AICP Exam Overview: History and Theory of Planning

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Planning suggests a systematic attempt to shape the future.” [Rothwell]

Theory is “a belief that can guide behavior.” [Wordnet]
Types of Theories

• Normative Theories
  – To what ends ought planning be focused?
    • Theories of the public good, social justice, utilitarianism, rights…

• Substantive Theories
  – How do communities and regions work? By what methods do we assess existing and project future conditions? By what means do we achieve the ends we desire?
    • Economics (econometrics), geography (GIS), environmental science (EIAs)…

• Procedural/Process Theories
  – How might planners act?
    • Decision theory, political science, negotiation theory, public participation…
“From the outset of English settlement, starting with the building of a stockade enclosure at Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607, the conquest and peopling of North America entailed repeated efforts to devise sites for future use, usually as villages or towns. Although twentieth-century historians commonly identified this activity as “city planning” … no such phrase was used before 1900. Commonly, a landowner or public official simply hired a surveyor to devise a plat showing the proposed streets and lots … [F]or purposes of clarity, this activity will be called town site planning.”

- Peterson 2003
“City planning, by contrast, dealt with already built cities, such as New York, Chicago, or San Francisco. The older practice of devising layouts for new places was not its principal concern. This distinction is fundamental.”

- Peterson 2003
Industrialization and Societal Change
Poor Sanitary Conditions
Urbanization & health

“Filth theory held that unsanitary conditions in general, rather than infectious agents, gave rise to disease transmission – seen as an environmental rather than a biological problem.”

Peterson 2003
“Four major ideas then fully enunciated in Britain would anchor subsequent American thinking as well: that vital statistics be regularly collected and publicly recorded; that all preventable disease be continuously monitored by the government; that corrective action be based on scientific judgment, utilizing surveys of disease outbreaks and associated environmental conditions when possible; and that a thorough nuisance abatement program be carried out, including large scale engineering works. This last goal in combination with the rational, investigative thrust of health administration was tantamount to urban planning in the guise of public health.”

- Peterson, 2003
Antecedent 2: Planning as Greenspace Development

Olmsted & Vaux’s
Central Park: 1873
“Almost everywhere the upsurge in population had touched off orgies of land platting and selling, in many places well beyond the city limits, though usually near railroads. The subdivision of land long before more home sites were really needed was such a common practice that few voices were raised against speculators. Ever since the days of the canals and early railroads urban growth had stimulated feverish trading in land ... local authorities began in the early nineties to pay some attention to the quality of platting. Generally, their attempts to exercise stronger control represent some of the first few steps toward modern city planning.”

- Scott, 1995
The early sanitary surveys and sewer plans constitute some of the first clear examples of comprehensiveness in large scale public works projects. These plans were:

1. **Multipurpose in their goals**: remove waste; limit disease transmission; enable continuous delivery of fresh or filtered water;

2. **Citywide**: as opposed to the Roman Cloaca Maxima, Chicago’s sewer plan was designed to serve the entire existing city, as well as future growth;

3. **Integrated in implementation with other public projects**: sewer construction was coordinated with the repaving of streets and, later, other sub-terranean utility work.
The “White City”
“From 1905 through 1909, the new ideal of comprehensive city planning achieved its first historical form: the City Beautiful Plan. All the lofty dreams about the public good, the “science” of city making, the inspirational value of general plans, the need for order, harmony, and beauty, and the virtues of expertise now faced the text of reality. Real organizations and city officials began seeking real plans for real places.”

- Peterson
Plans by Burnham

Chicago 1909

San Francisco 1905

Cleveland 1903
“Social progressives challenged the root assumptions of City Beautiful planning head-on. Coming from the same segment of American society as the City Beautiful advocates did, they readily grasped the cultural bias of beautifiers toward the well-to-do and its preoccupation with public improvements to the neglect of urban slums and their inhabitants.”

- Peterson, 2003
“The good we secure for ourselves is precarious and uncertain until it is secured for all of us and incorporated into our common life.”

Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull House*
Divergence of Planning Thought

City Beautiful Movement

Physical Design Orientation
Physical Progressives

Social & Regulatory Policy Orientation
Social Progressives
Regulatory Basis for Planning

**1901**
- NYC: “New Law” regulates tenement housing

**1907**
- Hartford: First official and permanent local planning board

**1909**
- Washington DC: First planning association
- National Conference on City Planning
- Wisconsin: First state enabling legislation permitting cities to plan
- Chicago Plan: Burnham creates first regional plan
- Los Angeles: First land use zoning ordinance
- Harvard School of Landscape Architecture: First course in city planning
1913
- Massachusetts: Planning mandatory for local governments; planning boards required

1916
- New York: First comprehensive zoning ordinance

1917
- American City Planning Institute established in Kansas City

1922
- Standard State Zoning Enabling Act issued by US Dept of Commerce

1926
- Euclid vs. Ambler Realty Co: Supreme Court upholds comprehensive zoning
Physical Blueprint for Garden City
Application of Expert Knowledge to Community Design

“Determining the best plan for a city was solely a matter of proceeding logically from the known to the unknown – of gathering factual information, analyzing it, and discovering that in almost every case there was ‘one, and only one, logical and convincing solution to the problems involved.’”

--- Scott 1995
Why This Increasing Emphasis on Rationality in the 1950s?

- Optimism in the power of science to resolve social problems
- Depression and WWII experience with planning
- Increasing emphasis on social and economic as well as physical aspects of urban problems
Rational Planning

Meyerson & Banfield: Planning, Politics, and the Public Interest, 1955

- Planning should be: 1. Efficient with resources; 2. Reproducible; and 3. Objective.

- A structured process of decision-making that seeks to maximize the achievement of desired goals (ends) by careful consideration of potential consequences of available alternatives (means)

- Rationality focuses on
  - the quality of decision
  - the subordination of action to knowledge and of knowledge to values
The Rational Model

1. **Analysis of Situation**: How is the decision situation bounded?

2. **End Reduction**: What are the goals of the client or client group? How are these ends prioritized?

3. **Design of Courses of Action**: What courses of action lead to the attainment of goals?

4. **Comparative Evaluation of Consequences**: What are the consequences of the identified courses of action?

5. **Ends-Consequences Determination**: Optimization
Challenges to Comprehensive Rationality in Planning

Problems are “wicked”
not subject to optimization

Knowledge is limited
not subject to comprehensive consideration

Interests are plural
“public interest” is subject to over-simplification and bias
Goals and means are uncertain

- Broadly defined groups/clients
- Diverse interests
- 5 – 20 years before results discerned
  - feedback and corrective actions are difficult

Problems are “wicked”

- Each attempt to create a solution changes the understanding of the problem
- Problem definition evolves as new possible solutions are considered and/or implemented
Knowledge Is Limited
Impediments to Comprehensiveness

Synoptic rationality is essentially impossible

- Cognitive limits
- Resource limits
- An infinite regression

Procedural rationality is a more attainable goal

- Seeks to approximate rational decision making within these limits
Response to complexity and knowledge constraints: **Incrementalism**


- Select goals and policies simultaneously
- Consider alternatives only marginally different from status quo
- Trust results of social experimentation over theory
- Act incrementally through repetitive attacks on the problems being addressed
- Satisfice rather than maximize

Major policy changes are best made in little increments over long periods of time.
Mixed Scanning


“Bounded” instrumental rationality simplifies the world less than incrementalism

A wide-angle examination of patterns across all possibilities
  - long-term context & plan

• A close-in examination of the most promising options
  - short-term choices
Interests Are Plural
Community, Power and Social Justice

- 1960s
  - Communities consist of multiple voices
  - Planners’ incapacity to discern public interest
- Planning goals cannot be reduced to a unified notion of the public interest
  - Single voice usually = most powerful voice
  - Marginalized voices typically excluded
  - Inclusion of marginalized interests in plans requires planner to act decisively from a social justice perspective
- Planning responses
  - Advocacy Planning
  - Radical Planning
Advocacy (Progressive) Planning


- Planner ≠ value neutral technician
- Large inequalities in political and bargaining processes
  - Many communities under-represented/unorganized
  - “Citizen participation” programs usually react to official plans and programs
- The “public interest” is plural, not unitary
  - A single plan cannot represent the public interest
- Planning should be pluralistic & represent diverse interests
Advocacy Model

- Planners “represent and plead the plans of many interest groups.”
- Planners assist various interest groups ("clients") to propose their own goals, policies & plans
- Planners advocate for the interests of their clients
  - Special responsibility toward marginalized interests
Radical (Progressive) Planning

Robert Kraushaar, "Outside the Whale: Progressive Planning and the Dilemmas of Radical Reform" 1988

“In the context of this paper I define social reform as action that ‘subordinates its objectives to the criteria of rationality and practicability of a given system and policy.’ The legitimacy of the existing structure of society is a predominant concern. Social reform automatically excludes activity incompatible with that concern.”

“I define radical reform as activity that attempts to transform society, enacting changes that ‘substantially add to the democratic rights and power of ‘average’ citizens in their daily lives as workers and consumers … Radical reform takes as its objectives fundamental political and economic changes, which it seeks to attain without crises or revolution. But radical reform sees the existing economic and institutional mechanisms of society as a primary cause of inequity and inequality.”
Social Learning
(Communicative Planning, part 1)


“Formal models have been usefully employed to solve problems in such relatively undemanding areas as inventory control and logistics. They have generally failed to yield effective results in the more complex, less clearly defined problems of business management, housing policy, or criminal justice.”

Emphasis on problem solving has obscured the importance of problem setting: the process by which we define the decisions to be made, the ends to be achieved, means which may be chosen.

Recognition of the socially constructed bases of information and facts militates for a process of collective knowledge validation in advance of problem identification – the basis of problem setting.
Social learning rejects positivist approaches to knowledge development in favor of socially constructed bases of learning and knowing, through which all facts and observations are understood through a lens of experience.

Problem setting is informed by a group learning process oriented toward collective understanding through knowledge validation.

Through social learning, an individual theory of practice is developed through “reflection-in-action.”

Social learning can be understood as constituting an inductive (observation to theory) – deductive (practiced-based theory to observation) loop.
“Political economic power may function systematically to misinform affected publics (e.g., misrepresenting risk or costs and benefits), the progressive view anticipates this regular, structurally rooted, misinformation and organizes information to counteract this “noise” (or “ideologizing”).”

“Unlike the incrementalist or liberal-advocate planner, the [critical theorist] believes that misinformation is often not an accidental problem in planning, but rather that such distortions of communication are systematic, structural and institutional problems to be addressed and counteracted on that basis.”
“Communicative competence (ideal speech) is achieved only when the speaker produces grammatical sentences, a content is chosen so that the listener can share the knowledge of the speaker, the listener trusts the speaker, and the listener can agree with the speaker on the underlying values.” Hemmens & Stiftel, 1980

Four conditions of ideal speech:
1. Clear and comprehensible;
2. Sincere and trustworthy (although perhaps not factually accurate);
3. Appropriate and legitimate (lacking in assertions of authority); and
4. Accurate and true.

Comprehension, trust, consent, and knowledge.
Theory Succession

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communicative</th>
<th>Progressive</th>
<th>Incremental</th>
<th>Rational</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge as socially constructed; theory building through inductive-deductive looping</td>
<td>Prioritizing one value set over another</td>
<td>Divorcing values from alternatives</td>
<td>Optimizing alternatives</td>
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Resources

Theory


History

Good luck!