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# The Centrality of Normative Ethical Theory to Contemporary Planning Theory

*Thomas L. Harper and Stanley M. Stein*

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## ■ ETHICAL THEORY AND PLANNING THEORY

### The Shared Fallacy

Public planning theory and ethical theory have a similar origin and mission. Ethical theory arose out of attempts to give an account of moral goodness and the morally good life. Public planning arose from the commitment of social reformers (Friedmann 1987) and designers to create a good life for ordinary people (Klosterman 1978).<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, following World War II as planning became widely accepted as a profession, mainstream planning theory<sup>2</sup> became more sharply divorced from ethical theory. Ironically, this cleavage reflected an erroneous shared premise that each discipline was technical in nature and should eschew value questions.

In philosophy, a clear distinction was drawn between normative ethics (involving substantive argument about what is the right thing to do) and meta-ethics (the analysis of ethical language and moral arguments). Ethical theory came to focus almost completely on meta-ethics to the exclusion of substantive normative ethical argument (Shklar 1986, 13). In planning, the fallacy was expressed in the approach which Friedmann (1987) labels policy analysis, Klosterman (1978) calls instrumental planning, and many others refer to as rational planning. This approach replaced social reform as the dominant planning theory during the 1950s. It focused on applying value-free Weberian social science, classical economics, systems analysis, and quantitative management techniques to public decision-making.

Of course, neither philosophers nor planners were able in practice to avoid value questions. The result was that normative assumptions tended to be implicit, often unrecognized. The underlying implicit normative ethical theory was most often utilitarianism, operationalized in planning via such ill-defined concepts as the public interest.

In philosophy, the fallacy has lost its hold almost entirely due to three factors: 1) the demonstration that no clear line could be drawn between questions of meaning and questions of fact<sup>3</sup> (Quine 1963), thus meta-ethics could not be divorced from substantive normative ethics; 2) the difficulty of maintaining the fact/value distinction in practice (Williams 1971, 85), the facts and theories of social science came to be seen as value-laden (Nielsen 1983; Habermas 1984); 3) the arrival of full-blown ethical theories, clearly and unabashedly normative, with both procedural and substantive content. Rawls' (1971) work freed philosophers from their long self-imposed silence, showing that substantive ethical questions relevant to a political/social context "could be discussed without the slightest loss of rational rigor or philosophical rectitude" (Shklar 1986, 13-14). Close on Rawls'

### ABSTRACT

Since planning is a normative activity one would expect public planning to be based on moral foundations. Unfortunately, post-WWII mainstream planning theory became divorced from ethical theory. Ironically, this cleavage reflected an erroneous shared premise—that each discipline was technical in nature and should eschew value questions. This fallacious premise is now largely rejected. Contemporary planning theory fully recognizes the inherently normative nature of public planning processes. However, it still makes little use of normative ethical theory to illuminate the issues raised by this recognition. In this article we will present a spectrum of five normative ethical theories and show how these theories provide the underlying normative foundation for six theories of planning. Thus many debates about planning theories can be understood as debates about underlying normative ethical theories.

*Thomas L. Harper is Associate Professor in the Planning Program, Faculty of Environmental Design, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2N 1N4.*

*Stanley M. Stein is Senior Instructor in Philosophy, Faculty of Environmental Design, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2N 1N4.*

heels was Nozick's (1974) natural rights-based defense of libertarianism. Writing earlier in Europe, but with a later influence in North America, Habermas (1984) critiqued the concept of value-free social science as an illusion. More recently, communitarian writers (Walzer 1987) advanced and defended values which they argued arose out of shared community norms.

In planning, the fallacy also lost its hold, though less decisively, for similar reasons: 1) a wide-spread recognition that value-free planning was impossible because choices between divergent objectives and interests cannot be resolved by any technical means (Klosterman 1978); 2) some recognition that normative elements cannot be confined to a single goal-setting stage of the planning process (Alexander 1986) because the entire process is inherently political and normative (Klosterman 1978), involving competing conceptions of the good life (Long 1959); 3) a growing awareness that the utilitarian ethical theory implicit in many rational planning techniques (Wachs 1982) was inadequate and resulted in many injustices.<sup>4</sup>

### The Reunion of Ethical Theory and Planning Theory

The rejection of the fallacy set the stage for a reunion of ethical theory and planning theory by legitimating a new set of questions for planners. Can public goals be objectively evaluated or justified? What principle(s) should be used? Whose interests should be served by public planning? How should the powerless groups in society be represented? These are the kinds of questions which the planner-as-scientist is particularly ill-equipped to answer. Different sorts of tools and theories are needed to analyze normative issues; these come from the field of normative ethics. It is really not possible to justify the goals of public planning without appeals (explicit or not) to normative ethical theory (NET). When this is recognized, NET moves from the periphery of planning theory to a central location at its very heart.

While recognition of these questions spawned a host of normative planning theories (e.g., Faludi 1973; Friedmann 1973; Grabow and Heskin 1973) most of this work was not directly related to NET. Some did look to professional codes of ethics for guidance (Marcuse 1976; Howe and Kaufmann 1979), and sought to broaden the codes when they did not address these new questions.<sup>5</sup> Much of the work on planning ethics has focused on professional codes and on the behavior of individual planners (Wachs 1985).

Beginning in the late 1970s some planning theorists began to explicitly make the link between NET and planning theory. Rawls' (1971) early work has received the most attention (Klosterman 1978; McConnell 1981; Wood 1982; Harper and Stein 1983), while some also drew on Nozick (Wood 1982, Harper and Stein 1983, 1984 1986). Forester's (1980, 1989) application of Habermas' NET is probably the best known. While Friedmann (1987, 1989) continues to be a leader in formulating and critiquing

normative planning theory, even his recent work makes very little reference to NET.

Our aim in this article is to present a framework for understanding NETs, to survey the principle features of some contemporary NETs, and to show how our interpretation of these NETs provides the normative bases of contemporary planning theories.

## ■ NORMATIVE ETHICAL THEORIES

### The Nature of Normative Ethical Theory

At this point it is important to outline what we mean and do not mean by normative ethical theory (NET), and to discuss the nature of NET. It is helpful to divide NET into two levels—substantive and procedural—because much of the disagreement focuses on substantive NET.

Substantive ethical theory advocates actual normative ethical principles and judgements. These principles are meant to be applied to judge the rightness or wrongness of specific social institutions, actions, plans, policies, etc. Examples are the various forms of utilitarianism (Smart 1972), natural rights (Nozick 1974), Rawls' (1971) two principles, and some forms of egalitarianism. The ethical theorists just mentioned are often in radical disagreement concerning the proper role of government and the mandate of public planning in a liberal democratic society.

Procedural ethical theory is a level above substantive theory. It makes recommendations about the process which should be followed in deriving and justifying ethical principles, and arriving at ethical conclusions. Procedural NET give us guidance regarding how we should go about debating the merits of competing substantive NETs, and thus offers some way of searching for a consensus amongst them. Rawls (1971) and Habermas (1984) are both concerned with the procedural level of NET.

We believe that the most promising approach to procedural NET is the coherentist (Clarke and Simpson 1989) approach which does not start from abstract, basic, or universal moral principles.<sup>6</sup> Instead, using a process often referred to as wide reflective equilibrium (after Rawls 1971, 48-51; Daniels 1985; Nielsen 1982), one reflects on one's own ethical principles, judgements, and intuitions; correcting intuitions by reference to principles; generating principles which reflect intuitions; using these principles to justify intuitions; and seeking a reflective equilibrium where all of these factors are coherent and consistent, giving as much sense as possible to our shared moral life. Whether or not they explicitly include a procedural component in their NETs, most contemporary ethical theorists do in fact follow this sort of procedure.

Table 1 summarizes some features of the various NETs discussed in this section (i.e., whether they have substantive or procedural components, whether they are consequen-

	Normative Ethical Theory				
	Utilitarian	Nozick	Rawls	Habermas	Communitarian
Procedural Ethical Theory	Y(1)	N	Y	Y	N
Substantive Ethical Theory	Y(2)	Y	Y	N	N
Consequentialist	Y	N	Y	N	N
Deontological	N	Y	Y	Y	N
Liberal Democratic Notion of Person	N	Y	Y	Y	N

Y = yes  
 Y(1) = given nonspecific account of "good"  
 N = no  
 Y(2) = given specific account of "good"

Table 1. Key features of normative ethical theories.

rialist or deontological in approach, and whether they are based on the liberal democratic notion of the person as discussed in the section on communitarianism.

### Utilitarian Ethical Theory

Utilitarian ethical theory is a general moral theory which is consequentialist in that it evaluates the rightness or wrongness of acts by their consequences or outcomes. It holds that the best act (rule, plan, policy, system, or intervention) is the one which maximizes the sum total of whatever is intrinsically good—usually happiness or well-being. This recommendation may be viewed as either procedural or substantive. If good is defined (e.g., as pleasure) then it is a substantive principle; if the definition is open then it is a procedural one (i.e., decide what is good then maximize it).

A key attraction of utilitarianism to the scientific<sup>7</sup> mindset is that, in principle, moral issues can be resolved by the empirical calculation of consequences. Moral thought can be reduced to the empirical, and public policy questions can be determined by social science. Moral obscurity arises only from technical limitations. A further attraction is that utilitarianism provides a common currency of moral thought: the concerns of different parties and the different claims on one party can all be translated, in principle, into a common commensurable unit—happiness. Thus, it is impossible to have a moral conflict between two claims which are both valid and irreconcilable (Williams 1972).

There are numerous variants of utilitarianism. Unitary

utilitarian theories tend to hold that there is one single public interest which can be maximized. Economic utilitarian theories (when applied to public policy) hold that an approximation of this single total can be derived by translating individual utilities into a commensurable unit (dollars) and thus summed to give a total measure (or at least a proxy measure) of well-being. This requires some assumptions<sup>8</sup> which noneconomists often view as dubious.<sup>9</sup> Pluralistic utilitarian theories hold that individual utilities can not be measured and summed, but that an open political process will yield the best approximation of maximum well-being.<sup>10</sup>

Critiques of utilitarianism are plentiful. Williams' (1972) is one of the best general ones; MacIntyre (1977) criticizes the economic utilitarian version. Most of the other NETs discussed in this section also include a critique of utilitarianism. Its most forceful contemporary defender is J. J. C. Smart (1972).

### Nozickian Negative Rights Theory

In contrast to consequentialist NETs, negative natural rights theories are deontological<sup>11</sup>—they evaluate acts, not according to their consequences, but according to whether they respect or violate the rights of other persons.<sup>12</sup> Natural rights approaches are based on an ultimate respect for individual persons as separate entities, each of equal and intrinsic worth. Any interference with the freedom of individual persons must be morally justified. Otherwise, the individuals interfered with are being used as tools or mere

means to achieve the objectives of some other individuals.

Nozick (1974) is the leading contemporary advocate of this position. Our interpretation of Nozick is that he would advocate a basic rights principle something like: each individual person has the right to freely act in any way he chooses, provided that choice recognizes the same right for every other person. From this moral perspective the only legitimate limitation on rights is the recognition that every other person has the same rights. This recognition places side constraints on our behavior. These side constraints express the inviolability of each person.

The moral side constraints upon what we may do...reflect the fact of our separate existences. They reflect the fact that no moral balancing act can take place among us; there is no moral outweighing of one of our lives by others so as to lead to a greater overall social good. There is no justified sacrifice of some of us for others (Nozick 1974, 33).

Thus this sort of "rights approach" is a negative one—it tells us what we should not do. Subject to these negative side constraints, individuals should have the freedom to decide what they want to do, in pursuit of whatever goals they choose. Probably the strongest criticism of Nozick is that the most basic underlying moral value is not the formal notion of freedom, but rather it is the autonomy of the person which should be the ultimate moral concern, and autonomy requires some command over economic resources.

Nozick's NET is entirely substantive in that there is no discussion of the procedures for debating what ethical principles should be ultimate. However, his arguments do use a process like wide reflective equilibrium (WRE), appealing to our moral intuitions regarding particular moral judgements.

It is interesting to note that the attributes of Nozick's NET (summarized in Table 1) are the exact opposite of the procedural version of utilitarianism.

### Rawlsian Ethical Theory

Rawls' (1971, 1985, 1987) is the only one of our NETs which offers both a procedure for arriving at the ethical principles which should govern a society, and principles of justice which he argues would arise out of such a procedure and which best embody the moral ideals of liberty and equality for a constitutional democracy.

Rawls' procedure for deriving principles of justice is that the principles should be the ones which would be chosen by rational self-interested persons if they did not know their own position in society.

The principles of justice are chosen behind a veil of ignorance. This ensures that no one is advantaged or disadvantaged in the choice of principles by the outcome of natural chance or the contingency of social circumstances. Since all are similarly situated and no one is able to design principles to favor his particular condition, the principles of justice are the result of a fair agreement or bargain (Rawls 1971, 12).

The role of these "rational contractors" is intended to be that of a perspicuous representation of our ordinary moral positions as explicated by Rawls and generated by him via the method of WRE. In Rawls' early work it sounds as if his argument for his two principles requires nothing more than rationality and the veil of ignorance, and that it thus could be argued that his principles can claim to be universally valid. This seems to be Klosterman's (1978) interpretation. It is important to recognize that Rawls' theory rests on other thoroughly normative assumptions, such as impartiality and fairness. His more recent work acknowledges that these normative assumptions have arisen out of a particular historical context (i.e., the enlightenment culture), in a society with a plurality of interests and goals, consensually holding democratic values, and seeking an overlapping consensus of their differing views (Rawls 1987).

Rawls (1985, 226-231) then argues that persons following his idealized process would choose his two substantive principles with the first over-riding in cases of conflict.

1. Liberty—Each person has an equal right to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic rights and liberties, which scheme is compatible with a similar scheme for all.
2. Equality—Social and economic inequalities are to satisfy two conditions: first, they must be attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity, and second, they must be to the greatest benefit of the least-advantaged members of society.

The first principle is quite similar to the Nozickian principle. The second principle, applied to the economic realm, says that the best economic system is the one in which the worst-off group is better off than they would be in any other system. Different "quasi-empirical" assumptions (Harper 1987) or background theories could take this principle in divergent directions. An advocate of capitalism might argue that a free market system, with some redistribution, would maximize the well-being of the worst-off; while a socialist might argue that the power accruing to corporate capitalists as a result would inevitably lead to exploitation, and thus violate Rawls' first principle, particularly if meaningful liberty requires individual autonomy.

### Habermasian Ethical Theory

The critical theory of Habermas and his followers is an entirely procedural NET. It is extremely complex; we will mention only a few facets which are most relevant here. Habermas critiques our contemporary culture as one distorted by the ideology of scientism—the notion that all thought, action, and knowledge can be reduced to the objective scientific paradigm. This reductionistic ideology is the dominant ideology of our time, one which distorts communication about both empirical and normative matters, and one which perpetuates the class domination of the status quo (Nielsen 1983, 120-128). By systemically distorting all our communication it prevents us from reaching self-knowledge and emancipation.

For critical theorists, the starting point is a procedural process. Habermas believes that these procedural conditions give a “moral core” for all ethical theories (Habermas 1986). He suggests that a moral principle is rational or true “if it is what would be adopted in a constraint-free consensus” (Nielsen 1983, 134). This process is similar to that of Rawls; Habermas says of Rawls’ process that “it is a reasonable proposal” (Habermas 1986, 205).

However, Habermas goes on to argue that what one can not yet do is give substantive moral principles as Rawls does, because

...as soon as he moves to his two principles, he is speaking as a citizen of the United States with a certain background, and it is easy to make—as has been done—an ideological critique of the concrete institutions and principles which he wants to defend (Habermas 1986, 205).

Thus, Habermas would argue that all three of the substantive NETs which we have discussed have no objective validity, but are really communitarian (see below).

The reason, Habermas argues, that we can’t yet go this far is that three conditions must be met:

1. an ideological critique of present social institutions (i.e., a critique of scientism as the basis of our technological society);
2. a social science which is both explanatory and critical;
3. an ideal-speech situation, allowing for undistorted communication, where we can come to a constraint-free consensus.

Thus, Habermas connects the procedural goals of normative ethical philosophy to the requirement for a more adequate social science and to his theory of undistorted linguistic communication. It will not be possible to arrive at the best substantive ethical principles until the conditions above have been realized.

In the interim Habermas recommends that we work toward making our political decision-making processes into dialogues where we can gain a less-distorted view of ourselves and the functioning of the system in which we live. His focus would be on approximating the ideal speech situation, in which all participants in dialogue are free from ideological distortions. A crucial part of the planner’s role then would be conscious-raising—helping the client recognize their own unconscious distortions.

### Communitarian Ethical Theory

Unlike all the other ethical theories outlined here, communitarians believe that normative values arise out of the community, and can be legitimated only by the actual community itself. Thus, moral values are articulated by concrete social dynamics focusing on particular, specific issues.

Communitarians, such as Sandel (1982), are critical of what they see as individualistic thinkers like Rawls or Nozick, arguing that these thinkers base their ethical theories on a false liberal democratic conception of the person. For example, MacIntyre (1977, 204-5, 201; cited by Kymlicka 1987) argues that

...we all approach our own circumstances as bearers of a particular social identity. I am someone’s son or daughter... I am a citizen of this or that city... Hence what is good for me has to be the good for someone who inhabits these roles... I can only answer the question “What am I to do?” if I can answer the prior question “Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?”

In this view values are not created or chosen by the individual, but discovered, and self-discovery is achieved through knowledge of a person’s various communal attachments.

Our self is at least partly constituted by ends we haven’t chosen, but which we discover by virtue of our being embedded in some shared social context (Kymlicka 1987, 11).

While the communitarian view is often associated (at least in North America) with liberal political views, it seems to us to have very conservative implications. In the words of a leading British conservative thinker, Roger Scruton (1985, 125):

The conclusion to be drawn...may be the profoundly conservative one, that allegiance to what is established is the given, from which social criticism starts, and that this allegiance is neither conditioned nor purposive, but a form of

pious immersion in the history to which one's life is owed?

The profoundly particularist and amoral communitarian approach to ethics disallows any kind of general meta-level remarks regarding the nature of morality in general, whether substantive or procedural. Hence, the "no" answer to all the categories in Table 1.<sup>13</sup> This is the difficulty with communitarianism—its arguments are not really moral ones. It seems to conflate description and prescription. Certainly one's values can not be identified without appeal to one's historical and social context. In this sense values are given by the context. But individuals have the capacity to choose whether to accept, modify, or reject them. In addition, it doesn't follow from an account of the social origin of individual values that we should switch from the individual to the community as the proper object of moral concern. Such a switch could lead to a very oppressive bureaucratic state. Differing philosophical accounts of personhood do not obviate the need for moral justification of government actions which interfere with the individual's ability to choose a meaningful life.

## ■ NORMATIVE PLANNING THEORIES

Ethical choices are inherent in the choice of planning theory. Implicit in each planning theory is a NET (or perhaps two NETs). In this section we will show how the NETs outlined in the previous section provide the underlying normative basis for some contemporary planning theories. In addition, it will be seen that other NETs provide a basis for critiques of each planning theory.

We will discuss six planning theories. Four of these are from Friedmann's (1987) well-known typology. The fifth (progressive planning) is also quite familiar, and sits between Friedmann's old and new traditions (social learning and radical planning) in a way which we feel is a good fit to the North American context. The sixth (libertarian planning) is one which is often reflected in North American planning practice, but is rejected by Friedmann as being antithetical to planning.

It should be noted that when we attribute a view to an ethical theorist we are giving our interpretation of what he would have said at the time of his most recent cited work. Some of these authors may have different current views.

### Social Reform

Social reform is the grand tradition of planning theory, for which planning is social engineering—a scientific endeavor focused on making actions by the state more effective. Social reformers have a unitary conception of the public interest, that is, they believe that there are public goals, the rightness of which is clear and obvious. They may seek radical change but their means are top-down, via

societal guidance (Friedmann 1987, ch. 3).

There is very little overt support for this approach in recent planning literature. It has been widely recognized that the self-evident goals assumed by social reform do not exist. Rather, pluralists have argued that the public interest seems, in practice, to be "nothing more than a label attached indiscriminately to a miscellany of particular compromises of the moment" (Schubert 1960, cited by Alexander 1986, 103). However, the actual practice of many planners and many other professionals who do planning still seems to us to reflect this approach, in that they act and speak as if they, rather than citizens or politicians, are best qualified to determine the public interest.

The original arguments for social reform were essentially utilitarian. The public health needs in Britain in 1848 were so basic to human survival and so obvious that reasonable and moral persons probably could agree that they were in the public interest (Sutcliffe 1981, ch. 3).

Today none of the NETs we have included would favor social reform. In situations where the needs are sufficiently basic and obvious, utilitarians and Rawls might support it. In general, social reform would have difficulty claiming to maximize well-being, to meet either of Rawls' principles, to preserve rights, or to express community values. Habermas would of course see social reform as a tool to perpetuate elite domination.

### Policy Analysis

Policy analysis epitomizes the application of the technocratic/scientific fallacy in its approach to public planning, focusing on applying value-free Weberian social science to improving decision-making by the state. Its rational decision model (RDM) supports the societal guidance actions which maintain the status quo. Recent policy analysts look to a pluralistic political process to articulate the public interest and public goals, which are then accepted uncritically. It is assumed that the gathering and analysis of data, the construction of explanatory models, and the evaluation of alternative means to achieve public ends, can be divorced from any consideration of the appropriateness of these public ends. The planner is seen as a value-free means-technician who deals with "factual data but avoids the value questions of defining these objectives" (Klosterman 1978, 52). In Friedmann's use, policy analysis incorporates not only rational-comprehensive planning (Meyerson and Banfield 1955), but also incrementalist modifications to it (Braybrooke and Lindblom 1963; Etzioni 1968).

Policy analysis has few supporters in contemporary planning literature; it has been rejected for the reasons discussed earlier. Those who do continue to support it attempt to respond to these critiques by adding public participation, and by recognizing the inherently normative nature of the planning process, in the sense that it is directed towards the achievement of goals. However,

standard formulations of its planning process still simply call for goals to be identified or articulated (Robinson 1972, 27-28; Alexander 1986, 46).

Utilitarianism provides the normative rationale for policy analysis' rational planning approach. Anderson (1979) and Friedmann (1987, ch. 4) both argue that the flaws of the policy analysis approach reflect and flow from its basis in utilitarianism. Utilitarians will seek a planning process which determines the best means to maximize the good. The choice of good or ends should come from a political process beyond the scope of the planner-as-scientist; the choice of means is a technical/social scientific matter. While unitary utilitarians will most strongly favor this paradigm, even pluralistic utilitarians and more pluralistic versions of rational planning retain the foundational idea that only the ends are moral and the means strictly practical and technical.

All other NETs would attack the coercive nature of rational planning and, to a somewhat lesser degree, incremental planning: Nozick, because it violates individuals' negative rights; Rawls, in that it respects neither of his two substantive principles—neither liberty nor equality. However, he might favor an incrementalist approach to redistributing well-being via a minimum of coercive rights violation, for example, by tax incentives or zoning relaxations for building low-cost housing.

Habermas and critical theory would criticize the policy analysis approach as a paradigm of the distorting ideology of scientism. It is a mechanism for a hierarchical, bureaucratic, authoritarian, power elite to maintain its control of society behind a veil of technocratic knowledge. As Nielsen (1983, 125) says

This very posture of moral neutrality is a valuable ideological tool in protecting the status quo, with its class domination, for by methodological strictures, social science is prevented from critiquing the goals of a society, or the underlying rationale of its social institutions.

Although communitarians accept the notion of a common good, it should arise within a social process and not only at the end. They reject the means/ends dichotomy and the focus on efficiency of the rational planning approach. They too oppose the remote authoritarian centralization of power which seems concomitant with this approach.

Where libertarian liberals defend the private economy and egalitarian liberals defend the welfare state, communitarians worry about the concentration of power in both the corporate economy and the bureaucratic state, and the erosion of those intermediate forms of commu-

nity that have at times sustained a more vital public life (Sandel 1984, 17).

Some communitarians would accept centralized planning for the physical infrastructure (e.g., roads, mass transit, communication systems) insofar as it "enable[s] the mass of citizens to participate in necessary or valued social activities" (Walzer 1986, 137). However, the rationale for the provision of this infrastructure arises not out of a utilitarian calculus, but rather out of shared communal understanding of urbanity.

Communitarians would likely be less critical of the incrementalist variant, to the extent that it is done at a smaller scale, and tied to community values. However, they would still be concerned that it would support an authoritarian state.

### Social Learning

Social learning (originally transactive planning) was postulated by Friedmann (1973) to be an alternative to the reductionism of social reform and policy analysis. This approach is within what has been called the humanist tradition. Social learning focuses on integrating knowledge and action. Knowledge is "derived from experience and validated in practice;" it emerges from an ongoing dialectical process of mutual learning (a transactive process between professional and client) in which the emphasis is on application. Rather than being set at the beginning of the planning process, objectives emerge during the process from ongoing action.

Social learning could find its normative foundation in either communitarian or Habermasian approaches. Communitarians argue for bringing decision-making down to the community level and for not specifying its outcome in advance. Unlike Habermas, who believes that such a process will ultimately generate and create new values, communitarians would seek the emergence of common traditional values as the result of the process.

Habermas' discussion of communicative rationality can be read as a systematic articulation of the ideas implicit in social learning. He would view its planning process as a first step in the right direction towards a nonscientistic approach to planning in its focus on progress towards free and undistorted communication—that is, the attainment of communicative rationality. As Habermas (1984, 114ff) argues:

Everyday communication makes possible a kind of understanding that is based on claims to validity, thus furnishing the only real alternative to exerting influence on one another, which is always more or less coercive. The validity claims that we raise in conversation—that is, when we say something with conviction—transcend this



specific conversational context, pointing to something beyond the spatio-temporal ambit of the occasion. Every agreement, whether produced for the first time or reaffirmed, is based on, (controvertible) grounds or reasons. Grounds have a special property: they force us into yes or no positions.

Social learning's lack of *a priori* goals also fits Habermas' process; goals should emerge from the public debate.

The role of the planner in an application of Habermas to planning might be one of mediation. What Habermas says of the role of the philosopher can equally be applied to the planner, when he says that the philosopher should switch from the role of "the arbiter who inspects culture" to that of "the mediating interpreter" (Habermas 1984, 113).

Rawls would argue for social learning's procedure as similar to his WRE. However, he would criticize its lack of substantive principles and its lack of specified outcome. Utilitarians would have the same objection. Nozick might argue for social learning planning, but only to the extent that its decisions are not implemented coercively.

### Progressive Planning

Forester's progressive planning is a "refinement of traditional advocacy planning" (Forester 1989, 30). Advocacy planning (Davidoff 1965) sought to extend the policy analysis process to incorporate the interests of disadvantaged groups in a pluralistic society; the role of the planner was to represent these groups in the political process. Progressive planning seeks to advance the interests of these excluded groups by providing them with information, technical resources, and critical analysis. This includes the attempt to anticipate and correct "systematic sources of misinformation" (Forester 1989, 46), and the obligation to direct public attention towards distortions and injustices. This approach accepts the basic structure of western (particularly U.S.) society; it seeks a "genuinely democratic planning process" which works for all its citizens (Forester 1989, 28).

Progressive planning is explicitly based on Habermas' work. Thus, Habermas would provide strong arguments in support of progressive planning. He would commend both the practical communicative thrust (which echoes social learning) and the critical thrust of progressive planning. Here the planner could play the roles of both mediator and critic. However, Habermas might urge progressive planning not to stop at a critique of communicative distortion (agenda-setting), but to also address the need for more fundamental change in the capitalistic economic structure (needs-shaping) (Forester 1989, 44).

While Forester's procedural approach reflects Habermas', his substantive positions seem to us to implicitly reflect Rawls. This is confirmed by his endorsement of Krumholz's

equity planning (Krumholz and Forester 1990) which explicitly appeals to Rawls as part of its normative justification. Thus Rawls' second principle would provide a strong justification of the substantive thrust of progressive planning towards improving the well-being of the disadvantaged.

Nozick might argue for progressive planning if it is seen as preventing rights violation by more deeply informing and educating all citizens (thus supporting an underlying presupposition of his theory) or redressing past rights violations. Rawls could agree and would also argue for Forester's procedural approach as similar to his WRE.

Communitarians would support the communicative thrust, but most would argue that the critical aspects of progressive planning are too radical. However, progressive planning seems to us to potentially exemplify Walzer's (1987) critical interpretative approach.

### Radical Planning

Friedmann's radical planning paradigm is part of the broader tradition of social mobilization—the great oppositional counter tradition which encompasses the social movements of utopianism, social anarchism, and historical materialism (Marxism).<sup>14</sup> In Friedmann's view this tradition is the only one which can achieve social transformation—emancipation from the bottom up, from the grass-roots of the political community (Friedmann 1987, 297-308, chs. 7, 9). While social learners may attempt to engage in social transformation, Friedmann came to believe that ultimately social learning does not really challenge the existing relations of power (Friedmann 1987, ch. 5). This leads him to go beyond social learning to this new paradigm. Unlike social learning and progressive planning, radical planning rejects the basic structure of society and seeks more radical change in political and economic structures.

Friedmann sees planning as being in a crisis, which he blames on the world view/perspective of the enlightenment underlying both policy analysis and social reform. He critiques three key aspects of contemporary Western capitalist society which he sees as reflecting our enlightenment heritage: its acceptance of the claim of science to be the only reliable source of knowledge (Friedmann 1987, 41), its exaltation of the autonomous individual as the only object of moral concern (Friedmann 1987, 307), and the dominance of market rationality (Friedmann 1987, 20).

While Friedmann's advocacy of radical planning arises from his own critique, it could be viewed as having a normative foundation in either Habermas or the communitarians. Habermas would argue for both the communicative and the critical thrust of radical planning, as well as its focus on emancipating those who are disempowered by the capitalistic economic structure. Radical planning could embody and extend all that Habermas approves of in social learning and progressive planning. However, legitimate structural change must come

out of a dialogue which meets Habermas' three conditions. Thus, Habermas would not be supportive of any form of radical planning which seeks to impose structural change.

With regard to Friedmann's concern about social learning, Habermas would agree that a mere understanding of social institutions is inadequate without a critical understanding. But for Habermas, social learning would involve a dialectic process akin to Rawls' WRE which would lead to progress rather than stasis. Thus social learning could blend into progressive planning, and perhaps even into radical planning.

Friedmann's critique of the autonomous individual is nearly identical to that of the communitarians, who would support his advocacy of the household as the basic moral unit of society. However, they might well be concerned that radical planning is likely to generate a powerful and oppressive state, even though this is clearly not Friedmann's intent.

Rawls argues against this rejection of the individual; rejection of the enlightenment's metaphysical notion of the person need not lead to a rejection of the person as the proper object of moral concern. Rawls would also be critical of radical planning's lack of substantive principles; but a Rawlsian who believed that current structures are inherently biased against the disadvantaged might support it. Nozick would share the communitarians' fear of an oppressive state and the Rawlsian critique of the rejection of the individual.

### Libertarian Planning

Libertarian planning advocates planning which supports and enhances the operation of the free market with its institutions of individual liberty, or private property, of self-interested behavior, and of contract (Harper 1987). The sole legitimate function of public planning is to protect individual rights and to redress past violations of rights. Libertarian planning is generally aimed at controlling externalities (most commonly via zoning) and the provision of public infrastructure. We have argued elsewhere that such planning could encompass such public planning interventions as more restrictive zoning to limit negative externalities arising from adjacent land use, pollution controls, limitations on urban highway construction, and natural resource conservation (Harper and Stein 1986).

Variants of libertarian planning have been derived from both Nozickian and utilitarian approaches. We developed a libertarian planning explicitly derived from Nozick's NET, amended in several important aspects, for example, regulation of negative externalities (Harper and Stein 1984) and compensation for those who do not benefit from scarce natural resources (Harper and Stein 1986). While it is unlikely that Nozick would approve of some of our extensions, he would share libertarian planning's basis of a respect for negative, natural individual rights.

Some utilitarians—notably neoclassical economists—

favor a libertarian planning approach on the grounds that allowing each person to make their own choices will maximize well-being (which is itself unmeasurable, in part because interpersonal utility comparisons are impossible). In this view the rights given to persons have no inherent value—they are completely instrumental, nothing more than means to other ends.

The other NETs would be critical of libertarian planning. Rawls would criticize libertarian planning as respecting his principle of liberty, but ignoring his principle of equality. Habermas would view libertarian planning as another mechanism to preserve capitalistic societies and their private bureaucracies. He, along with communitarians, would reject the idea that persons are isolated and autonomous selves operating to achieve their own ends without interference, as another ideological barrier to his ideal community of communicators.

### ■ CONCLUSION

Our analysis of six influential contemporary planning theories, summarized in Table 2, has shown that each can be seen as having a normative foundation in one or two of our five NETs. Thus, each planning theory has inherent in it a particular NET. To advocate the planning theory is to advocate the underlying NET. In cases where there are two, elaboration and application of the planning theory will tend to draw on one, and to some degree exclude the other. If the underlying NET is understood, the advocacy will be more robust. In turn each of the NETs (except utilitarianism, with its two variants) provides the ethical foundation for one particular planning theory (indicated by YY in the Table 2) and provides a basis for critiquing the others. Critiques of one planning theory by another often mirror critiques of one NET by another. Thus the study of a more basic level of debate—that of normative ethical theory—can greatly illuminate debates about planning theories by making their implicit normative ethical foundations explicit.

Given the centrality of normative ethical theory to planning theory, one might hope that there would be one NET which was clearly superior to all others. Unfortunately this is not yet the case. At this point in time various attempts at WRE have not resulted in a consensus. However, it is important to recognize that these different NETs are in dialogue. We agree with Habermas' contention that, given the current state of our understanding of ourselves and our society, it is not possible to unequivocally select one of these theories as superior to, or more correct than, all others. It is important to remember that debates about normative ethics are ongoing. In Rawls' terms everything is not in WRE. Attempts to achieve an equilibrium have not yet been successful, though there is movement in that direction. Differences and conflicts between some of these ethical theories are resulting in their evolution. The way in which

some of the debates are resolved will have important implications for planning. It is crucial that planners be able to participate in the continuing dialogue about our social institutions, resulting in decisions about societal actions which are both more reasonable and more humane.

In spite of the above difficulties we do believe that agreement on WRE as a procedural ethical theory may be possible, and could ultimately resolve, or at least lessen, the present conflicts between substantive NETs. Our view is that Rawls offers the most promising procedural NET for planners. We feel that his WRE incorporates the procedural ideas of Habermas, as well as other writers such as Walzer. The difficulty with Habermas is that planners do need some practical guidance on how to select an interim substantive ethical theory, while striving towards the ideal situation, which we may never reach.

Our view is that many North American planners engaging in a WRE process would adopt Rawls' two substantive principles as the closest expression of the normative values held by North Americans. We would also argue that their practical implications are fairly close to our interpretation of a Nozickian negative rights approach. In deference to Habermas it should be acknowledged that these principles are not the final word, rather they are the best so far. Changes in circumstances, technology, and knowledge may result in future changes in these principles.

If Rawls' was chosen as the best NET, this would then lead us to advocate something like Forester's progressive planning, which incorporates social learning's communicative understanding and adds a critical function. Here we disagree with Friedmann; we do not believe that an effective critique requires a shift to radical planning (Harper and Stein 1990). One modification to the progressive planning paradigm which we would advocate is the explicit incorporation of Rawls' substantive principles of justice. This would make it very similar to Krumholz's equity planning (Krumholz and Forester 1990).

We have elsewhere argued in favor of a planning paradigm like the one just described (Harper and Stein 1990). However, our primary purpose in this article is not to persuade the reader to adopt a particular view; it is to show how normative ethical theories underlie contemporary normative planning theories. Recognition of the inherently normative nature of public planning entails a key role for normative ethical theory in establishing and evaluating planning theory. We believe that effective debate and critique of planning theory requires an explicit and reflective understanding of alternative normative ethical approaches and of their implications for planning.

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Planning Theory	Normative Ethical Theory				
	Utilitarian	Nozick	Rawls	Habermas	Communitarian
Social Reform	C	NN	C	NN	NN
Policy Analysis	YY	N	N	NN	NN
Social Learning	N	C	Y	Y	YY
Progressive Planning	N	N	YY	YY	N
Radical Planning	N	NN	N	Y	NN
Libertarian Planning	YY (econ)	YY	N	NN	NN

  

Y	=	support
YY	=	strongly support
C	=	conditional on circumstances
N	=	oppose
NN	=	strongly oppose

Table 2. Normative ethical and planning theories.

## ■ NOTES

1. The perceived roots of public planning vary greatly depending on the breadth of definition of the term. For a broader account see Friedmann (1987).
2. By mainstream planning theory we are alluding to what has been commonly taught in planning schools, generally reflecting what Friedmann (1987, 74) calls the social reform and policy analysis traditions.
3. This is the positivists' analytic/synthetic distinction discussed by Klosterman (1978).
4. The foregoing had become widely accepted by the late 1970s. In spite of this, rational comprehensive planning "continued to be practiced as if a public interest did exist" (Alexander 1986, 103). Even today the fallacy which has lost its hold on philosophy still retains considerable influence on planning practice.
5. Under the policy analysis approach, professional ethics were limited to questions regarding "the propriety of everyday social and professional relations" traditionally covered by codes of professional ethics, ignoring the "ethical content of planning practice, methods, and policies" (Wachs 1985, xiii).
6. As epitomized by the traditional rationalistic arguments about the meta-physics of morals set forth by Kant.
7. Scientism is defined below in our discussion of Habermas.
8. These assumptions are that the value of goods and services exchanged in the market-place is an approximate measure of well-being and that each monetary unit of consumption gives equal well-being regardless of its distribution. These assumptions are implicit in the compensation principle of traditional welfare economics as presented in such works as M. W. Reder (1947, 17). Modern welfare economics theorists often reject these assumptions, see E. S. Phelps (1973, 9-31) for a brief discussion. However, they still seem to underlie most practical economic policy analysis.
9. It should be noted that our use of the label economic does not imply that all economists adopt this ethical perspective.
10. We have elsewhere applied the label political utilitarian to those who advocate applying the utilitarian principle, but advocate measuring the well-being created by any act (plan, intervention, etc.) by the number of persons who benefit from the act less the number of persons who suffer as a result (Harper 1987). Those supporters and objectors who express their views through the political process may be counted as a proxy for beneficiaries and sufferers.
11. Deontological approaches to ethics involve rules or norms which should be obeyed because of their inherent rightness.
12. We are using rights here in a moral sense rather than a legal one, and in a natural rights sense in that all persons have the rights discussed, by virtue of simply being persons. We are not intending to include approaches in which rights are derivative from some other principles, approaches which minimize total violations of rights, or approaches which advocate positive rights (Dworkin 1977).
13. One of our referees pointed out that there may be variants of communitarianism (e.g., Buber) for which there would be yes answers to procedure (dialogue), substantive (solidarity), and perhaps deontological.
14. Note that we have excluded the other social mobilization paradigms outlined in Friedmann (1987, ch. 6) for three reasons: the three traditions which are included are so broad as to defy the kind of analysis that we are attempting here, radical planning is Friedmann's own choice of paradigm, and the other paradigms seem less relevant to contemporary North American planning.

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