

UC Berkeley

UC Berkeley Previously Published Works

Title

Both Process and Outcome Are Essential to Planning

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/31z7r853>

Journal

Journal of Planning Education and Research, 35(2)

ISSN

0739-456X

Author

Christensen, Karen S

Publication Date

2015-06-01

DOI

10.1177/0739456x14566277

Peer reviewed

Both Process and Outcome Are Essential to Planning

Karen S. Christensen¹

Journal of Planning Education and Research
2015, Vol. 35(2) 188–198
© The Author(s) 2015
Reprints and permissions:
sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/0739456X14566277
jpe.sagepub.com



Abstract

The research addresses practitioners' perspective on the theoretical debate over process versus outcome. Analysis of 119 structured interviews of exemplary planners on their roles, goals, constraints, and strategies finds support for both sides. Planners are process-oriented facilitators who use communication and networking strategies. Ninety-five percent are outcome oriented, either toward their own goals, such as equity, or their agencies', such as affordable housing. They plan in institutionally constrained practice settings of unequal power. They tailor strategies to constraints of politics, bureaucracy, or limited resources. Thus, planners reconcile the debate, using processes to achieve valued outcomes.

Keywords

exemplary, outcome, practice, process, theory

Exemplary planners can help students and practitioners to become more effective. Interviews of 119 exemplary planners on their roles, goals, constraints, strategies, and criteria of effectiveness show some ways such planners practice successfully. Moreover, the interviews shed light on the theoretical debate over emphasis on process versus outcome. In practice, exemplary planners pay attention to both process and outcome. Many are facilitators, and the exemplary planners use communication and networking strategies in institutionally constrained practice settings of unequal power. They use different strategies to cope with political and organizational constraints. Accordingly, they are concerned with process. Exemplary planners are goal directed, split between those who share their agencies' goals and those with personal goals such as social equity. Accordingly, they explicitly aim at outcomes. Even though one would expect practicing planners to attend to both process and outcomes, in view of the planning theory debate, one might expect exemplary practitioners to lean one way or the other to emphasize either process or outcomes in practice. Thus, the research question is, What do exemplary practicing planners tell us about the theoretical debate between process and outcome?

This article brings the views of exemplary practicing planners to bear on a debate in planning theory. It begins by examining the theoretical debate over process versus outcome. It then explains the research method, analysis of interviews of exemplary planners. The main section of the article presents the research findings on planners' roles, goals, constraints, strategies, and criteria of effectiveness. Next, the article shows the results of a cluster analysis of the planners into types of planners. The article then assesses the planners' planning practice in terms of the theoretical debate and

concludes that exemplary planners mediate between process and outcome, facilitating and power, tailoring political sensitivity and skills to particular situations. Finally, the article discusses implications for practice and future research.

The Process Outcome Conceptual Framework

The following discussion sets forth the conceptual framework for the article, including definition of terms and clarifying the theoretical and practice perspectives. The process outcome debate is a normative debate referring to which should be emphasized in planning theory and practice: process or outcome. The debate depends on a sometimes implied, sometimes articulated clear distinction between process and outcome. *Webster* (1956, 672) defines *process* as "2 b. a series of actions or operations definitely conducing to an end." Thus, in planning theory and practice, *process* refers to the process the planner follows when planning, for example, a rational process. Hoch refers to the process of planning as "practical reasoning" (2009, 220). *Webster* (1956, 576) defines *outcome* as "Issue; result; consequence. . . . Syn. see Effect." Thus, in planning theory and practice, *outcome*

Initial submission, March 2013; revised submissions, July and October 2014; final acceptance, November 2014

¹University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley, CA, USA

Corresponding Author:

Karen S. Christensen, Department of City and Regional Planning,
University of California, 228 Wurster Hall, Berkeley, CA 94720-1850,
USA.

Email: kchriste@berkeley.edu

refers to the outcome that results when the planner has completed the planning (and implementing) process, for example a sustainable community. Regarding outcomes, a study of fourteen regional municipalities' plans in Ontario (considered leaders in Canadian municipal planning practice) finds, "In fact, anticipated outcomes and impacts were not usually clearly articulated in the plans" (Seasons 2003, 435).¹

A recent account of participatory planning illustrates planning processes and outcomes (McGovern 2013). The collapse of a proposed shopping mall on Philadelphia's riverfront mobilized community support regarding the riverfront's future and engaged Penn Praxis (University of Pennsylvania). They developed a "civic vision" of public "access, open space and quality urban development" (ibid., 312). One planner said, "I've never seen such an inclusive process. . . . [They] launched a collaborative hub web site . . . planphilly . . . to promote public interest in planning . . . and it soon became an important vehicle for . . . the visioning process. . . . The civic vision aimed to strengthen connections between the city's neighborhoods and the river" (ibid. 313) and [to] create "a continuous riverfront trail linking a series of parks every half mile. The so-called emerald necklace became a defining feature of the civic vision. . . . [It] endeavored to deter mega-projects like casinos, big-box retail . . . in favor of . . . dynamic mixed-use neighborhoods" (ibid., 314). The city developed a master plan, but the hundred-foot natural riparian buffer for the trail was reduced to thirty-five feet, height exemption criteria were omitted, and, most significantly, citizen engagement was dramatically reduced (ibid., 315). This case study includes processes of expansive public shaping of the vision (and reduced participation in the master plan) and outcomes of public access, riverfront trail, and parks.

In planning literature, some theorists focus on process and others focus on outcome. For example, Judith Innes researches planning processes and has coauthored a recent book on collaboration. (While focusing on process, Innes and Booher note that "collaborative dialogues . . . often . . . produce significant agreements [and] build social, political, and intellectual capital" [2010, 7].) In comparing environmental planning approaches of The Netherlands and the United States, de Roo finds that when a planning situation is simple, a standard restriction can be applied, but when the planning situation is complex, it calls for communicative action and local self-regulation (De Roo 2000), that is, consensus building.

In contrast, other scholars, such as Susan Fainstein, focus on outcomes. She writes, "Among planning theorists rather is a debate between those who emphasize communication, negotiation, and democratic decision making as the principal normative standard for planning and those who instead opt for a substantive concept of justice" (2010, 9). "For just-city theorists the principal test is whether the outcome of the process . . . is equitable" (2010, 10).² (Those who emphasize process

favor outcomes responding to all the stakeholders. Those who emphasize outcomes favor democratic processes.)

The process–outcome distinction is highlighted in terms of the debate, but the two sides are more nuanced and contextual in practice and case studies. Healey writes, "Those asserting the value . . . of planning . . . need to address . . . the capacity for local invention and interpretation. . . . Planning . . . involves . . . situated, pragmatic learning . . . working out what would work practically in that particular context" (Healey 2012, 200, 201). In practice, process–outcome is not necessarily a dichotomy, as different kinds of outcomes imply different kinds of processes. For example, economists might emphasize outcomes with highest benefit–cost ratios, and equity planners might emphasize community organizing. For example, in the Portland area, "a collective movement . . . sought ways to combine urbanization . . . with safeguarding rural and natural landscapes" (Healey 2010, 183).

Both planning theorists and practitioners refer to process and outcomes at different levels. Although the interviewed planners clearly said planning is goal-directed, some planning does aim primarily at quality process. For example, communicative planners focus on process, with ideal standards for that process, that is, Habermasian conditions: speech must be comprehensible and true, and speakers must be sincere and have legitimacy (Innes and Booher 2010, 24). Thus, if the process follows communicative rationality, whatever agreements ensue are fine; while they may be outcomes, they are not high-level, abstract principles but rather specific planning resolutions. Similarly, a facilitative planner for a very participatory city may want to ensure a fair, open, transparent, and democratic planning process and may not be concerned with the eventual agreement or outcome. Like these and some other kinds of planning processes, outcomes emerge from the process. For example, in cost-benefit analysis noted above, the outcome emerges as the alternative with the highest net benefit. In "Getting to Yes" (Fisher and Ury 1981), the agreement that emerges is some sort of a win–win solution, even though it might not yield the highest net benefit. In cost–benefit planning, the distribution of benefits is not important; in "Getting to Yes" planning, the distribution of benefits is important.

Other planners may emphasize outcomes, such as Norman Krumholz's emphasis on equity outcomes. In siting a freeway, for example, he noted "the devastating impact [the proposed] I-290 would have on the supply of low-income housing available to blacks" (Krumholz and Forester 1990, 80). "The city of Cleveland filed a suit in federal court claiming its right to proportional representation on the NOACA [Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency, the A-95 Clearinghouse]. . . . Pending the outcome . . . the city . . . would no longer pay its dues to the organization. . . . [T]he city simply wanted the I-290 decision rescinded" (ibid., 81). Krumholz found an alternative approved highway. "Instead of dislocating 875 homes, 110 businesses, and acres of city parkland, as the original alignment would have done, our

proposal would cost the city only 164 homes, 30 businesses, and no park acreage” (ibid., 83). The dispute garnered media and political attention and led to NOACA depriving Cleveland of voting rights and HUD [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development] de-certifying NOACA as the A-95 review agency. Neither proposed freeway route was built, and the “\$100 million reserved for the . . . freeway . . . was ultimately used . . . for transit” (ibid., 87). To achieve the desired outcome, Krumholz used a politically astute, if “hard ball,” process.

These examples also illustrate that the level of outcome can vary in both theory and practice. For example, Fainstein’s outcomes are high level and abstract, such as “equity” and “social justice,” whereas the outcomes of some negotiations may be mundane and specific, such as the acceptable level of salinity in a delta (Innes et al. 1994). Planning practice generates multiple levels of outcome, from pedestrian-friendly streets to reduced infant mortality, for example, and through diverse processes, such as cost–benefit analysis and “Getting to Yes” negotiation mentioned above. To focus on the theoretical debate, the following analysis concentrates on process as consensus building and outcome as equity, but examples draw from the literature and broader planning practice.

The process outcome debate assumes that both the planning process and outcome are open, that is, not prescribed. In planning practice, however, outcomes are usually given and processes are often partly prescribed. Typically, planning is done within a sector such as transportation or housing, and thus the outcome, such as highways or affordable housing projects, is given. Typically funding agencies prescribe some aspects of planning processes although they may still leave considerable latitude. Even when the goal is given, in practice planning entails a wide range of both processes and outcomes. For example, in Canada, the economic, equity, and environmental promise of the firmly established principle of mixed use is not realized in the face of cultural and economic forces promoting separation of land use (Grant 2002).

The current process outcome debate is explicitly examined in a *Journal of Planning Education and Research* (2000) symposium on the limits to communicative planning theory. The current version of the debate has shifted from an earlier one of rational process versus political, advocacy outcome. The rational planning model uses analytic process. The communicative model uses social process. Communicative theorists argue that consensus building has replaced rationality (Innes 1995) and see planners as facilitating inclusive consensus building (Fischler 2000, 358) and minimizing inequalities of power and knowledge (Huxley 2000, 360). An affordable housing example of consensus building would be facilitating an inclusive process of bringing diverse stakeholders, for example, affordable housing developers, community development officials, local elected officials, neighborhood groups near prospective sites, and prospective tenants of the proposed affordable housing, to reach agreement on an affordable housing project.

In contrast, their critics argue that planning occurs in settings that are dominated by power relations. They see institutions constraining planning practice toward some outcomes and away from others. They see planning as a “state strategy in the creation and regulation of space, populations and development” (Huxley and Yiftachel 2000, 339). An affordable housing example of planning dominated by power relations would be a new affordable housing project located in the same poor neighborhood without access to services and employment opportunities where older public housing projects are located.

Howe’s (1994) research on planning practice can situate the present research. Howe found that different types of planners—technical or political, with hybrids as facilitating “process” planners—held different ethics: right acts, procedural duties, that is, process, and good ends, that is, outcome. For example, the “active planners” she studied saw planning as a tool for accomplishing their goals (p. 129) and accordingly they were concerned with outcomes. In contrast, the process planners’ overriding concern was the legitimacy of the process, not the outcome (p. 137). “Their idea of the public interest as a process shows up in . . . procedural issues, such as fairness and openness. . . . [T]heir moral commitment to procedural values shaped the facilitating role they played in reality” (p. 177). Technicians’ “role focused attention away from ends . . . toward basic honesty and bureaucratic obligations. This was reflected in their view of ethics, which was also more legal and procedural” (p. 177).

Although the current process outcome debate poses a clear division between consensual process and powerful institutions shaping outcomes, the two sides are more nuanced in practice and as shown in case studies. Furthermore, some communicative theorists have addressed institutions. For example, while exploring communication among practitioners Forester (1989) has drawn attention to how power relations distort communication. Flyvbjerg, examining the relations between rationality and power, finds stable power relations typical of planning and power relations being constantly reproduced (1998). (See also Hoch 2007 and Fainstein 2010.)

Healey links the new institutionalism to communicative planning theory, drawing the following argument from Giddens (1984). “Institutionalists acknowledge that powerful forces exist, but . . . their power lies in their internalization, in the way they are present in, and actively constituted through the social relations of daily life. . . . As we make choices about what to accept or reject within our structured, social embeddedness . . . we maintain, modify, or transform the structural forces that shape our lives” (Healey 1999, 113, 114). Thus, the new institutionalism may offer a bridge over the process–outcome debate.

Evidence from exemplary planners should shed light on how their planning practice helps them be effective. It should also reveal how they gauge organizational and political constraints, and how they actively engage, adapt, to or resist

those realities. As the planners describe their practice, they address questions debated in planning theory.

Research Method

The research method was to interview exemplary planners. This section explains the interview instrument, sample, interviews, coding and analysis.

Interview Instrument

Exemplary planners described their roles, goals, constraints, strategies, and criteria of effectiveness. An open-ended interview instrument (appendix) permitted an expansive, conversational format, while ensuring that each question would be addressed. Folioviews software assisted coding and analyzing the responses while preserving the original responses.

Sample

The sample is not meant to represent all planners, or all planners in the San Francisco Bay Area. Rather it is a collection of 119 of the area's best planners, termed exemplary planners. Graduate students with some planning experience conducted the interviews as part of a course assignment to shadow a practicing planner. As advised by the instructor, graduate students interviewed a planner who could serve as a role model, typically senior planners or directors.³ The planners in the resulting sample split male 60 percent and female 40 percent, and work in nongovernment (almost entirely nonprofit) 44 percent, and government 56 percent.⁴ They worked in the following planning specializations: administrative, city planning, and regional, 34 percent; housing and community development, 26 percent; environmental, 9 percent; transportation, 12 percent; other, 18 percent. ("Other" included social and children's services and urban design among others.) The planners in the resulting sample came from center cities, such as San Francisco, inner suburbs, and outer suburbs in the Bay Area. A key informant provided supplementary data on age (45 respondents), race (58 respondents), and master's degree (52 respondents).

Although the resulting sample is not representative, selecting exemplary planners offers the opportunity to consider aspects of planning in the San Francisco Bay Area that are endemic to planning. If, in contrast, the interviewed planners were average planners (like those in Baum 1983, for example), the findings might be qualified or undermined by doubts, such as that the interviewed planners missed something or confused the planning process. Moreover, the sample planners are privileged to practice in a metropolitan area that is sometimes highly participatory and generally supportive of planning. Accordingly, it is unlikely that the findings are constrained by obstructive circumstances. Being role models and practicing in supportive settings tend to contribute to these planners' sense of efficacy, discussed further below.

Interviews

The interviews were conducted by graduate students with some planning experience throughout the 1990s.⁵ Comparing responses to the same questions (e.g., constraints) in different times in the 1990s (e.g., 1990–1992, cf 1998–1999) shows that responses do not vary by time period. Approximately twelve to fifteen students took the course each year, with one interview per student, yielding approximately 135 interviews, resulting in a final sample of 119 clear, complete, and nonduplicative⁶ interviews. All the students asked the same assigned open-ended questions (see appendix). In writing the interview responses, some students quoted the respondents; others paraphrased.

Coding

The author and a research assistant conducted the coding. After they reviewed the interviews and separately derived standard categories of responses to the questions, they jointly agreed on the final set of response categories. The research assistant postcoded the answers to the questions. Examples of coding for the planner roles—facilitator, technician, or activist—include the planner describing his role or job as *facilitator*, referring to “mediator/facilitator/build trust, communication/coordinate.” Planners describing their role as *technician* mentioned “technician,” “analyst,” or “relay information—neutral.” Planners describing their role as *activist* spoke about “activist” or “promoter/protector/watch dog/advocate.” While the planning roles are meant to be mutually exclusive to enable analysis, in fact planners engage in multiple roles. One planner, for example, described herself as an advocate for environmental causes, but also as a facilitator when she helped advocacy groups to forge a common position. The categories of responses on strategies are not mutually exclusive. Some planners reported using different strategies for different problem conditions. For example, one planner said “when no opposition, professional more important, when contentious, network and political support invaluable.”

Analysis

The research assistant calculated descriptive statistics and cross-tabulations of the coded answers to the interview questions. In addition, a formal computerized cluster analysis separated the data into different types of exemplary planners.

Interview findings support both contentions in the process–outcome debate: Planners are facilitators, and planning is a social process. At the same time, institutions powerfully shape and constrain planning. The following analysis first presents findings on planners' descriptions of their roles, goals, constraints, strategies, and criteria of effectiveness. Then it presents three types of exemplary planners. Next it examines responses on process and outcome. Finally it

Table 1. Planners' Roles.

| | |
|---|-----|
| Facilitator | 42% |
| Technician | 31% |
| Activist | 8% |
| Other (regulator, problem solver, develop ideas, build support) | 19% |

Note: $n = 115$ exemplary planners.

analyzes how these exemplary planners deal with both process and outcome together, and the implications for practice and future research.

Research Findings: Planners' Roles, Goals, Constraints, Strategies, and Criteria of Effectiveness

Responses to survey questions reveal insights into the process–outcome debate and types of exemplary planners.

Roles

Exemplary planners described their roles in ways that fit Howe's (1994) classifications. The terms activists and technicians are adopted here; Howe's term *process* planner is replaced with the term *facilitator*. Activists (10 percent) described themselves as "promoters" and advocates as well as activists. Technicians (29 percent) described themselves as analysts and information providers as well as technicians. Facilitators (44 percent) described themselves as mediators and coordinators as well as facilitators. Others (18 percent) described themselves as regulators, problem solvers, idea developers, and people who build support.

As shown in Table 1, exemplary planners tend to see themselves as facilitators, and surprisingly few see themselves as activists. The low proportion of activists may be a function of the sample's "role model" (presumably older and more successful) planners needing to work within a shared power world, rather than being external activists.⁷

Facilitator is the most common role in every specialization, except environmentalist, and even in that field a number are facilitators. Facilitators practice equally in government and nongovernment organizations. The prevalence of facilitators underscores the importance of process.

As expected, activists are more likely to be housing and community development planners and environmentalists, and very unlikely to be planners in administration. Activists are more likely to be nongovernment planners, predominantly in nonprofit organizations. Technicians are more likely to be government planners. Technicians are significantly more likely to be planners in administration and significantly less likely to be housing and community development planners. Overall, roles appear to be associated with institutions.⁸

Table 2. Planners' Goals.

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| Organization goal | 38% |
| Own goal (e.g., quality of life) | 36% |
| Other | 18% |
| Neutral | 5% |
| Own upward mobility | 3% |

Note: $n = 117$ exemplary planners.

Goals

The prominence of planners' goals underscores the importance of outcome.

When asked if they had their own goals or vision, planners split between those who shared their agency's goal, or were neutral, hereafter termed "organization goal" (38 percent) and those who had their own goal (36 percent). The latter explained their goals in terms of improving the quality of life, positive change, social equity, or a standard of behavior such as honesty. Others had a more specific agenda, such as "I want to take the city past the point of . . ." Only a few voiced self-serving goals.⁹

Many shared their agency's goal. Of the few (about 12 percent) who described themselves as neutral, several explicitly specified "as a neutral agent, trying to facilitate the process, I need to set aside my own personal bias." But more of those claiming neutrality were ambiguous or ambivalent: "I try to give the appearance of neutrality." "I am neutral but active for following the law." "I am neutral and fair for the intended outcome." Thus the line blurs between the planner being neutral and sharing the agency's goal. In the entire sample of exemplary planners, barely 5 percent described themselves as unambiguously neutral.¹⁰

Table 2 shows the proportion of planners holding different goals.

All the surveyed planners' goals divide equally between "organization goal" and "own goal," as do those of activists and facilitators. Technicians' goals are slightly more likely to be their organization goal.

In sum, 95 percent of the exemplary planners in the study are goal directed, and accordingly attend to outcomes.

Constraints

When asked about factors that shaped their role, planners described constraints rather than opportunities. In itself, this finding underscores the importance of institutions in shaping planning.

As shown in Table 3, planners find politics the most prevalent constraint, followed by bureaucracy.

The largest number of responses on constraints referred to politics (31 percent), such as "can't speak freely" and "politics slow down the process." "Everything is so political," said one planner. Most comments referred to constraints, for example a project needing to be acceptable to a range of

Table 3. Planners' Perceived Constraints.

| | |
|--------------------|-----|
| Politics | 31% |
| Bureaucracy | 20% |
| None (free) | 16% |
| Multiple interests | 11% |
| Limited resources | 11% |
| Other | 10% |

Note: $n = 149$; some planners responded with more than one constraint.

stakeholders. Yet some noted they could use the political situation to achieve their work aims, and needed to “bring new politicians aboard.”

Planners also referred to bureaucracy (20 percent) as a constraint, noting bureaucratic communication lines, hierarchy, and slowness. One planner said, “We need strong institutions to be involved but we don’t want them controlling outcomes.” Despite bureaucratic constraints and planners’ limited autonomy (Baum 1983), many planners in this study were in accord with their organization, sharing its goals.

When asked about factors shaping their roles, a surprising 16 percent of the planners said that they were free from constraints. When discussing their freedom, a number of these planners referred to their organization being non-hierarchical, which enabled flexibility and innovation. A number referred to light supervision and accordingly some autonomy. One said, “I exercise a free hand...I’m ultimately supervised by a policy board which is content with me as long as I stay out of trouble.”

Multiple interests, sometimes termed multiple constituencies, was also noted as a factor shaping planners’ roles in 11 percent of the responses. For example, planners reported being “accountable to multiple agencies” and having the “clients of our program conflict with each other.” Planners in all three main roles mentioned this factor, but activists more so and technicians less so. Others (11 percent) noted limited resources as constraints. Other factors (10 percent) included being a team player or in a network, and the private sector.

Strategies

Exemplary planners’ responses concerning their strategies not only help students and practitioners, but also begin to clarify the relationship between process and outcomes in practice.

Planners use an array of strategies to address their goals and overcome constraints. Individual planners may use multiple strategies. The most frequently mentioned strategy is termed “improve communication” (28 percent), for example, “wide information sharing,” “listening,”¹¹ “putting everything on paper,” and “having an open and fair process.” A related but different, widely used strategy, termed “build social capital” (24 percent), was often referred to as “developing networks,” or “partnerships,” “building trust,” or “collaborating.”

Table 4. Planners' Strategies.

| | |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Improve communication | 28% |
| Build social capital | 24% |
| Other | 17% |
| Be objective | 13% |
| Be flexible | 10% |
| Be adversarial | 8% |

Note: $n = 106$ exemplary planners.

Less used strategies include “be objective” (e.g., “neutral,” “adds credibility,” “provide accurate data”; 13 percent), “be flexible” (e.g., “have multiple plans,” “manipulate the system for goals”; 10 percent), and “be adversarial” (e.g., “conflict,” “proactive,” “action”; 8 percent). The large “other” category (17 percent) contains such diverse strategies as focus on long-range objectives or specific issues, to “find own niche” and “foot in the door.” Table 4 shows planners’ use of different strategies.

Roles shape strategies. Appropriately, facilitators use “improve communication” and “build social capital.” Activists—as expected—used “be adversarial” considerably more and also used “improve communication” more and “build social capital” considerably less than other planners. Technicians use “improve communication” and “build social capital” strategies significantly more than other strategies. Although technicians rely on “being objective” more than other planners, savvy technicians want their information used. “Information is power,” said one planner.

The “be flexible” strategy (10 percent of all responses) was used equally by planners in all three roles.

As expected, strategies vary by perceived constraint. Those constrained by politics rely on “improve communication” and “build social capital.” Those constrained by bureaucracy appropriately rely more on “improve communication” and less on “be adversarial.” Surprisingly, those who feel free of constraints use strategies like all the surveyed planners—communication and social capital—and are more likely to use “be objective” than other planners. Those constrained by multiple interests tend to rely more on “build social capital” and “be adversarial” strategies than other planners.

Those constrained by limited resources use quite different strategies: less “improve communication” and “be objective” and significantly more “be flexible,” “be adversarial” and “build social capital” strategies. These strategies resonate with those of nonprofit housing developers, who face severe funding problems and piece together projects opportunistically from whatever resources are available (Christensen 2000).

Criteria of Effectiveness

Planners’ criteria of effectiveness range widely, including awards received and deliverables to funding agencies. The

Table 5. Planners' Criteria of Effectiveness.

| | |
|---------------------|-----|
| External validation | 44% |
| Completing goals | 24% |
| Other | 22% |
| Production | 11% |

Note: $n = 115$ exemplary planners.

most often mentioned criterion of effectiveness was external validation, expressed as “changing attitudes,” “public awareness” and “customer satisfaction.” The second most frequently mentioned criterion of effectiveness was internal, that is, completing their own goals, tasks, or projects. Other responses were either vague (e.g., “difficult to judge”) or related to production, for example, production of affordable housing units. As shown in Table 5, exemplary planners tend to gauge their effectiveness by external validation.

Planners' criteria of effectiveness are somewhat puzzling to interpret, but as a whole correspond to outcomes. One expects activists to judge effectiveness by outcomes, technicians by procedural correctness, and facilitators by quality of the process.¹² Yet interviews with exemplary planners did not support these hypotheses. The planners largely judge their effectiveness by external validation. Yet activists assess effectiveness relatively less on external validation and more on production, for example production of housing units, perhaps construed as achieving their desired outcomes. Facilitators gauge effectiveness relatively less on external validation and more on completing goals, tasks, or projects, which again can be construed as desired outcomes. Contradicting stereotypes, technicians are more likely to judge their effectiveness by external validation, for example, learning that their analysis helped make a decision. Thus, in different ways—production, completing tasks, or “customer satisfaction”—all the exemplary planners gauge their effectiveness not by process or procedure but rather by results, that is, outcomes.

Exemplary Planning Types

Exemplary planners work in different ways. A computerized cluster analysis separated the planners into types of exemplary planners with different roles and strategies: “technicians,” “facilitators,” and “social capitalists.” See Table 6.

Two groups are defined by their roles. The “technicians” were predominantly in government, saw politics as a big obstacle, and used “communication” as a strategy. Similarly, “facilitators” also worked in government, saw politics as a big obstacle, and used “communication” as a strategy.

The third cluster is defined by their strategy “social capital.” In contrast to the technicians and facilitators, not one planner in this cluster reported using the “communication” strategy. The “social capitalists” worked mostly in nonprofit agencies in community development and housing. Their big

constraint was understandably “bureaucracy,” as housing and community development nonprofit developers depend on funding from bureaucracies. (They also mentioned politics as a constraint, but less so than the technicians and facilitators.)

Analysis

Planners' Characteristics

Mostly planners' characteristics—age, race, master's degree—are not associated with particular strategies or constraints. However, younger planners rely on the “social capital” strategy, and non-Caucasians are more constrained by “Economics/Profit/Private Sector” than others.

Both Process and Outcome

Consistent with communicative theorists' claims, more exemplary planners are facilitators than either technicians or activists. Moreover, the strategies most used—“build social capital” (e.g., networking) and “improve communication” (e.g., have an open process)—are particularly appropriate to consensus building. In contrast, only 13 percent of the planners said they used the “be objective” strategy, appropriate to the rational process model. Of those, activists disproportionately used the “be objective” strategy, suggesting it might be a legitimation tool.

On the other hand, evidence from the exemplary planners supports the importance of institutions in shaping roles and outcomes. Planning is understood as embedded in politics and shaped by institutions. For example, planners mentioned “intergovernmental resentments and power relations” and “direction from funding agencies.” Only 16 percent of the planners responded that they were free from constraints. More activists cite political constraints (38 percent) compared to facilitators (27 percent). Perhaps facilitative planning downplays politics while activist planning makes politics more salient. Moreover, in explaining both their goals and their criteria of effectiveness, planners showed themselves directed to outcomes. Thus, exemplary planners are concerned not only with facilitating but also with institutional constraints on practice and outcomes.

Exemplary planners' strategies suit their roles and the political and organizational constraints they perceive. Overall, the analysis shows that planners follow multiple models of practice, adopting strategies appropriate for a shared power world (Bryson and Crosby 1992). Thus, exemplary planners engage in communicative practice with multiple stakeholders. At the same time, the planners work in institutional practice settings far from Habermas's ideal conditions, full of uneven power and politics.

In principle, the relation between planning as a facilitating social practice and planning constrained by powerful institutions must be uneasy. Those with power cannot be

Table 6. Types of Exemplary Planners from Cluster Analysis.

| Gender | | Gender | | Institution | |
|---------|--------------------|--------|--------|-------------|---------|
| | Response | Male | Female | Public | Private |
| Cluster | Facilitators | 17 | 17 | 21 | 13 |
| | Technicians | 31 | 22 | 35 | 18 |
| | Social capitalists | 17 | 13 | 12 | 17 |
| | Total | 65 | 52 | 68 | 48 |

| Perceived Role | | Technician | Facilitator | Activist | Other |
|----------------|--------------------|------------|-------------|----------|-------|
| | Response | | | | |
| Cluster | Facilitators | 0 | 34 | 0 | 0 |
| | Technicians | 33 | 0 | 4 | 15 |
| | Social capitalists | 3 | 14 | 5 | 7 |
| | Total | 36 | 48 | 9 | 22 |

| Planning Specialization | | Environmental | Land Use Planning | Transportation Planning | Community Development and Housing | Other |
|-------------------------|--------------------|---------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------|
| | Response | | | | | |
| Cluster | Facilitators | 4 | 13 | 7 | 3 | 6 |
| | Technicians | 12 | 21 | 9 | 2 | 9 |
| | Social capitalists | 1 | 4 | 0 | 22 | 3 |
| | Total | 17 | 38 | 16 | 27 | 18 |

| Strategy | | Social Capital | Communication | Conflict | Objectivity | Other |
|----------|--------------------|----------------|---------------|----------|-------------|-------|
| | Response | | | | | |
| Cluster | Facilitators | 1 | 20 | 3 | 4 | 2 |
| | Technicians | 2 | 23 | 5 | 4 | 14 |
| | Social capitalists | 20 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 3 |
| | Total | 23 | 43 | 12 | 9 | 19 |

| Obstacles | | Formal bureaucracy | No obstacles | Politics | Multiple Interests | Limited Resources |
|-----------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------|----------|--------------------|-------------------|
| | Response | | | | | |
| Cluster | Facilitators | 9 | 8 | 20 | 1 | 6 |
| | Technicians | 17 | 6 | 32 | 0 | 9 |
| | Social capitalists | 14 | 8 | 11 | 5 | 3 |
| | Total | 40 | 22 | 63 | 6 | 18 |

expected to leave it at the door (Huxley 2000), and those with little power cannot be expected to be ignorant of or comfortable in asymmetric power relations. Thus, exemplary planners must take politics into account as they act as facilitators. How do they mediate between process and outcome, consensus and power?

Mediating between Process and Outcome, Consensus and Power

On the one hand, planners in the study believed they could be effective. However constrained they were, they did not feel

that outcomes were entirely predetermined. Their discussions of their strategies conveyed the belief that the planners themselves could choose to be more effective. Indeed, some of the advice they gave to younger planners suggests some autonomy and efficacy. "Choose a path and stick with it" said one planner. Another said "Stick to what you know to be important, bring your planning sense to that, and people will listen."

On the other hand, the planners spoke about institutional constraints and uneven power relations and their choice of strategies. Accordingly, planners imply that they should analyze their practice settings in terms of power and politics

even when planners act as facilitators. One planner said that the hardest lesson for her to learn was to listen to the politics. Planners can have great ideas, she said, but sometimes they come at the wrong time. Planners need to listen to the politics and to “clients.”

None of the 119 planners spoke of a contradiction between facilitating and being constrained by power relations, bureaucracy, and politics. It could be inferred that exemplary planners do not expect to be facilitating in Habermas’s ideal conditions. The interviews explicitly show that planners practice in politically constrained conditions.

Several explanations help account for planners’ accepting this logically contradictory but realistic situation. First, planners who say they “facilitate,” “coordinate,” or “mediate” are describing what they do as planners rather than as professional facilitators for dispute resolution. Second, the planners are not neutral,¹³ but rather pursue goals. Thus, they would not expect a value-neutral process. Third, several mentioned tailoring their roles to particular aspects of their work, sometimes acting as a facilitator and other times as an advocate.

Finally, exemplary planners accept political constraints as a factor to be taken into account, rather than a barrier to be removed. Their strategy to “build social capital” responds to politics and their strategy of “improve communication” addresses bureaucratic constraints. Exemplary planners simply take politics in stride, for example, educating new elected officials. Their interviews show the planners to be politically sensitive but not overtly political. Thus, mediating between process and outcome may be a routine political survival strategy.

When mediating between facilitating and power,¹⁴ exemplary planners might indirectly affect power relations. For example, when planners ensure that all stakeholders are involved, they have the effect of challenging routines. By altering everyday norms of practice, planners indirectly counter the prevailing power establishment. Some planners in effect reframe issues, even as they are being sensitive to political realities. For example, one planner suggested that planners need to listen and remember that others can make legitimate points. If the constituent has an idea of how to achieve a goal and it will work, do it, she advised. “Do it even if you, as a planner, had in mind a different procedure.”

In sum, this set of student-selected San Francisco Bay Area exemplary planners shows them to mediate between process and outcome, facilitating and power, tailoring political sensitivity and skills to particular situations.

Implications for Practice

The implications for practice are both obvious and subtle. Obviously, beginning planners can follow the explicit advice planners offered. The two most frequent kinds of advice pertained to political sensitivity and doing what’s right. For example, one planner advised, “Key is to stay rooted in reality, know the political constraints, and to focus on

community issues.” As noted above, another planner advised, “Stick to what you know to be important. . . .” The next most frequent piece of advice concerned vision; for example, “Cultivate a broad vision of planning.” Another repeated recommendation was “make sure you are a flexible, savvy person if you want to survive and succeed in this business.”

Beginning planners can also take their cues from exemplary planners to develop and hone their communication and networking skills. They can learn to listen actively; to follow open, transparent processes; to write and speak effectively; to be inclusive in providing information; and to build networks, trust, and social capital through reciprocal work. In addition, the exemplary planners showed that they tailored strategies to problem conditions: when constrained by politics, improve communication and build social capital; when constrained by bureaucracy, improve communication; when constrained by limited resources, be flexible, be adversarial, and build social capital.

More subtly, the findings suggest ways planners delicately navigate through power relations. Rather than directly challenging power, exemplary planners work indirectly to create more space in planning deliberations. To loosen the power of established policy networks, some planners may introduce doubt and a wider range of stakeholders (Christensen 1999). Other planners may “limit the unthinking adoption of routines that may merely serve to reinforce and entrench . . . power relations” (Healey 1999, 117, 118) or reframe issues (Schon and Rein 1993; Krumholz and Forester 1990).¹⁵

Implications for Further Research

This research addressed the question, What do exemplary practicing planners tell us about the theoretical debate between process and outcome? It concluded that exemplary planners emphasize both process and outcome. The discussion repeatedly implied the further question, What is the connection between process and outcome? But the present research did not permit answering that question, an obvious direction for future research. Regarding the connection or linkage between process and outcome, Healey (2003, 111) writes, “substance and process are co-constituted, not separate spheres (Gualini 2001). In addition, process should not be understood merely as a means to a substantive end. . . . The challenge for researchers and practitioners is to keep the interplay between both dimensions in mind as instances of practice unfold” (see also Hajer and Wagenaar 2003). An anonymous reviewer also recommended Senbel, Stevens, and Ferguson (2012) and Puppim de Oliveira (2005) as sources that blend process and outcome concerns well. This line of future research should also study how planners manage to balance conflicting imperatives of practice.

In conclusion, exemplary planners describe themselves as facilitators using communication and networking strategies in institutionally constrained practice settings of unequal

power. Moreover, exemplary planners are goal directed. They use process and political skills to achieve valued outcomes. As they clearly address both sides of the process–outcome debate, the exemplary practitioners resolve the theoretical debate.¹⁶ In doing so, they direct attention to the connection between process and outcome and future research: what is the link between process and outcome?

Appendix

Survey Questions

How do you see your role as shaped by your organizational context? Institutional context? political context?

How do you deal with any role conflicts?

How do you set your priorities?

Do you have your own agenda/goals/vision?

Do you want to facilitate a planning process and/or see yourself as a neutral agent?

What strategies do you use to achieve your goal, or to facilitate the planning process?

Do your strategies change? over time? by problem condition?

What criteria do you use to judge your effectiveness?

What advice do you give to an inexperienced planner?

Acknowledgments

The author gratefully acknowledges contributions from Miriam Chion, Matthew Lewis, Jean Roggenkamp, Juan Onesimo Sandoval, and the graduate student interviewers. The author also thanks the *Journal of Planning Education and Research* editors and reviewers for their helpful comments and suggestions.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Notes

1. This lack of clear anticipated outcomes posed an obstacle for evaluation, Seasons's concern. If widespread in planning practice, the lack of clear anticipated outcomes is also a concern for the process–outcome debate and understanding exemplary planning practice.
2. Those who emphasize process favor outcomes responding to all the stakeholders. Those who emphasize outcomes favor democratic processes.
3. Often the students worked in the practice settings and thus knew the planners.
4. Planners' roles, goals, and strategies vary according to their practice setting, a finding examined in another study.
5. Interviews conducted in the 1990s are relevant for planning today because the questions posed are generic to planning and are not time-sensitive. Furthermore, none of the anonymous reviewers mentioned that the data were dated, even though one asked "Why the delay in writing the manuscript?" (Delay in analyzing the findings was caused by exigencies of daily living, such as knee surgery and serving as Department Chair. Moreover, an earlier version of the manuscript had been delayed by the change of editors at a different journal.) To check further on the current relevance of the interviews, two metropolitan-level planners with extensive professional expertise and interactions with Bay Area planners reviewed the manuscript and said it "rang true today." Thus, the two senior metropolitan level planners imply that the sampled planners reflect Bay Area planners.
6. A few planners were interviewed in more than one year; only one interview per planner is included in the 119 interviews analyzed in this article.
7. But see Alinsky (1972) for external activists and Krumholz and Forester (1990) for a compelling case for an internal activist.
8. The organizational and institutional dimensions of the planners' interviews are analyzed in a separate study.
9. Only 3 percent of the planners had the goal of upward mobility. These planners are more likely to choose the conflict strategy, even though very few (8 percent of the planners) chose that strategy.
10. Planners whose goal is categorized as "other" were either vague or described something not a goal but a matter of degree.
11. Listening is an important aspect of communication, exchange of thoughts.
12. More in line with expectations and partially in line with these findings, Howe (1994, 254) found that activists gauged effectiveness by achieving their goals, technicians by giving good advice, and process planners—facilitators—by facilitating an open process.
13. Even those who were concerned with the quality of the process had the goal of providing equal access to decision making.
14. In theory, the uneasy situation of planners using political knowledge and skills to make a planning process more open poses more of a problem for planners who are facilitators than for activists or technicians. In its pure form, planners who take on the role of facilitator should operate outside of politics, in settings where power relations among the stakeholders are equal. The dilemma is particularly worrisome when the facilitator is responsible for the whole, whether for the whole city, with all its diverse citizens and interest groups, or for the whole consensus-building process, with its diverse stakeholders. Forester (1987) found that some planners in this position did not attempt to serve as both facilitator and stakeholder, but instead arranged for someone else who could be neutral to serve as facilitator. In contrast, as Howe (1994) explains, technicians can leave the political choices to the politicians. Activists can behave explicitly as politicians because it is understood that they are advocates operating in a system of pluralist politics (Davidoff 1965).
15. Unquestionably, it is challenging for planners—especially for those early in their careers—to follow such advice when the planning situation may be far from the individual planner's control.
16. An anonymous reviewer notes, "If theory is merely descriptive of realities, then it becomes questionable what normative value may be ascribed to that theory." Both sides of the process–outcome debate are explicitly normative, as Fainstein notes (quoted above). Accordingly, their reconciliation is also normative.

References

- Alinsky, S. 1972. *Rules for Radicals*. New York: Vintage.
- Baum, H. 1983. *Planners and Public Expectations*. Cambridge, MA: Schenkman.
- Bryson, J., and B. Crosby. 1992. *Leadership for the Common Good: Tackling Public Problems When No One Is in Charge*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Christensen, K. 1999. *Cities and Complexity: Making Intergovernmental Decisions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Christensen, K. 2000. *Affordable Housing: Constraints and Opportunities for Nonprofit Developers*. CPRC Brief, California Policy Research Center, University of California, Berkeley.
- Davidoff, P. 1965. "Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning." *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 31 (4): 331–38.
- De Roo, G. 2000. "Compact Cities, Environmental Conflicts and Policy Strategies: Complexity as a Criterion for Decision Making." In *Achieving Sustainable Urban Form*, edited by K. Williams, E. Burton, and M. Jenks. New York: Routledge.
- Fainstein, Susan S. 2010. *The Just City*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Fischler, R. 2000. "Communicative Planning Theory: A Foucauldian Perspective." *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 19 (4): 358–68.
- Fisher, R. and W. Ury. 1981. *Getting to Yes*. London: Penguin.
- Flyvbjerg, B. 1998. *Rationality and Power: Democracy in Practice*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Forester, J. 1987. "Planning in the Face of Conflict." *Journal of the American Planning Association* 53 (3): 301–14.
- Forester, J. 1989. *Planning in the Face of Power*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Giddens, A. 1984. *The Constitution of Society*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Grant, J. 2002. "Mixed Use in Theory and Practice: Canadian Experience with Implementing a Planning Principle." *Journal of the American Planning Association* 68 (1): 71–84.
- Gualini, E. 2001. *Planning and the Intelligence of Institutions: Interactive Approaches to Territorial Policy-Making between Institutional Design and Institution-Building*. Aldershot, United Kingdom: Ashgate.
- Hajer, M., and H. Wagenaar, eds. 2003. *Deliberative Policy Analysis: Understanding Governance in the Network Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Healey, P. 1999. "Institutionalist Analysis, Communicative Planning and Shaping Places." *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 19:111–21.
- Healey, P. 2003. "Collaborative Planning in Perspective." *Planning Theory* 2:101–23.
- Healey, P. 2010. *Making Better Places: The Planning Project in the Twenty-First Century*. Basingstoke, Hampshire, England: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Healey, P. 2012. "The Universal and the Contingent: Some Reflections on the Transnational Flow of Planning Ideas and Practices." *Planning Theory* 11 (2): 188–207.
- Hoch, C. 2007. "Pragmatic Communicative Action Theory." *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 26 (3): 272–83.
- Hoch, C. 2009. "Planning Craft: How Do Planners Compose Plans?" *Planning Theory* 9 (2): 219–41.
- Howe, E. 1994. *Acting on Ethics in City Planning*. New Brunswick, NJ: Center for Urban Policy Research.
- Huxley, M. 2000. "The Limits to Communicative Planning." *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 19 (4): 369–78.
- Huxley, M., and O. Yiftachel. 2000. "New Paradigm or Old Myopia? Unsettling the Communicative Turn in Planning Theory." *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 19 (4): 333–42.
- Innes, J. 1995. "Planning Theory's Emerging Paradigm: Communicative Action and Interactive Practice." *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 14:3.
- Innes, Judith E., and David E. Boher. 2010. *Planning with Complexity: An Introduction to Collaborative Rationality for Public Policy*. Abington, Oxon: Routledge.
- Innes, J., J. Gruber, M. Neuman, and R. Thompson. 1994. *Coordinating Growth and Environmental Management through Consensus Building*. Berkeley: University of California at Berkeley, California Policy Seminar.
- Krumholz, N., and J. Forester. 1990. *Making Equity Planning Work*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- McGovern, S. J. 2013. "Ambivalence over Participatory Planning within a Progressive Regime: Waterfront Planning in Philadelphia." *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 33 (3): 310–24.
- Puppin de Oliveira, J. A. 2005. "Enforcing Protected Area Guidelines in Brazil: What Explains Participation in the Implementation Process." *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 24:420–36.
- Schon, D., and M. Rein. 1993. "Reframing Problems." In *The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Planning*, edited by F. Fisher and J. Forester. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Seasons, M. 2003. "Monitoring and Evaluation in Municipal Planning: Considering the Realities." *Journal of the American Planning Association* 69 (4): 430–40.
- Senbel, M., M. Stevens, and D. Ferguson. 2012. "Local Responses to Regional Mandates: Assessing Municipal GHG Emission Reduction Targets in British Columbia." *Sustainability: Science, Practice and Policy* 9 (1): 28–41.
- Webster-Merriam. 1956. *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*. Springfield, MA: Merriam.

Author Biography

Karen S. Christensen is professor emerita in the Department of City and Regional Planning, University of California, Berkeley. Her research interests include planning theory, institutions, and housing.