

(Marxists and neo-Marxists) be maintained when only an occasional and partial victory occurs in the seemingly interminable struggle against the enemy?

- What should be the basic components of a strategy? What role should be given to violence, to the choice of arena, to the timing of actions and their duration, and what kinds of specific actions should be undertaken (strikes, demonstrations, street theater, terrorism, non-cooperation with the state, formation of political alliances, establishment of alternative communities)?
- What should be the characteristics of the "good society," the social ideal to be realized in practice, now or in the future? What relative importance should be given to such goals as a nonhierarchical and inclusive social order, the practice of self-reliance, voluntary cooperation, dialogic processes, and a radical leveling of the social hierarchy?

New chapters in the history of planning thought are still being written. Specific modalities and styles of plan-

ning may become obsolete, but the linkage between knowledge and action will remain a lively concern, both ideologically and in practice. We cannot wish not to know, and we cannot escape the need to act. As social conditions and human understanding change, the actual and theoretical links between knowledge and action will surely undergo changes as well. If we wish to ensure the continued vitality of planning in the public domain, we would do well to examine, carefully and in a critical spirit, the traditions we have now. □

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After Rationality

Ernest R. Alexander

Rationality has been the prevailing paradigm for planning and related decision sciences and areas of practice and has yet to be superseded. Today it faces a growing perception of anomalies, but classic rationality filled a real need, and attempts to find a suitable replacement continue.

What have been the responses to the breakdown of rationality as a dominant paradigm of planning theory? I have described these elsewhere as "the ritual response," the "avoidance response," the "abandonment response," and the "search response." In the ritual response, which is widespread in planning education and practice, adherence to the rational model continues with only token acknowledgment of its anomalies. The avoidance response is common among social scientists. It involves substitution of essentially descriptive decision-making models for the rational paradigm, or modifications of the rational model that generally fail to develop their practical implications to any logical conclusion.

The abandonment response suggests that the rational model, or indeed any process model at a similar level of

generality and abstraction, is unnecessary and should be abandoned. In one version, substitutes are proposed at a lower level of abstraction, either summoning up the practitioner's intuition and experience as a basis for action, or suggesting a pragmatic limitation of planners' roles. In another version, a concrete, substantive, political or social ideology is substituted for the value-neutral rational model. In the search response, radically different models are offered as alternatives to the prevailing paradigm which is crumbling under its acknowledged anomalies.

I focus here on responses that constitute the pre-paradigmatic alternatives to the rational model. To win acceptance as a new dominant paradigm for planning and the related decision sciences and professions, each, some, or all of them together must encompass the different roles that rationality filled. Ideally, a new paradigm should also meet criteria for adequate theory, but this is not a necessary condition. After all, the rational model itself does not meet these criteria, yet it filled the paradigm role—how well is a matter of perception and argument.

One type of response is to substitute for the rational model an alternative model of decision making. Many critiques of classic rationality have been prefaces to this type of response. Herbert A. Simon's "satisficing" and Charles E. Lindblom's "disjointed incrementalism" are examples. These models themselves have been subject to many of the same critiques that were advanced against the rational model: they too are based on limiting assumptions which are not always supported in reality. These are a type of avoidance response.

Another set of responses fall into the abandonment category but still offer a substantive model as an alternative paradigm. Neo-Marxist planning theorists are the most prominent example of this approach. The problems with this or, indeed, any substantive approach, are well set out by Marios Camhis in *Planning Theory and Philosophy*, but proposals of a substantive paradigm are not limited to neo-Marxists. Systems based and ecology oriented approaches have been presented making similar claims. John Friedmann has proposed his model of "transactive planning" which modifies some of the procedural characteristics of the rational model and introduces some significant substantive assumptions about ethics and society. It is clear that none of these can replace the rational paradigm. All of them are either limited to specific contexts, or, if universalized, require an act of faith in their underlying ideological assumptions. It is hard to believe that these are forthcoming.

There is a perennial debate between proponents of "procedural" versus "substantive" planning theory. Many of the assertions underlying this debate are rooted in a fundamental misunderstanding of the role of abstraction in theory building. Thus, the contention that procedural theory is abstract and devoid of substance and that substantive theory alone can offer models based on reality is misplaced. At some level of abstraction, process and procedure are bound to become divorced from each case-specific context and substance: without such abstraction any generalization across cases is impossible. This is equally true for substantive or structural variables.

There are two orthogonally distinct dimensions on which we can map any discourse on planning: (1) the focus of conceptualization, ranging from totally procedural at one pole to totally structural at the other, with various procedural-structural mixes between; (2) the level of abstraction, from the totally concrete case-specific or phenomenological approach at one extreme, to the completely abstract, contextless, and general—perhaps even universal—model at the other.

Much of the debate between procedure and substance has really been about something else: the appropriate level of abstraction for fruitful discussion and learning about planning. That is a question of some importance, but it cannot be constructively addressed through a contrived conflict between essentially complementary concepts. This realization can help us evaluate some of the philosophical borrowings that have been proposed as alternative paradigms for planning. Models, such as Don-

ald Schön's "reflective practitioner," which rest on an essentially phenomenological approach to action cannot respond to the demands of a paradigm that offers a general model and that can serve as a normative base for decision and action. As a conceptual base for planning theory, pragmatism may have some value, although it is difficult to see how the pragmatic calculus can be operationalized, except as a guide to sound intuition, for actual decisions.

Another alternative paradigm has been proposed, which is transferred from yet another philosophical source: critical theory. Based on the thinking of a school of German philosophers, and lately elaborated by Jurgen Habermas, this model has been the subject of widespread discussion among philosophers in general and planning theorists in particular. Critical theory has many—although not all—of the attributes needed for a paradigm, and it can offer a significant contribution.

Representatives of the search response have proposed a variety of contingency theories as a way to sidestep the recognized problems of a general model. Recent examples of such contingency models in planning theory are Barclay Hudson's SITAR model and Gill-Chin Lim's synthetic framework. In decision and organization theory such frameworks have also been proposed as a way to integrate different and competing models.

The very proliferation of alternative contingency models illustrates their intrinsic problem. A contingency theory is in essence a metatheoretical framework for identifying and relating a set of relevant contingencies into which the universe must be partitioned. Such frameworks suffer from the same shortcomings as the ideologically based substantive models. The selection of the relevant contingencies, or the identification of the specific partitioning factors, is critical. Yet in any contingency model, this selection is essentially arbitrary, and any attempt to justify it is the beginning of an infinite regress.

In spite of this reservation, a contingency framework offers the most promising direction out of our preparadigmatic impasse. The contingency models offered to date do not fit the bill because they essentially limit themselves to integrating classic rationality with a few of the modified rationality models. They fail to respond to critical theory's valid critiques of formal utilitarian rationality, in particular the fact that neither classic nor modified rational models address the social and interactive aspects of decision and action.

If I am optimistic about the potential contribution that a contingency theory can make, it is because I see no better alternative. I will be rash enough to join the long line of proponents of contingency models on the assumption that an inductive approach, based on a valid intersubjective experience of a common life-world in practice, can generate a set of useful contingencies.

The test of such a model will be both theoretical and pragmatic: Are its dimensions a valid reflection of some critical factors in the real world that facilitate description, analysis, and explanation of phenomena? Does the

framework offer answers to practical questions and dilemmas, answers that offer the foundation for the development or application of skills and tools that offer processes superior to intuition alone? No model or paradigm can be perfect on these criteria, but another virtue of a contingency model is that it offers the best framework for discourse in the ongoing process of theory generation and generalization.

Competitive or Complementary?

The point of departure for the contingency framework I propose is the juxtaposition of the rational model with a proposed new paradigm: critical theory. Critical theory has expanded the base of reference of our thinking on decision making and action with two important contributions. First, there is the idea of reflexive consciousness, expressed in the term *praxis*. This includes the realization that societies and individuals, institutions and organizations, decisions and actions are all embedded in specific historically determined social, cultural, economic, and political contexts which reflect distinct norms and values. The normative implication is a rejection of objective or scientific expertise in practice, for a *praxis* that combines reflective decision and action in full consciousness of oneself and one's own life-world. Second, critical theory has given us a shift of focus from decision, or choice, to action and, more specifically, to interaction in the social arena. Interaction implies communication between persons or, by implication, between homogenous social units acting like individuals. Thus the classic theory of decision is transformed into a theory of communicative action, which is offered as the new paradigm for thinking about individual and societal action.

In this discussion I take Habermas's "Theory of Communicative Action" (from *Theorie des Kommunikativen Handelns*), which I call TCA, as the final expression of critical theory. Critical theory, as represented by TCA, is also inadequate as a general paradigmatic model for planning and decision making. TCA is subject to some of the same flaws that have been identified in critiques of classic rationality. It is normative, not descriptive; it is procedural, not substantive; like rationality, it omits a significant portion of the relevant universe from its area of attention.

As a normative theory, TCA is abstracted from the real world and does not purport to describe real behavior. Habermas states clearly, "My aim is not the empirical characterization of attitudes, but the conceptualization of general structures of consensus formation processes, from which formally characterized conditions of participation may be derived [my translation]."

Communicative action, which is the subject of most of TCA, is characterized by an a priori orientation toward consensus (*Verständigung*) among the participants in the interaction or, more accurately, the discourse. In this respect, it is clearly distinguished from strategic action, which is directed toward the actor's own success, or, in terms of an interactive discourse, to achieving a collective

agreement (*Uebereinstimmung*) on the actor's own terms among the participants.

Strategic action (which Habermas refers to only in passing and includes in his schema only for completeness) does not use the force of rational argument to accomplish its ends, unlike communicative action which aims at persuading participants to coordinate their actions based on commonly arrived at convictions. Rather, strategic action, which can be covert or open, uses power, influence, and manipulation, or systemically distorted communication in unconscious deception, to coordinate the participants' behavior in pursuit of the actor's objectives.

Habermas's complete schema is a powerful analysis of the potential universe of interactive behavior. But communicative action, which commands most of his energy and has riveted his readers' attention, is only part of that schema. It does not take an extreme degree of cynicism to recognize that it is strategic action that describes interactive behavior most accurately, and that most observed interpersonal, interorganizational, and social interactions are strategic, not communicative action as Habermas has defined them. Communicative action, as described and analyzed by Habermas has little to do with actions that actually take place in the real world, but it is a normative model in the same sense that formal utilitarian rationality is. This is not a particularly damaging criticism for either model. Both have their analytic uses just as normative rationality offers a model to abstract deliberative decision behavior, TCA provides a model for analyzing decision-related interactions. In the planning arena, John Forester has demonstrated TCA's usefulness.

TCA is entirely procedural since it is as divorced from substance as classical rationality is, in the sense of the many critiques that have been aimed at rationality over the last twenty years. Communicative action is a process that is regulated by a highly abstract set of rules that can be applied in any substantive context and that are designedly independent of social structure. Indeed, they can be criteria to evaluate and assess social structures as contexts for interaction. Communicative action is a general and universal theory, demonstrated by its most basic law: the "universalization principle." This is the principle that any norm can only be valid if it is unconditionally and freely accepted by all affected parties.

A revealing illustration of the deliberately procedural orientation of TCA is Habermas's comparison of communicative action with John Rawls's criterion of distributive justice. Habermas is explicit in describing Rawls's approach as nothing more than a special case of a possible substantive consensus that could be reached through communicative action, a particular working out of the universalization principle that he and Rawls have in common. I do not see a procedural orientation as problematic; but consistency demands that if it is considered a serious shortcoming in the classic rational model, it is recognized as a flaw in TCA as well.

TCA cannot become a paradigm for planning and decision making because it covers only a limited part of the

universe of action and interaction. Habermas's own schema, which complements his essentially normative model of communicative action with a much more realistic and descriptive model of strategic action, in this sense recognizes this limitation. There is another sense in which Habermas's entire construct of communicative and strategic action is incomplete: TCA is the mirror image of classic rationality. The rational model of decision making ignores the interactive, reciprocal, and coordinative aspect of action—action that does not result from an individual, but a collective, organizational, or social decision. Decisions of such heterogeneous collectivities, and the resulting actions, cannot be accounted for by the utilitarian rational model. The rational model encounters serious difficulties in dealing with collective action. Its limitations, even when formally surmountable, lead in any practical sense to the replacement of the hard rational approach by soft models of political interaction.

Rationality presumes a deliberative decision making process internalized within an actor identified as a homogeneous unit: an actual individual, or an organization, institution, or political unit such as a government conceived of as acting as a unit. Charles Arthur Willard has called this "ratiocination," or the "private" aspect of decision making.

TCA, on the other hand, is limited to the public or social-interactive dimension of action. TCA does not prescribe and cannot account for preinteractive decision making or deliberation. How does an individual or a social unit arrive at the choice of the course of action desired, before entering the arena of interaction and discourse? How should individuals or social units, acting as units, decide on the strategy that they enter this arena to promote?

Clearly, the life-world is not limited to either of these dimensions: the domain of internal reasoning or the arena of social interaction. The universe of decision and action must comprise them both. Therefore, the conclusion suggested by the diagnosis of the reciprocal gaps in the rationality model and TCA is compelling. One paradigm cannot supplant the other. Rather, these two models are complementary, each covering an aspect of the process that transforms ideas into reality that the other does not. Any model that is to claim the status of a new paradigm must include them both.

Toward a Contingency Framework

No contingency model can be complete; its framework can only span a limited part of the range between universal abstraction and particular concrete experience. The partitioning of every contingency framework is essentially arbitrary, so I will not attempt to offer a rationale for the model presented here. This particular proposal is essentially a synthesis of several models that have been suggested at various levels of abstraction, taking formal rationality and communicative action as points of departure at the highest level.

The framework I propose is a metatheoretical model

that encompasses the world of decision and action, and embraces the entire process of translating ideas into realities. This contingency framework spans several levels of abstraction. At the highest level, it aspires to be comprehensive and universal. At the lower levels, it cannot hope to be complete, and some branches of the hierarchy that have attracted attention may selectively be filled in. Many other branches await completion, necessarily by others. This is one of the attractions of such a contingency framework: its elaboration must necessarily become a cooperative enterprise.

A contingency framework offers the most promising direction out of our impasse.

At the level of metatheory, the relevant dimensions are: (1) the purpose or orientation of the theory or model and (2) the decision domain. The latter continues into the next, lower, level of abstraction, where Habermas's distinction in his TCA also comes into play: (3) the actor's orientation or purpose. These dimensions can penetrate down into the following, more concrete, level, where additional factors can be added. These could include interaction and issue or problem characteristics such as types of knowledge and agreement. The interaction between dimensions 1, 2, and 3 generates relevant decision and action models.

The definition of theory domain places theories in one of two alternative sets. One is "ideal": this refers to logical-deductive theories which, by definition, must be normative in the senses I have suggested. Thus, they can be logical "ideal type" models; they can also be prescriptive models for desired action. The other set is that of "real" theories: positive-descriptive models that describe and explain observed phenomena.

The dimension of action domain is suggested by the juxtaposition between the classic rational model and Habermas's schema. It distinguishes between models that refer to decision making or action by individuals or units conceived of as individuals: deliberative models; and models referring to decisions and actions among actors in the social arena: interactive models.

Both domains can be partitioned by the actor's purpose. Habermas uses this to distinguish between strategic action and communicative action. The purpose of an actor can be teleological: oriented toward the outcome or result of the actions, and aiming at the accomplishment of desired goals. Alternatively, an actor or a collectivity of actors can focus on the quality of the interaction process and orient it toward achieving coordinated action through mutual understanding and consensus.

These three dimensions divide the universe of decision and action models into six possible sets. Two other sets

remain empty. One would contain models that are real—that is, positive-descriptive, individual-deliberative, and oriented toward consensus/understanding. This set must be empty by definition, since consensus and understanding are properties of interactive behavior, not individual-deliberative decision or action. The other empty set would contain models that are ideal rather than real. It is not limited to models that could describe observed behavior; it cannot contain models that have logical inconsistencies, such as the combination of consensus with individual deliberation. The remaining possible sets present these characteristics:

- Real, individual-deliberative, accomplishment-oriented: This set contains the descriptive models developed in response to critiques of classic rationality—models of instrumental rationality applied to practical situations. These include various versions of bounded rationality, satisficing, and disjointed incrementalism, and contingent blends of these such as mixed scanning.
- Real, social-interactive, accomplishment-oriented: Here is Habermas's strategic action. This set may include instrumental or substantive rationality, in the sense defined by Mannheim, manifested in "compromising strategies" such as bargaining, negotiation, and political "games."
- Real, social-interactive, consensus/understanding-oriented: This set may contain models of communicative action that can be observed and described. Such models could include mediation, conflict resolution, arbitration, allocation, regulation, and legislation. To fall into this set, such actions must be by a neutral participant or by a consensus-oriented collectivity, and this may be rare. Models in this set involve actions and interaction that are unself-interested by definition. To the extent that they do not conform to this requirement, and involve actors that seek their own goals and success, they would be strategic action and fall into the real, social-interactive, accomplishment-oriented set. Alternatively, if the models are only analytic or normative idealizations of behavior, they would be covered under the ideal, social-interactive, consensus/understanding-oriented set.
- Ideal, individual-deliberative, accomplishment-oriented: This is where the formal model of utilitarian rationality has its place, including both instrumental and substantive rationality. Rationality related normative analytic models, such as optimization, linear programming, and multiobjective decision making also fall into this set.
- Ideal, social-interactive, accomplishment-oriented: Games theory, formal models of teams and coalitions, and formal strategic models, as for example war game simulations, are generated by the dimensions forming this set.
- Ideal, social-interactive, consensus/understanding-oriented: Here is the place of "communicative action" as defined and described by Habermas.

I have presented a framework for a contingency model of theories of planning, decision, and action. This framework is developed only at the highest and most general level of abstraction. It is intended to serve as a point of departure for thinking and discourse about deliberation, action, and interaction; and for the development of more specific, detailed, and concrete contingency dimensions to further partition some of the sets I have suggested.

There is already a significant body of work along these lines, which could be integrated into this framework. For example, Anna Grandori has focused on models of modified rationality. She suggests how the choice of an appropriate model among maximizing models (such as linear optimization), heuristic models (including satisficing), incrementalism, cybernetic or random strategies may be affected by types of uncertainty and knowledge about expected conflicts of interest. Others also distinguish between decision models according to the degree and types of uncertainty that prevail; or array approaches to decision and action according to agreement on goals, knowledge of cause-effect relationships (related to context and possible means), and the types of values at stake (instrumental or expressive).

The potential also exists for applying this framework to integrate procedural and structural orientations to theory. Structural dimensions can be introduced at any relevant level of abstraction. Decision, action, and interactive models in the first two sets, for instance, could be analyzed, and possibly new or elaborated models generated, using as structural dimensions the ones suggested to Patsy Healey by political economic theory: the internal organization of the state, spatial interrelations and configurations of land use development-related interests, and sectoral land use development needs and demands.

Is a contingency framework such as the one developed here (and, eventually, its elaboration at more specific and concrete levels) a viable replacement for the rational model as a conceptual paradigm for the planning, policy, and decision disciplines and professions? I believe that it is and, indeed, that such a framework is the only approach that can span the expanding universe of decision and action, and at the same time bridge the widening gap between theory and practice.

In a knowledge-world in which we have come to appreciate complexity, the replacement of one simple paradigm by another is unlikely, however desirable that might be. A contingency framework offers the only hope—perhaps no more than a hope—of a paradigm that can incorporate complexity and that can grow, change, and adapt in response to new insights and accretions of knowledge. □

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