertise to (mainly) the public sector. Planners and architects are not usually academics and they have no special knowledge of the urban process (in comparison with economists, ecologists, etc). Their type of expertise has been based instead on the ability to synthesise different types of information and give it a spatial interpretation.

The role of planning expertise entailed by the suggested paradigm shift is very different from this original expert role. Instead of connecting themselves to the nation-state and its objectives (which is the historical legacy of urban planning in most European countries), planners should become local actors. Instead of striving for harmony, legibility, and spatial order, they should opt for diversity and continuous change. Instead of synthesising the different objectives concerning the built environment, with artistic or moral commitment, they should become experts in communicative skills, being able to cross cultural, class, and gender borders.

One can with justification ask whether there is anything in this new type of expertise which contemporary planners already possess and whether their existing expertise can be of much use in this new situation. If not, then planning theory can be said to undermine, instead of develop, the social position of the planning profession. Is this a mark of a decline in its social and political role? Are new forms of social practice emerging from beneath the discursive surface of legitimation of traditional planning institutions? Or can we understand the paradigm shift in planning through institutional reflexivity, as an attempt to develop a new argumentative position in the public sphere?

On the other hand, certain new objectives of planning have challenged the dominant position of local interests implicit in the concept of communicative planning. The concepts of urban ecology and sustainable development, for instance, have emphasised that the object of concern in planning is not local but rather regional and global. This means not only that problems have become more complex—and perhaps even impossible to be 'taken care of' by local authorities—but also that the concept of locality in its modernist sense has lost its meaning. The residents of a specific area, the landowners, or those who are supposed to have a role within the area, no longer have any privileged status in the argumentation about the planning of 'their territory'. Global objectives, such as the reduction of $CO_2$ emissions and the loss of biodiversity, imply that a whole network of people are concerned with what happens in the planned area, and the local residents are in return dependent on what happens elsewhere. Thus, even if we could make some sense of the 'argumentative jumble' produced by participatory planning, this would still not justify our compromise solution. The court that would decide the winning argument, if this could be established, would have to be an international court. And even then the future generations would not be represented.

The situation can be given a different interpretation if we consider it from the point of view of argumentation theory. One of the rules for critical discussion, specified by van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1992, page 208), states that the parties in argument must not prevent each other from advancing standpoints or casting doubt on standpoints. Another rule states that parties must not use formulations that are insufficiently clear or confusingly ambiguous and they should interpret the other party's formulations as carefully and accurately as possible (page 209). These two rules correspond, in essential respects, to the first two requirements of Healey's "inclusionary argumentation": everybody should in principle have access to the planning process, and a common language should be used in order to make comprehension possible.

The differences begin when it comes to exclusion or the sorting out of ideas and arguments. Healey seems to have very little to say about what to do with the resulting "argumentative jumble" of statements about facts, values, claims for attention, fears, consequences, and apocalyptic prophesies (Healey, 1995, page 59). She stresses the openness and the mediator's role of experts even in this situation, such that the result would hardly be any sort of a generally agreed-upon consensus from the vast material produced. Finally, she suggests that a "court" should be established to provide a fair treatment of disagreements and objections (page 63). In this way she actually leans on the theory and practice of forensic rhetoric.

According to van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1992), in contrast, the purpose of argumentation is not to *settle* the disputes by, for instance, calling on an unbiased third party for arbitration (a referee, an ombudsman, or a judge), but to *resolve* them. A dispute is resolved only if somebody retracts their doubt because they have been convinced by the other party's argumentation or if they withdraw their standpoint because they have realised that their argumentation cannot stand up to the other party's critique (page 34). Entering into argumentation—in contrast with trying to persuade others by means of rhetoric or violence—requires the readiness to qualify one's own standpoint, or even to reject it, if it cannot be successfully defended. This difference is important, because what is at issue in argumentation is not only differences of opinion, but the need to find the 'best possible solution', whatever this might mean in the particular context. In science, for instance, differences of opinion may even be artificially produced in order to test the plausibility or truth of theories.

It thus seems that it is very difficult for planning theory to deal with the problem of participation without a theory of argumentation, which is concerned with the very problem of solving rationally differences of opinion. This is not to claim that argumentation theory could already provide a good enough methodology for practical argumentation. In fact the problem of defining the field-dependent (as compared with field-independent) criteria for reasonability is still the weakest part of argumentation theory. On the other hand, most of the general criteria of critical discussion specified by this theory are certainly relevant in planning.

## 3 The elements of argumentation theory

Argumentation theory has its roots in the classical theories and techniques of dialectic and rhetoric, and also analytic reasoning, but the ways in which these traditions are used differ substantially in the different schools of modern thought. The revitalisation of the theories of argumentation and rhetoric in the 20th century is very much due to the works of Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca (1971), whose book *La Nouvelle Rhétorique: Traité de l'Argumentation* was first published in 1958, and Toulmin (1976), whose book *The Uses of Argument* came out in the same year. Although both these contributions were critical towards the dominant position of formal logic (the formalised

systems of deductively valid reasoning) in evaluating arguments, they had a very different view of how to develop a nonformal theory of reasoning and argumentation.

According to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, the classical view of rhetoric as the methodology of persuading audiences, where the particular features of the members of the audience (such as their initial assumptions, their emotions, etc) were given the central role, could be used in analysing any kind of argumentation, even scientific. To avoid the relativistic implications of this view, the authors introduced the controversial concept of a 'universal audience': if argumentation to a particular audience aimed at persuasion, argumentation to the universal audience aimed at conviction. However, as even the universal audience was defined as a construct of the arguer, this is hardly a successful way to avoid relativism.

Toulmin was not interested in the possibility of persuading an audience, but rather in practical reasoning and justification, where conclusions can be rationally warranted without requiring deductive arguments. His famous layout of the structure of argument has remained an important analytical tool in various textbooks, although his interpretation and critique of formal logic was severely criticised by contemporary philosophers (for example, see Castanêda, 1960; Cooley, 1959; Cowan, 1964). Toulmin's scheme of argument is, in its simplest form, based on the concepts of *data, conclusion*, and *warrant*, and it is elaborated with *backing* (for the warrant), *qualifier*, and *rebuttal* (for the conclusion). The warrant is the inference rule enabling us to move from data to the conclusion. Arguments can be either warrant using or warrant establishing (Toulmin, 1976, pages 99, 135). The criteria of acceptable warrants is, according to Toulmin, "field-dependent". But not every communicative situation is a field of argument, or every warrant justified within a field. According to Toulmin (1976), the criterion for an acceptable warrant is that it is *established:*

> "Rational discussion in any field accordingly depends on the possibility of *establishing* inference-warrants in that field: to the extent that there are common and understood inter-personal procedures for testing warrants in any particular field, a judicial approach to our problem will be possible" (page 176).

But this 'conservative' attitude to argumentation will become problematic once we remember that there are confrontations and schools of thought within all disciplines and, as mentioned, differences between disciplines. These do not concern only inference warrants but also procedures for testing these warrants. And surely we cannot conclude that, wherever there is vivid scientific or philosophical debate on basic methodological questions, unreasonability prevails (Govier, 1987, page 21).

As van Eemeren et al (1996, page 155) have pointed out, Toulmin used the term 'field of argument' in an ambiguous way: he sometimes referred to sciences or disciplines, and sometimes to problem areas (such as predictions). But if we can take it that planning as a discipline, for instance, is a field of argument, then we should, according to Toulmin, look for the established warrants and procedures for testing warrants *within* the discipline. The rationality in each field is, namely, an intrafield issue, and no critique from the outside—and presumably not even nonestablished critique from the inside—can hope to become relevant. This would imply that, for instance, the environmental and social critique based on natural and social sciences could not rationally challenge the established criteria of argumentation in planning.

But even if this were the unfortunate fact in modern planning, it could hardly be raised as the norm, and this is certainly not what Toulmin had in mind. The problem with his theory thus seems to be that his preoccupation with the critique of logic blinded him from the issue that would have been more essential from the point of view of argumentation theory, namely the distinction between valid and fallacious arguments within and across different fields. This is also why his system has proved

to be more useful in analysing individual arguments than in evaluating them (van Eemeren et al, 1996, page 158).

More recently, his model of argumentation has also been shown to be restricted, in the sense that it cannot be used in cases of confrontation, where the antagonist not only challenges the standpoint and reasons of the protagonist, but also presents his or her own standpoint with a different type of reason (Wohlrapp, 1987). In the terminology of pragma-dialectics, these cases are called *mixed disputes*. In any case, Toulmin's model is an important and useful starting point in analysing individual 'monologue' arguments, where the antagonist is not directly present.

One can with justification say that Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's attempt to fuse dialectic and rhetoric into one doctrine of 'new rhetoric' did not succeed but that the classical trichotomy between analytical or logical reasoning, argumentation (dialectic), and rhetoric is still alive, and theories and applications of nondeductive reasoning are following either the rhetorical or the argumentative path according to their interests. The second branch is developed, for instance, by the pragma-dialectical approach of van Eemeren and Grootendorst.

The purpose of pragma-dialectics was to develop a theory of argumentation where empirical and normative aspects of argumentation could be combined. Although arguments in different fields differ substantially, there are, according to van Eemeren and Grootendorst, rules for critical discussion that can be given as norms of argumentation in any field. These rules will also make it possible to deal with *fallacies*, that is, arguments that only appear to be valid or correct. Fallacies (such as *argumentum ad hominen, begging the question*, or the *straw man)* have been seen as theoretically difficult ever since Charles Hamblin (1970) presented his severe critique against what he called the "Standard Treatment" of fallacies. Pragma-dialectics is very much based on analysing these fallacies as violations of the rules of critical discussion. These rules, according to van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1992, pages 202–209), are listed below.

*Rule 1* Parties must not prevent each other from advancing standpoints or casting doubt on standpoints.

*Rule 2* A party that advances a standpoint is obliged to defend it if the other party asks them to do so.

*Rule 3* A party's attack on a standpoint must relate to the standpoint that has indeed been advanced by the other party.

*Rule 4* A party may defend their standpoint only by advancing argumentation relating to that standpoint.

*Rule 5* A party may not falsely present something as a premise that has been left unexpressed by the other party or deny a premise that they themselves have left implicit.

*Rule 6* A party may not falsely present a premise as an accepted starting point nor deny a premise representing an accepted starting point.

*Rule 7* A party may not regard a standpoint as conclusively defended if the defence does not take place by means of an appropriate argumentation scheme that is correctly applied.

*Rule 8* In their argumentation a party may only use arguments that are logically valid or capable of being validated by making explicit one or more unexpressed premises.

*Rule 9* A failed defence of a standpoint must result in the party that proposed the standpoint retracting it, and a conclusive defence in the other party retracting their doubt about the standpoint.

*Rule 10* A party must not use formulations that are insufficiently clear or confusingly ambiguous and must interpret the other party's formulations as carefully and accurately as possible.

The motivation underlying the introduction of such rules for critical discussion is, according to van Eemeren and Grootendorst, that argumentation, if these rules are

violated, does not satisfy its function of resolving differences of opinion. A deliberate or unconscious use of fallacies would turn the discussion into a rhetorical debate, which could then be settled only by voting, by using violence, or by using a third party.

For instance, the three famous fallacies mentioned above can all be explained as violations of one of the rules of critical discussion. Argumentum ad hominen, or direct personal attack upon the other party, by doubting their expertise, their intelligence, or their honest intentions, is clearly a violation of the first rule, as this is a form of preventing the other from freely advancing standpoints or casting doubt on them. If a person's intelligence were questioned, he or she would hardly be willing to continue the discussion (van Eemeren and Grootendorst, 1992, pages 110–111). Similarly, the *petitio principii*, or begging the question (also called circular reasoning), is a violation of rule 6, as this would be presenting falsely something (in this case, the standpoint that is controversial) as an accepted starting point (page 153). The straw man, or imputing a fictitious standpoint to the other party, or distorting the other party's standpoint, would equally clearly violate rule 3 (page 126).

It is not possible for us to discuss each of these rules in this connection, but I shall only point out that the most controversial of them is rule 8 because it implies that pragma-dialectics is a *deductivist* theory of argumentation. Any deductively invalid argument should, according to pragma-dialecticists, be reconstructed in the analysis by adding an unexpressed premise that will make the argument valid. The party may be said to be committed to the implicit premises as well as the explicit ones. This is a thesis that was rejected by both Perelman and Toulmin and it has also been criticised by some modern theorists (Berg, 1992; Govier, 1987; Woods, 1994; for a defence of deductivism, see Gerritsen, 1994; Groarke, 1992).

The problem with deductivism is that it is not at all uncontroversial that the protagonist would be committed to a universal (and still informative) statement that will validate his or her argument. For instance, if a doctor argues that patient p has a disease d because he or she has the symptoms $s_1$, ..., $s_n$ can we say that the doctor is committed to the universal proposition

(U) Every patient with the symptoms $s_1$, ..., $s_n$ has disease d?

Not necessarily, because it is possible that the doctor can point out certain very rare examples where these symptoms have not indicated the existence of this disease. Still it may be quite reasonable for him or her to draw this conclusion, although he or she knows that there is a risk of an incorrect diagnosis and although he or she has no reason to claim that patient p does *not* belong to the set of exceptions to the rule. As the epistemologist Robert Audi has written: "A good foundation need not be indestructible; it need only sustain the weight it is meant to bear. Not all foundations rest on bedrock, and even those that do may be anchored more or less firmly" (Audi, 1993, page 434).

Thus it would seem possible to combine the Toulminian idea of nondeductive inference warrant and the pragma-dialectical approach as the general framework. This would require, it seems to me, that in addition to the inference warrant we would introduce an extra element, risk statement or doubt statement. In the previous example, the inference warrant and the doubt statement could be, for example,

(W) From the symptoms $s_1$, ..., $s_n$, it follows that patient p has disease d.

(D) Patient p belongs to those few who do not have disease d even though they have symptoms $s_1$, ..., $s_n$ (that is, patient p is a counterexample of the inference rule W).

In a nondeductive view on argumentation, the protagonist is not committed to the negation of D (~D) and cannot be asked to give reasons for it, although ~D is the necessary implicit premise that would make his or her argument logically valid. On the other hand, the antagonist may well produce a counter argument against the original standpoint if he or she succeeds in giving reasons for D. But the mere fact that W may

in principle have exceptions will not do. This idea would correspond to the well-known concept of 'reasonable doubt' in forensic argumentation and also to the Wittgensteinian view that in usual communicative situations (when a commonly accepted inference warrant is used) we should be able to give *reasons for our doubt*, not give reasons for the *impossibility* of doubt (Wittgenstein, 1979, n:o 122 et passim).

An amended pragma-dialectical approach as a technique of analysis and evaluation might then proceed in the following way. First, the confrontation and the different standpoints are specified, and the roles of the protagonist and the antagonist are defined in relation to the standpoints advanced. Second, the reasons and the inference warrants are reconstructed from the explicit expressions—or through a critical discussion between the parties—in order to make the implicit premises explicit. Third, the fallacies are cleared from the scene, and the successes and failures of the different parties to defend or cast doubt on standpoints are evaluated. The analysis is of course very much dependent on whether we are dealing with the whole process of argumentation, a part of it, or only an individual monologue argument, such as a scientific paper or a planning document. But even if we are dealing with argumentation as a product, we should see it as part of a process, as part of a real or imagined implicit discussion (van Eemeren and Grootendorst, 1992, page 43).

## 4 Problems of interpretation and discourse analysis

Argumentation theory as such will, however, give us very little help in interpreting actual texts so that the standpoints and the reasons are revealed. Consider the following sentence, taken from the introduction of the master plan of Tampere, Finland, from 1988:

> "The land-use of the Master Plan area ... and the street network of the city proper have already settled down rather precisely within their riverbed [*asettuneet uomaansa*]" (*Tampereen yleiskaava*, 1988, page 7, translated by the author).[2]

Is this part of argumentation? On the face of it, it might appear as part of a neutral description of the history of the development of urban infrastructure of the city and an anticipation that no major changes are to be expected in the near future. However, one can easily see that it also has an argumentative role: it implies that the earlier plans of the land-use and street network have been, if not necessary, at least 'natural' ("... have already settled down ... within their riverbed") and therefore correct, and that there is no reason to make any substantial changes. However, none of this is explicitly expressed and the whole sentence is constructed in a way that will make it sound nonargumentative, like a natural fact.

These observations will immediately suggest that we have to make an extension to the theory of argumentation as an analytical tool. Most of the argumentation theories start from the initial assumption of *controversy* (for example, see van Eemeren et al, 1996, page 2) but in actual communicative situations people often tend to *avoid* controversy. Planners and politicians are no exception.

For example, in the 1996 master plan of Tampere (*Tampereen yleiskaava*, 1996), the plan is said to promote "a solution whereby the various modes of transport are linked together flexibly and uniformly, to serve both businesses and private citizens".

[2] The examples from planning documents used in this paper serve only to illustrate the problems, which means they are not chosen in any kind of systematic manner, and the cultural context is not analysed except for a few remarks. In the actual analysis of argumentation and discourse it is also necessary that the analysis is made from the original text. I have here used rough translations that do not necessarily correspond to the way that similar things would have been said in English planning documents, in order to preserve the essential syntactical and metaphorical features of the text.

Similarly, in the review of the 1992 land-use and transportation plan for Cork, Ireland, the planners wish to "continue the successful road constructing programme while also giving much more effective support for public transport, cyclists and pedestrians" (*Review of Cork Land Use/Transportation Plan*, 1992).

Use of such ambiguous and seemingly uncontroversial statements, which is typical of planning and other policy documents, has the effect of creating a 'vacuum' for critical discussion. If there is no confrontation, then there is also no debate and no argument. Also, as we know from sociological and political studies on ideology, ideological solutions are often presented as natural or even inevitable, in order to avoid their being challenged. These features of the planning texts are rhetorical but we have to be able to deal with them first in order to reveal the 'skeleton' of argumentation.

This is where modern discourse analysis can be of much use. By use of the philosophical insight derived from, for example, Foucault (Foucault, 1971; 1985) and developed in particular by many British analysts (Billig, 1996; Burman and Parker, 1993; Fairclough, 1992; Parker, 1992; Potter and Wetherell, 1989), discourse analysis has developed into a technique that will enable us to draw conclusions not only from the supposed contents of the text but also, for instance, from the subject positions and the objects of discourse that are constructed through the syntactic and pragmatic structure of texts. Using this insight we may, for instance, see that the text above constructs as its subjects not the planner or the politicians, who have *actually* made the decisions, but "the land-use" and "the street network". It also uses a natural 'dormant' metaphor (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1971, page 405) describing the development of these subjects as settling down to their riverbed (asettuneet uomaansa), which is a perfectly ordinary metaphor in Finnish.

The same structure of discourse can be seen in the following passage of the same text:

> "Traffic volumes (vehicle journeys/day) are expected to grow until 1990 by about 20%, and until 2010 by about 50% above the present level, the major part of the growth being due to the growth of passenger car traffic in the city. The growth of passenger car traffic means problems for the public transport. In the worst case the number of passengers in public transport can decrease considerably" (*Tampereen yleiskaava*, 1988, page 74, translated by the author).

Here the dormant natural metaphor is "growth", and the subject constructions are, for instance, "traffic volumes", which is the subject in the first sentence in a passive voice, and "growth of passenger car traffic", which is the subject of the second sentence.

The relevance of a syntactical analysis like this may at first seem remote to the analysis of argumentation. It is inevitable, however, because so long as 'real' subjects like the planner or the decisionmaker are not made explicit the structure of argumentation remains hidden and the whole process remains predominantly rhetorical. Subjects such as traffic cannot be supposed to defend their standpoints, such as growth. The analysis of argumentation requires that we are able to specify the protagonist and the antagonist, their relevant standpoints, and the arguments and counterarguments that are (or might be) given.

In the planning discourse of Tampere in 1988, the growth of traffic was constructed as a natural phenomenon, as part of the basic statistical knowledge that planners had to take into account. The standpoint was, clearly, that in land-use plans the planners had to be prepared for this growth, by developing the street network of the city accordingly. The possibility that a network more suitable for passenger cars would also promote car use—and in the end create a vicious circle of car dependence—was not even raised, although this would have been one of the most obvious counterarguments presented by the antagonist. The public critique against air pollution was more than ten years old.

In the district master plan for the city centre of Tampere from 1994, the section "Street Network" opened with the assertion that "the access to the city centre by car is the precondition for its economic viability". This statement marked a negative attitude towards car-free zoning: compared with the rhetoric of 1988, the 1990s planners felt the need to *defend* the dominant position of the car in the city centre, by referring to economic viability. The structure of this new text is interesting, however, as it is also wholly unreflective: the statement appears as the first sentence of the section and the authors never return to it. I shall discuss this argument in detail below.

Recovering the implicit standpoints and reasons hidden in the text is, however, not the only problem facing the analysis of planning argumentation. Plans are different from many other texts in their specific use of pictures: illustrations, diagrams, maps, charts, etc. In official land-use planning, the legal status of the plan is given to the map and to a specific part of the text (specifications and instructions). In planning competitions, the arguments used by the jury are meant to be read beside the represented illustrations of the entries. In each case, the pictures in planning are never simply illustrations of what is said in the text; they also carry an independent meaning. Can this meaning be used in argumentation?

In some cases the pictures have a clear rhetorical role, in the sense that some controversial standpoints which are not (and perhaps could not be) expressed in the text, are implied by figures and maps. In the *Schéma Directeúr 2015, Île de France* (1994, regional master plan of Île de France), for instance, the first chapter, "A European

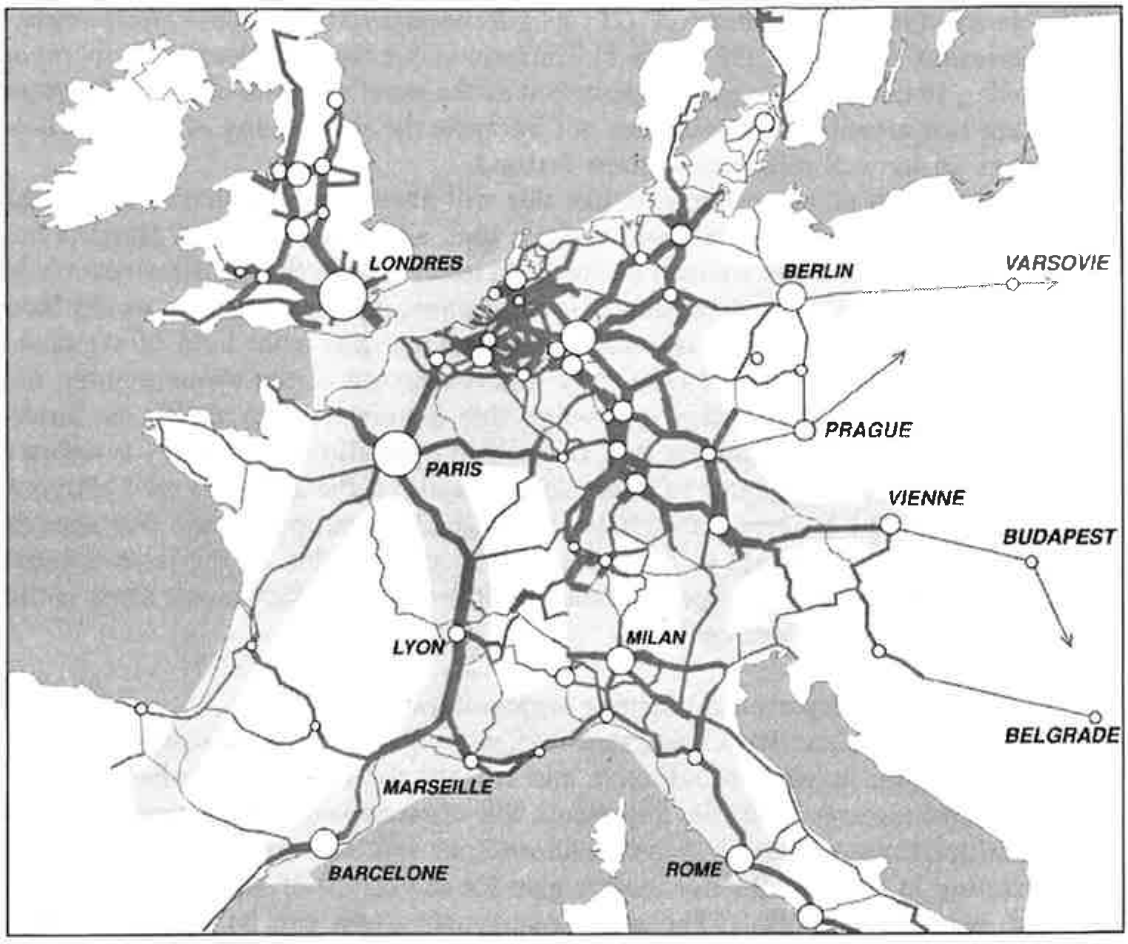


**Figure 1.** "The Great Development Axes in Europe" (source: *Schéma Directeur 2015, Île de France*, 1994; reprinted with permission of Direction Régionale de l'Équipement de Île-de-France, 21–23 rue Miollis, F-75732 Paris cedex 15, France).

Ambition", is illustrated with a map describing "The Great Development Axes in Europe" (figure 1). In addition to these axes, the map also depicts the daily volumes of vehicle traffic on the main highways in and around France. Thus the image implicitly advances the standpoint that development can somehow be derived from vehicle traffic (or at least is inherently connected with it), and that this also represents a European ambition (or perhaps *the* ambition of the people of Île de France).

In such cases, we either have to conclude that only expressed or clearly implied standpoints should be dealt with in the analysis, or we have to make the hidden standpoints explicit and assume that the protagonist is also committed to these standpoints. If we are dealing with an open process of argumentation, however, it is always possible for the antagonist to challenge the hidden standpoints and thereby force the protagonist either to amend or to reject the implicit standpoints.

The situation is more complex when the written text and the illustrations seem to contradict each other. This is different from the case when there is a contradiction between statements in the text, as people have a very different ability to 'read pictures'. I shall take an example from an architectural competition in Finland from 1991. The purpose of the competition was to plan an extension for the small town of Hamina, which is famous for its radial plan, unique in Finland. The winning entry in the competition was typical of its time, representing a 'deconstructivist' plan, in which the orderly spatial structure of the centre was step by step transformed into a more fragmented, 'exploding', structure (figure 2).

However, according to the jury the strength of the entry was in its "timelessness and the clarity of its spatial formation" (*Hamina, Tervasaaren aatekilpailu—Idea Competition for Tervasaari in Hamina*, 1991, page 8). The fashionable theme of deconstructivism or the exploding structure that could be described as the exact opposite of timelessness or clarity were not mentioned, if one does not interpret the mentioning of "the spirit of the time" as an implicit reference to these features.

The explanation of inconsistencies like this will always require knowledge of the cultural context. In this case, we might suppose that, as the town plan of Hamina has such a unique position in the Finnish heritage, no lesser feature than timelessness could be used in the argument, but particularly not fashionable because this would have meant that the context was not taken seriously enough. But what kind of argument is the jury in fact committed to? Obviously it is committed to the winning entry, not only (or not at all) to the written expression that a timeless plan should be implemented in this case. It even appears as if the written evaluation of the entry is rather a rhetorical device to sell the entry to nonarchitects: without the ability to read planning illustrations it would be very difficult to challenge the standpoint that this specific entry is timeless. Any attempt to require a precise specification of the term timeless would have to be related to the spatial structure of the entries. But in what sense is this entry timeless, and the others not?

## 5 Evaluation and development of planning argumentation

The examples given above have illustrated that, as we try to extract the argumentative commitments—that is, clear standpoints and reasons for them—from the rhetorical expressions and pictures used, the arguments will often appear to be rather primitive. Let us consider, for example, the above-mentioned one-sentence argument given against car-free zoning in the 1994 district master plan for the centre of Tampere (*Tampereen keskustan osayleiskaava*, 1994). The explicit statement given can be interpreted as a reason for something that is not stated.

*Explicit reason* "Access to the city centre by car is a precondition for its economic viability" (page 15).

**Figure 2.** Ilmari Lahdelma's winning entry for an extension to the town of Hamina (source: *Hamina, Terrasaaren aatekipailu—Idea Competition for Tervasaari in Hamina*, 1991).

For this to make any sense as an argument, we have to suppose that something like the following standpoint is implicitly advanced.

*Implicit standpoint* There should be no implementation of car-free zoning in the centre of Tampere.

The implicit premises would then seem to be the following.

*Implicit premise 1* We (the citizens) want to keep the economy of Tampere viable.

*Implicit premise 2* If we want X (keep the economy viable), and C (not implementing car-free zoning) is a necessary condition of X, then we should do C.

In a critical discussion, the antagonist would have many paths to follow. In the first place, he or she could point out that the protagonist has not given an unambiguous meaning to all the terms used in the argument and that he or she has thus violated rule 10 of critical discussion. In particular, the word viability should be specified, as different businesses in the city would be affected in a different way by car-free zoning: some would probably gain from it, whereas some would suffer. After this specification, he or she might challenge the truth of this statement, and the protagonist would have to defend it by producing, for instance, research results or documented experience from other cities.

Second, the antagonist might challenge the truth of implicit premise 2. It is often assumed that, for this kind of 'practical norm' to be true, we only have to know that the two parts of the antecedent are true, that is, that the desire for economic viability exists and that the necessary condition between access by car and economic viability is true. But this is not the case.

The statement totally ignores the fact that we do have some other desires except economic viability (such as healthy city air), which may be in contradiction with the first desire. Moreover, even if we had taken all of our desires into account, it still does not follow that we *should* do C, because in addition to wants and desires we also have a lot of *obligations*. Thus, whether we understand the word 'should' in either of its standard meanings (that is, either as a *rational* or a *moral* should), we still cannot draw the suggested conclusion without additional information.

It is interesting to compare these findings with the situation of modern planning described in section 2. The attempts to develop participatory or 'inclusionary' planning easily lead us into the problem of an argumentative jumble, to use Healey's terminology. This is because planners—if ever they are willing and successful in providing access to everybody and a free discussion between parties in the planning process—will have to deal with an often chaotic and incommensurable set of objectives, values, predictions, fears, interests, etc, none of which can be ruled out as a priori irrelevant. And even if they manage to sort out some kind of consensus solution, they still cannot be sure that everybody concerned has expressed his or her opinion—at least the future generations that sustainability arguments directly address are usually not represented.

But if we consider the situation from the point of view of argumentation theory—that is, not argumentation as rhetoric or free discussion but as *critical* discussion—we shall get a totally different picture. Instead of an argumentative jumble, it often seems that argumentation in planning has not even got off the ground. Very often the actual standpoints advanced are not made explicit and, if reasons are given for these standpoints, they are not elaborated to meet even the most obvious challenges or counter-arguments that can be expected from possible antagonists. In such a situation, one cannot expect that the different parties (such as the planners, the politicians, NGOs, the entrepreneurs, or the individual citizens) feel that the disputes have been resolved. The plans cannot then be said to be results of critical discussion but at best the results of political agreement and at worst the results of simple force.

I have deliberately used only planning documents as illustrations of argumentation in planning. This is not meant to imply that arguments used by citizens or NGOs would be free of similar fallacies. However, it is often assumed that the requirement that planning discourse should meet the norms of critical argumentation would only strengthen the dominant position of experts and politicians. It is indeed true that, in contemporary planning, experts and other authorities of the planning process have more information and a better ability to develop specific alternatives and arguments, whereas citizens and NGOs do not always have a single 'solicitor' who could translate their interests into arguments. However, as the examples above have shown, the arguments used by planners are often open to severe criticism from the point of view of argumentation theory. In fact, if they would have to be developed to meet this criticism, many of the public interests that are currently ignored would enter the discussion.

The problem with such a poor argumentative quality is not only that it is often undemocratic or paternalistic, but also that planning cannot be supposed to be able to deal with the serious problems that it has to face in contemporary society. One should not forget that argumentation is not only the means to resolve differences of opinion, but it is also a way to find the 'best possible solution' to practical and theoretical problems. These problems—such as unsustainability in urban development—are matters not only of opinion, but also of fact.

This critical observation—independently of how far it can be generalised in the field in modern planning—also gives us keys to the development of planning in the direction of critical discussion. At least the following applications of the norms of argumentation theory could prove to be useful.

(1) As planning is mostly concerned with decisions and developments which are not *actually* natural or inevitable, any attempt to 'naturalise' these decisions and developments should be rejected. This also entails that all decisions—even the ones that entail that no major changes are made—call for arguments.

(2) The standpoints that the parties advance should be made explicit and they should be expressed, as far as possible, in a language that is common to all the parties (for example, not hidden in illustrations and not using unnecessary technical or professional terminology), and which is as unambiguous as possible.

(3) The protagonist of a standpoint should give reasons for his or her standpoint and he or she should answer to the relevant challenges and counterarguments that have been proposed in the planning process and in public discussion, and also those that can obviously be imagined. In this sense, planning should become, at the same time, more responsive and more scientific or critical.

(4) If the original standpoint cannot be successfully defended, it should be amended or rejected and the plan should also be changed accordingly. The plan should never be allowed to become independent of the textual argumentation that is given for its defence.

(5) It is a common assumption in planning that, in the end, planning solutions are political decisions that cannot be 'shown' to be right or wrong. This may be partly true but it is also evident that planning includes a number of descriptive issues that are clearly *not* the subject of political decision (such as the direct economic or ecological impacts of certain policies). It is also important to remember that even normative and political issues can be rationally discussed—this was actually the starting point in the development of argumentation theory in the first place. Development of planning argumentation has the objective of finding the proper area of political decisionmaking and also the necessary information that the politician needs in order to make rational decisions.

## 6 Discussion

But what is the actual relevance of the argumentation analysis and evaluation in the context of planning? Is the argumentative approach committed to a specific, perhaps too optimistic, view of planning as a social practice and form of expertise? As an essential part of the analysis consists of revealing the argumentative structure from behind the rhetorical and often fallacious textual corpus, it may seem that argumentation theory is striving for a 'pure', rational, and nonmetaphorical communicative practice. In comparison with most of discourse analytic research and rhetorical studies, it could thus be accused of misinterpreting planning as a social and political activity.

This would not be a correct interpretation but there are indeed differences concerning rationality and evaluation, between the different communicative approaches to planning and other discursive practices. This is an issue that cannot be fully elaborated here but a few remarks may be in order.

The argumentative approach is committed to the distinction between (valid) argumentation and (mere) rhetoric, which means that a rational and critical assessment of the arguments used in different fields of argument makes sense. It is also assumed that the criteria of this evaluation cannot be based solely on the adherence of particular audiences, or even the Perelmanian universal audience. Scientific argumentation is the paradigm case where this concept of a normative ideal of argumentation is assumed, which is clearly seen in the fact that scientific results are never accepted through voting or political agreement—or if they are, it is clearly considered to be a violation of the principles of scientific research. But it is also assumed by most argumentation theorists that the normative requirements of critical discussion can also be applied in more practical contexts—and that they *should* be applied whenever the case is both controversial and open to better or worse solutions.

Thus we may say that the argumentative approach is committed to a different concept of rationality than Perelmanian 'new rhetoric', which assumes that all argumentation is essentially audience dependent. It is also inconsistent with the constructivist and relativistic positions that are held by many discourse analytic studies. Thus the argumentative approach does not assume that rationality and truth are simply social constructions, produced by the discursive practices where rationality and real are legitimately used. On the other hand, it is perfectly possible for the argumentation analyst to admit that these concepts *are* often used for rhetorical purposes. Thus this perspective is not committed to an assumption that rational discussion would be the dominant feature of social discourses like planning. It only maintains that these discourses are in principle open to self-reflexivity and that analysing and evaluating arguments is one of the tools that planning theory can present to practicing planners for this purpose.

Theoretically, argumentation theory is more closely related to the Habermasian tradition than to discourse analysis or new rhetoric, which is indicated clearly in Habermas's excursus on the theory of argumentation (Habermas, 1984, pages 22–42). The requirements suggested by the argumentative analysis—although they may suggest some dramatic changes in some forms and practices of planning—are, however, not in principle half as revolutionary as the changes suggested by some of the advocates of participatory or communicative planning. In the argumentative model, planners are only supposed to do what they always thought they had been doing; namely, to deal with different types of information, to take into account different interests and aspects of the problem, and to provide decisionmakers with the information they need in order to make rational decisions. What they have to do, however, is to take argumentation more seriously and not to let it deteriorate into rhetoric for persuading people to accept prechosen decisions.

In the analysis above I have made no assumption as to how serious the planners or the politicians are in constructing their arguments, that is, how far they can seriously be said to be aiming at critical discussion and not simply political rhetoric. This is quite consistent with the theoretical view adopted in this paper: although rhetoricity is evidently an important feature of political texts, this will not prevent us from analysing them also as argumentation, as it is only as argumentation that they can be said to *justify* the solutions presented.

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