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*T h e o r y*

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# COHERENTIST THEORIES OF PLANNING ARE POSSIBLE AND USEFUL

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**Abstract** Mandelbaum argued against the possibility of a complete general theory of planning set out along the lines of a generalist, a priori, covering-law model. In this article we draw on Miller and Hurley to elaborate a coherentist approach to planning theories that achieves some of the aspirations Mandelbaum sought for a general theory. We argue that this perspective is more inclusive, vis-à-vis what can count as theory for planning, and widens the circle of intellectual conversations in which productive disagreements on points of theory can be sustained. We show how the coherentist approach is useful in focusing the attention of planning theorists on productive inquiry. Finally, by analogy, we argue that a coherentist attitude toward how plans can and should be made and used in particular situations is more useful than the traditional approach of comprehensive plans.

**Keywords** coherentism, explanation, justification, making plans, using plans, web of plans

Mandelbaum (1979) challenged us to frame our theory work so as to set difficult but achievable aspirations. A complete general theory of planning in the terms Mandelbaum presented is impossible. It is possible, however, to adopt a *coherentist* approach in which theories of less ambitious scope are developed and used to cope with particular problems that arise in the world. This approach works toward aspirations that Mandelbaum set because it suggests reasonable expectations for explanations and justifications useful in coping with the world. The approach also enables us to focus on productive disagreements that will improve the collection of theories and our ability to express them in ways pertinent to understanding what is happening or deciding what to do. Finally, the coherentist approach suggests an attitude toward using and making plans that sets reasonable expectations for what plans can and should do.

Coherentism is an approach to determining what ought to be done in a particular situation, all things considered. Coherence is a relationship of consistency among reasons for action. A working assumption of this approach is that we operate within a 'web of belief' concerning facts, values, and meanings and, moreover, that the factual, evaluative, and interpretive components of descriptions cannot be completely disentangled. Because different strands of this web of belief are not privileged over others, general concepts are not analytically prior to or independent of specific concepts. We include in coherentism Rawls's political notion of wide reflective equilibrium, Davidson's epistemological coherence, and Hurley's combination of these two aspects with consideration of individual and collective coherence.

On this approach, one seeks to establish the widest possible agreement among reasons for action by bringing appropriate explanations and justifications to bear in deliberations. Importantly, however, the aim is not to eliminate disagreement. To say from a coherentist perspective that a particular course of action ought to be taken is just to say that it is favored by the theories that give the best account of the relationships among the specific values that apply to the alternatives. Coherentism is consistent with particularism in that it is oriented to the analysis of concrete situations as opposed to the establishment of general laws. Particularism is not inconsistent with generalization from one case to another, but it does not focus on finding general laws or using general laws as the basis for generalization.[1]

First, we briefly review the impossibility argument of Mandelbaum (1979) and then sketch a coherentist perspective of planning theory that is possible. We also contrast the coherentist approach to explanation and justification with other non-positivist perspectives.

Second, we illustrate how coherentist consideration of competing theories about a set of related questions can be used to find opportunities for effective scholarship. The set of related questions intersect in disagreements about an important question: what kinds of plans are and should be made for cities? The set is particularist in that it is grounded in concrete disagreement and it is built specifically to focus this disagreement.

Third, we argue that an emergent web of plans is analogous to a coherentist attitude toward linking knowledge and action in which the content of plans is the focus of knowledge. Coherentism provides a perspective for using the many plans that we observe in urban development processes without forcing these plans to be in close agreement with each other. The focus is then on coherence among reasons for action, not on consistency among plans themselves. This contrasts with a more traditional view of plans as hierarchical and foundational, with certain plans, such as regional plans or formally mandated plans, presumed to be analytically prior to others, such as municipal plans or neighborhood organization plans, in identifying and determining actions.

Fourth, we illustrate why this disagreement about plans matters by describing the mix of recent plans for the metropolitan area of Chicago. Four recently created plans can be used to reason about action, based on awareness of who made these plans for what reasons, without pretending to resolve differences among the plans themselves.

Finally, we consider relationships among disagreements about plans and disagreements about other issues in planning theory. Different responses to one issue can affect the appropriateness of responses to other issues. In particular, we argue that the idea of an emergent web of plans is coherent with recent planning theories that have been used, at least implicitly, to deny the pertinence of conventional comprehensive plans as if that were the only way to think of plans. Thus coherentism frames an approach for deciding what to do in particular situations. These situations include using theories when choosing what planning scholarship to do and using plans when deciding what urban development actions to take.

## *Theories – impossible and coherentist*

### An impossible theory

In his classic 1979 article, Mandelbaum asks us to consider a model of a complete and general theory of planning. Mandelbaum takes theories to be 'particular sorts of statements which organize the vast array of causal narratives and explanations' (p. 67). At their cores are sets of axioms and definitions, models of social or personal interactions, and rules for deducing and validating propositions. The domain of planning theory includes 'all statements which relate the attributes of planning processes, the settings in which they are applied, and their outcomes' (p. 67). Mandelbaum observes that 'a general theory must generate a set of propositions which relate all necessary categories of processes, settings, and outcomes' (p. 67) and suggests that it would be:

> helpful to think of this set of propositions as arrayed in a table in which the columns are designated as types of planning processes and the rows as settings. Outcome measures appear in the cells . . . The canon of descriptors for the prime table . . . cannot be settled through formal linguistic analysis but depends upon serious inquiry and debate. The table as a whole is an object of complex design and research, a product of a community of scholars able both to create and maintain it. (Mandelbaum, 1979: 68)

Two criteria that Mandelbaum proposes that the table should satisfy are brevity and political neutrality, noting that the brevity that would make manageable the task of testing and refining propositions would not be achievable without political neutrality. Upon considering the prospects of putting planning theory into such a framework, Mandelbaum observes that 'the criteria for an adequate table are . . . so demanding that they . . . exceed the capacity of any current or likely community' (p. 68). He despairs, for various plausible reasons including disagreements, of anyone being able to formulate a brief and neutral canon for a prime table and concludes that theorizing is a process not a product, whose 'worth lies in the tension it generates against practice rather than its unique claim to validity' (p. 70).

While Mandelbaum's argument is compelling if one accepts all its assumptions, these assumptions are not necessary to the theoretical enterprise of planning and may in fact lead planning theorists to misguided theorizing. Allmendinger (2002) and Flyvbjerg (2001) arrive at conclusions similar to Mandelbaum's about the feasibility of general theory, but by different routes, for different reasons, and with implications different from those we draw here. Allmendinger and Flyvbjerg go further than Mandelbaum by questioning the possibility of any theory of planning in the sense of explanation. We do not.

In this article we agree that pursuing a complete, general theory of planning *is* unrealistic, but we also elaborate a different account of theories in general and planning theories in particular that is better suited to our needs for explanations and justifications. In rejecting the possibility of a general theory, Mandelbaum buys unnecessarily into positivistic (a priori, formal, and general) notions of what theories are about, and therefore precludes other approaches to achieve aspirations for some of the benefits of a general theory. We draw on non-positivistic and particularist characterizations of theories provided by Miller (1987), Hurley (1989), Toulmin (1992) and Kitcher (2001), in developing our account and thereby achieve some of these benefits, while still rejecting the possibility of a general theory as set out by Mandelbaum.

Why does it matter how we view theories in planning? We acknowledge that it may well be the case that, in the academic discipline of planning today, theory is widely viewed as encompassing all the scholarly literature of the field. It is undeniable that it is also held by many that theory in any sense other than this all-encompassing one is perhaps not something that

can be 'done' in planning. We are not ready to concede the point. We continue to see a need to be able to identify and distinguish between significant contributions to explanatory and justificatory knowledge and contributions to other types of knowledge, for example, historical or aesthetic.

Having an explicit view of what counts as theory also enables us to be appropriately inclusive and to prevent the exclusion or ruling out of potential contributions on a priori grounds. Here we have in mind theoretical arguments that might be excluded from a conference program or from a journal's editorial review process because they fail to conform to a narrowly positivist view of theory: 1) they don't attempt to account for why a general law may or may not have been realized; 2) they may not be value neutral or may even dispute the possibility of value neutrality in defining that which is to be explained; or 3) they are not based on assumptions of methodological individualism.[2] All three types of exclusion are casualties of institutionalized positivistic prejudices about models of theory (Miller, 1987; Putnam, 2002). Standards for assessing adequacy of causal depth and of justification of particularist theories emerge in focused scholarly argument. Hence we sketch in the next section a view of planning theory that, while ruling out 'anything goes,' enables us to make progress in ongoing scholarly conversations as described by Hopkins (2001a).

## Theories, explanations, and justifications

*Theories* are essentially explanations that may be of two types. They may explain phenomena that are relatively more observable in terms of causal factors that are relatively less observable or they may provide reasons or justifications for particular conventions, value judgments, or perspectives. Henceforth, we shall refer to the former as 'explanations' and the latter as 'justifications.' What counts as a good theory (an adequate explanation or justification) varies with the field of inquiry and depends in part on the needs of its intended audience. It is arguable that a necessary, if not sufficient, condition for effective planning is the availability of good theories of *both* planning behavior (e.g. explanations of conditions under which planning is likely to succeed and why and justifications of certain conventions or practices) *and* the workings of interdependent systems (e.g. explanations and justifications of urban development processes, the economy, social institutions, the political system, the ecosystem) within which planning activities are being considered.

According to Richard Miller, an explanation may be viewed as a:

> . . . kind of description which is most fundamentally a basis for coping with reality, i.e., for promoting or preventing change. Such description will be description of causes, for all means of control are causes, even if the converse is not true. Describing causes is a social activity with a long history of interconnected episodes. So if it is to aid in coping, adequacy will be governed

> by standards fitting the scientific needs of the time. But, even when guided by these standards, the description of causes would often fail to aid in coping, unless the requirement of depth is imposed. Without the requirement of depth, we could [should] not expect explanation generally to direct us toward a crucial point at which to intervene in order to change reality. (Miller, 1987: 104)

Several comments on Miller's characterization are in order. In his view, explanations are given relative to audiences with specific *practical* needs. Hence the causal factors cited and effects putatively brought about are those in which a particular audience is interested. Said factors and effects are not likely to be general. Whereas, in positivistic accounts of science, there are formal and general criteria any valid explanation must satisfy a priori, in non-positivist accounts of science, successful explanations need not conform to a standard format. Miller points out that philosophers of science tend to worry about satisfaction of such criteria more than do scientists working in given fields. Different fields of study have different repertoires of causal mechanisms to which theorists appeal. One purpose of the research process is to extend such repertoires. 'Stopping rules' in explanations will be dependent on field and audience. What suffices for an explanation in technical shorthand between planners in an office most likely will not suffice for an audience at a public hearing, which requires a more fully developed account. Every explanation (as a description of causes) is a social act with a context. There may be, and usually are, competing explanations based on different definitions of what is deemed to be problematic.

A critical point made by Miller against those who would divide certain sciences from others on methodological grounds is that there is not one methodology for, say, human sciences (e.g. hermeneutics) and another (a general a priori method) for other sciences. In fact, all sciences, theoretical and applied, have their own field-specific methodologies and means of detection. When we seek to explain what caused or brought about *any* phenomenon, we appeal to repertoires of causal mechanisms that have been established in the relevant fields, be they movements of tectonic plates (geology) or motivating reasons, desires, or fears (psychology), that is, whether the causal factors are in the ground or in our heads.[3] Often too, what we seek to explain is not some recurring *general* phenomenon but a *particular* event or sequence of events. We prefer one explanation to another if, in a fair comparison of competing explanations, it does a better job of accounting for the phenomenon in question. The confirmation of theories is recognized by Miller to involve historical rivalries of causal hypotheses, frameworks in which they have arisen, and the histories of the investigations themselves. Importantly, in Miller's account (in contrast to the positivist account that Mandelbaum rejects) there *is* a place for political values in identifying important explanatory factors, and there is no ambition for comprehensive generality, which is also the case in real-world

scientific practice. Thus, the political account that Mandelbaum wants to include can be included in a coherentist account.

Turning now to justifications, we observe that there are many institutions, conventions, and practices that give context to planning and which need to be justified in the sense of revealing the reasoning behind such social constructions. Justifications involve normative arguments, persuasion, and appeals to values or rankings of values. Often arguments for planning interventions involve both explanations *and* justifications. For example, social policy planners argued in support of the Head Start program in the 1960s, noting that it would help underprivileged students to learn better (a causal relation) and thereby become better educated and more productive members of society and contribute to the realization of a liberal social value (a justification). Deliberations about granting variances to zoning regulations reflect on the causal impacts such variances may have on the public health, safety, and morals the value of which is not in question but presumed. Often members of zoning boards of appeals and other bodies associated with planning are asked to make tradeoffs between competing community values, seeking coherence among justifications.

In her interdisciplinary study of reasoning about action, Susan Hurley (1989) observes, as did Isaiah Berlin (1969) before her, that values (and reasons) often conflict not only between but within people. She describes the deliberation process through which we may try to achieve coherence or internal consistency between our values or reasons for actions as something akin to Rawls's notion of reaching a 'wide reflective equilibrium' among positions held by different individuals in a liberal society (Daniels, 1979). Hurley, like Miller (1987, 1992) and many Aristotelian theorists (e.g. Murdoch, 1970; Nussbaum, 1993), is *non-centralist* in the sense that she rejects the view that general concepts such as 'right' or 'ought' are conceptually prior to and independent of specific reason giving concepts such as 'just' and 'unkind.' The primary difference between centralist and non-centralist positions is over the priority of the general. *Coherentist* views are non-centralist. Drawing extensively on the writings of Wittgenstein (1958) on language and practice and Davidson (1984, 2001, 2004) on the social nature of knowledge, Hurley argues for the possibility of the objectivity of value judgments about what ought to be done, all things considered, and the interdependence of values and preferences through action.[4] In so doing she lends critical support to a style of theorizing about planning that can work in particular contexts with practical aims without making concessions on objectivity.

With other contemporary planning theorists, including Mandelbaum, we share an appreciation for the apparent incommensurability and irreconcilability of many phenomena we engage within our post-modern communities and world. Yet we also cannot dismiss Wittgenstein's and Davidson's profound understanding of how much in the way of background knowledge – factual *and* normative – we share that *must* be correct if we function

socially as well as we do. Hence in our framing of planning theory we follow Hurley and seek coherence among the different planks (explanations, justifications, and supporting positions) that are needed to make sense of and cope with the world. And as a by-product of this approach we are attuned to areas of disagreement that might be productively investigated.

When we adopt a coherentist perspective on planning theory, we are inclined to ask a different set of questions than those posed by Mandelbaum's general theorist. What needs to be explained or justified to whom to enable action to be taken? What theories would help interested parties cope with and manage change and decide what is the best thing to do, all things considered? What would constitute adequate causal depth in an explanation by one or more of the interested parties to another? What institutions, conventions or social and cultural practices come into play, are questioned or challenged, and must be justified? What reasons for planning interventions might interested parties be disposed to accept or not (perhaps, because the conflict of values is too great)? What kinds of studies need to be conducted, meetings convened, and arguments prepared to help parties involved cope with the problems at hand?

When we ask these questions we are not asking for abstract theories that aspire to completeness, generality, or unanimity. But we are asking for more than partisan stories and interpretations. We are examining particular constellations of issues that come together in concrete historical situations, seeking pragmatic insight and direction, and attempting to identify and constructively pursue disagreements.

We would expect there to be substantive disagreements not only between parties to a decision, but also between theorists attempting to explain or justify various aspects of a situation, and we do not need to produce a 'master narrative,' a definitive account of what is going on at all levels in universalistic a priori positivistic terminology. Still, taking suggestion from the sources of coherentist thought, we can see the value in looking for coherence among explanations and justifications of what is going on and identifying substantive disagreements which might be productively pursued.

Throughout the foregoing we have contrasted coherentism with the more traditional positivist view of theorizing. It is reasonable to ask how coherentism compares with other *non*-positivist perspectives adopted by planning theorists. The neo-pragmatism of Harper and Stein (1995) and the communitarianism of Mandelbaum (2000) share coherentism's emphasis on coping with particular concrete problems in historical communities. Coherentists and neo-pragmatists are perhaps more sanguine about the possibility of communicating meaningfully across cultural differences, making objective, non-relativistic determinations about courses of action, and defending liberal values than communitarians might be. Coherentists and neo-pragmatists both find the web of belief metaphor compelling, but neo-pragmatists such as Stein and Harper (1997) (and perhaps communitarians)

find in this a prima facie case for incrementalism in taking action, whereas our coherentist interpretation does not.

## *A coherentist attitude about theories for planners*

Having set out the argument for the value of a coherentist approach to reasoning about action, we now extend the idea of coherence from reasoning about what to do in a particular situation to the task of choosing what research questions to ask and what theoretical arguments to bring to bear for particular issues. We put these ideas to work to demonstrate how this approach can accomplish two tasks in planning scholarship.

First, we can clarify focused disagreements by identifying particular issues being considered and the explanations or justifications that are used to make claims in response to these issues. These claims intend to make clear what is being explained or justified, by whom, and for what particular purpose. They are presented here as particularist, non-positivist claims that may be usable in coherent reflections about what research to do about plans as a particular phenomenon. The practical tasks of organizing to carry out scholarship in this way were described in Hopkins (2001a). Woolcock (2004) develops a similar argument focused on the concept of social capital.

Second, we can consider whether focusing on a particular explanation for one issue affects the framing of questions or explanations for other issues. That is, a coherentist account developed for one particular issue may interact with coherentist accounts developed for other particular issues and thus be pertinent to recognizing interdependent arguments in scholarship.

A major reason for seeking coherence is to discover where there is agreement or disagreement about how the world works or about what we should do, in contrast, for example, to differences resulting only from addressing different issues. Tables 1 (explanations) and 2 (justifications) summarize four distinguishable issues: plans, command versus markets, collective choice and social action, and process and procedure. This particular frame is chosen in order to focus attention on more precise disagreements about explanations and justifications of plans. That is, this framing of issues is created to consider a particular theoretical situation, not to create a general theory or general categories in the covering law sense.

This framing of issues in Tables 1 and 2 intentionally makes plans a phenomenon distinguishable from other phenomena. Plans are information about related decisions. A plan in this sense is a consideration of more than one decision, regardless of whether authority encompasses more than one decision. This information may be useful in making better decisions about any one action. Plans do not inherently control or change authority, depend on social choice or collective action, or rely on particular kinds of processes or procedures. The questions about plans are: under what circumstances and to accomplish what do we or should we make plans or use plans?

TABLE 1 *Explanations pertinent to major issues in planning theory*

| | ***Plans*** | ***Command versus market*** | ***Social choice, collective action*** | ***Process/procedures*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *General question* | How can we explain the existence and effects of plans? | How can we explain the world in terms of organizations and their interactions? | How can we explain choices emerging in and among individuals, groups of individuals, and organizations? | How can we explain the existence and effects of individuals' actions in planning situations? |
| *Examples of specific questions* | Why do plans occur for downtowns and transportation and not for neighborhoods? | Why do markets emerge?<br>How do societies overcome capital accumulation or rent seeking in corporations and bureaucracies? | Under what circumstances are coercive structures likely to change into non-coercive structures? | How do coercive power, influence, reasoned argument, expertise, consensus, and advocacy roles interact in explaining effectiveness of actions? |
| *Examples of explanations in response to specific questions* | Plans are made when participants can gain sufficiently from planning to compensate costs (Hopkins, 2001c).<br>Plans are made by governments when governments can gain as local corporations or when in interests of political constituencies who are influencing governments (Hopkins, 2001c). | Markets emerge as property rights systems because they are more efficient than other allocation mechanisms (Barzel, 1989; Webster and Lai, 2003).<br>Markets disappear when rent seeking participants gain monopoly control. | Democratic collective choice processes are impossible for more than two choices (Arrow, 1951). | Consensus processes in groups enable collective action (Innes, 1996).<br>Micro-political action with critical reflection and moral commitments increases the ethical quality of action (Forester, 1999).<br>Advocacy balances differences in influence and capability (Davidoff, 1965; Harwood, 2003). |

TABLE 1 *Continued*

| *Plans* | *Command versus market* | *Social choice, collective action* | *Process/procedures* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Plans are made in neighborhoods when external inducements are provided artificially (Hopkins, 2001c). | | | Reasoned argument is overwhelmed by power (or not) (Flyvbjerg, 1998).<br>Action research empowers underpowered communities (Reardon, 1998).<br>Direct action in Alinsky style influences outcomes (Horwitt, 1989). |

TABLE 2 *Justifications pertinent to major issues in planning theory*

| | ***Plans*** | ***Command versus market*** | ***Social choice, collective action*** | ***Process/procedures*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *General question* | How can we justify choices among attributes of plans in particular situations? | How can we justify choices among different structures of interaction among organizations? | How can we justify choices among mechanisms and contexts in which such choices occur? | How can we justify choices among types of individuals' actions in planning situations? |
| *Examples of specific claims* | A plan should be made by public sector agency and be comprehensive in space, time, and topic.<br>Plans should be made of scopes sufficient to consider interdependent decisions by any organization that might benefit. | Urban land should be allocated by markets.<br>Urban land should be regulated by zoning and growth boundaries. | Direct participation should be privileged over representation of interests.<br>Direct participation is inherently flawed and should be complemented by representation of interests. | Plans should be made through participatory processes working toward consensus on common interests.<br>Plans should be made through critical reflection by experts and interested parties.<br>Plans should be made by separate interests so as to discover and, in some circumstances, make known what a particular actor should do. |

TABLE 2 *Continued*

| | ***Plans*** | ***Command versus market*** | ***Social choice, collective action*** | ***Process/procedures*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Example of justifications in response to specific claims* | Collectively sanctioned plans that aspire for consistency should be made in metropolitan areas (Berke et al., 2006).<br>Plans should be made in complicated mix as motivated by organizational interests (Hopkins, 2001c). | Markets allocate resources more efficiently without zoning regulations (Webster and Lai, 2003).<br>Zoning regulations are efficient mechanisms for accounting for externalities over time. | Direct participation creates citizens (Hurley, 1989; Mandelbaum, 2000). | Planners should actively oppose power (Sandercock, 2004).<br>Planners should work in the public interest (AICP Code of Ethics). |

Under what circumstances and with what scope are plans useful? We elaborate these issues below. First, however, we consider other issues identified in Tables 1 and 2 to distinguish them from issues about plans.

Command versus markets is one of the most (or for some least) popular issues in what is loosely termed the 'planning versus markets' debate. The questions addressed under this label are usually questions of which actions of which actors should be placed under the command of other actors and which should occur as transactions among mutually willing actors (e.g. Dahl and Lindblom, 1953; Alexander, 1995; Webster and Lai, 2003). Put slightly differently, the question is what size and scope of organizations will or should choose actions internally within the organization rather than externally among organizations. Even actions subject to command are often based on a prior transaction among willing actors, as in employment contracts or decisions to join an organization. And decisions within organizations are seldom as simple as command from the top. Most of the work on this issue occurs outside the planning literature in political economy, economics, sociology, and organizational behavior. It is pertinent to issues of plans, not because it (or anything else) is central or foundational as some might claim, but because of its ambiguous relationships to claims about what plans are, can do, and should do.

Much of the discussion of command versus markets repeats well-established arguments without engaging the actual remaining disagreements. Incentives and adaptability are not really still at issue. The open questions are about how to make specific choices in specific instances, trade-offs between adaptability and justice, implications of capital accumulation over time, influences beyond markets that affect distributions of wealth and power, and fundamental rights of winners and losers. As will be seen shortly, deep assumptions about command versus the autonomy and spontaneity ascribed to markets affect what planning scholars see as readily acceptable assumptions and justifications for questions about plans. Even when focusing on other questions, relationships to this question are often important in discovering where contradictions or agreements actually lie.

Social choice and collective action refer to issues about how groups make choices and take action. Command versus markets might be considered a subset of this issue, but the focus of inquiry here is different. Explanations of social choice and collective action, based on thousands of years of philosophy and political economy, consider aggregation of preference, the nature of community, and circumstances in which concerted action is likely. Justifications respond to the hope that moral societies are possible (Mandelbaum, 2000). General moral commitments often frame such justifications.

> I see planning as an always unfinished social project whose task is managing our coexistence in the shared spaces of cities and neighborhoods in such a way as to enrich human life and to work for social, cultural, and environmental justice. (Sandercock, 2004: 134)

Such broad moral commitments, however, do not distinguish planning from any other approach to issues of social choice, collective action, or individual moral commitment. We cannot explain why plans are likely to be made or used or should be made or used only by what people should want to accomplish in the world. The quote above might equally well define use of any device in economics, law, political science, political philosophy, or psychology. Explanations and justifications of plans require something more specific. A coherentist approach to planning theories makes it possible to focus on questions about plans in particular situations without ignoring what is known or pretending to resolve theoretical challenges on which many others are working in these other fields.

Process and procedure questions ask, how do and should planners work with communities to advance the social project identified with planning? Much planning scholarship of the last 20 years has focused on how individuals acting as planners behave when planning, both as effective actors and as moral beings (e.g. Hoch, 1994). The scope of approaches includes deductive claims for rational method, psychological research, communicative action, and critical theory. Again, however, little of this work is specific to using or making plans as distinct from any other approach to dealing with the world.

Current scholarly conversations tend to focus separately within each of the four issues – plans, command versus markets, social choice, and process – and appear to disagree about the nature of knowledge, modes of research, and the importance of particular questions. There is little work that cuts across these distinct conversations because it is difficult to frame a question with sufficient clarity to know whether or not there is any disagreement and if so about what. Each conversation has its own 'native' language of discussion, which complicates the task of discovering coherence or contradiction. Rather than accepting these conversations as ships passing in the night, as scholars head toward different objectives with different motives, we should engage questions across these conversations, at least sufficiently to consider how questions interact. To illustrate the possibilities of 'inter-conversation scholarship', we focus first on questions about plans and then relate these to the other issues.

## *A coherentist attitude about plans*

The claim that cities can and should make comprehensive plans is often advocated as the defining idea of the organized profession (Kelly and Becker, 2000; McClendon, 2003). Planning theorists, on the other hand, often refute this claim (e.g. Altshuler, 1965) or, especially in the last 30 years, ignore it as no longer of theoretical interest. Mandelbaum (1979, 1990) and Neuman (1998) are exceptions. Two streams of ideas about plans, which we label 'hierarchical comprehensive' and 'emergent web', are presented here

to illustrate how a focused disagreement can be used to shape theoretical attention on remaining differences in the face of many similarities.

Both the hierarchical comprehensive and the emergent web views agree that it is worth making claims in theoretical terms about what plans can and should do. Both views distinguish the direct effects of plans themselves from the authority or capacity of actors (individuals or organizations) to take action or enforce regulations. Both arguments yield claims that in particular circumstances plans of particular scopes are worth making and that plans of useful scopes can and should be made. These views disagree about the relationships among these plans and on the ways they affect action.

The traditional hierarchical comprehensive view imagines these plans as consistent in content among plans up and down the hierarchy, controlling action, widely agreed to as serving collectively chosen common interests, and created through structured procedures. The hierarchical comprehensive view argues that plans must control action and be consistent to be useful (Wildavsky, 1973). It follows that all actors should do what the plan says they should do. A plan is good if it is consistent with higher-level mandates and plans, agreed to by consensus, created by prescribed procedures, and implemented (e.g. Kaiser et al., 1995; Burby et al., 1997).

The emergent web view, on the other hand, imagines plans occurring in ill-structured and constantly changing collections with unresolved inconsistencies in content. These plans serve different interests that may conflict, are created through a wide variety of formal and informal procedures, and influence actions of various actors by providing information. The emergent web view builds on Friend and Jessop (1969) and is framed as an 'ecosystem of plans' in the context of urban development in the United States in Hopkins (2001b, 2001c). This view tries to explain under what circumstances plans can be expected to occur and to justify claims about when and for what scope plans should be made. It does not need to distinguish the idea of planning and plans as something that only planners do because it is able to identify explanations of who is likely to make plans about what and in what circumstances. It recognizes plans as occurring in many scopes contingent on situations and justifies these many scopes as appropriate given explanations about organizations, social choice, and limitations of human and social capabilities to carry out prescribed procedures. Plans are good if they present information that is useful in consideration by various actors of what to do, all things considered.

A key aspect of disagreement is the extent to which consistency within and among plans is desirable. One way to understand this question is to distinguish between an aspiration to achieve agreement and consistency when *making* plans and an aspiration to achieve coherence of reasons, all things considered, when *using* plans from multiple sources to take action. The former is analogous to a positivist perspective that we can get things right in general and beforehand. We could then, by implication, achieve a consistent, general plan analogous to a covering law model of theory. The

latter, on the other hand, is analogous to the coherentist attitude that we can and should try to make effective use of knowledge in a critical, reflective way when coping with specific choices about action. This knowledge includes the many plans of varying scope and made by and for multiple interests as justified in the emergent web of plans approach.

We can, therefore, justify making multiple and inconsistent plans because these are more likely to express the information actually pertinent when making contentious choices about actions. Plans made consistent a priori, on the other hand, are likely to achieve consistency and agreement by suppressing or avoiding aspects over which there is disagreement, by excluding such information from plans even though it is pertinent to taking action. In the spirit of coherentist reflection, the emergent web view acknowledges the underlying claims for how plans can work, such as vision, agenda, design, policy, strategy (Hopkins, 2001c), as arguing for many plans of finite scope rather than no plans at all.

The emergent web view is itself a coherentist attitude toward the use of plans because it argues neither for priority of one plan over another, thus non-centralist, nor for resolving inconsistencies among plans before engaging particular decision situations, thus particularist. Actions taken are and should be based on consideration of the information available in plans of various sorts that are helpful in understanding what might happen, what others might do, and how futures might be valued. Plans are not inherently prior to decisions. A well-considered decision to build light rail, for example, should depend on formal and informal plans from many agencies and times, not on a pretense of agreement on a plan as if it could control all action and all uncertainty.

The hierarchical comprehensive view focuses more on justifying why plans should be made than on explaining why such planning might occur. It relies on the existence of many historical instances to suggest that such plans are possible because they have occurred. The justification claims that comprehensively planned cities will be more beautiful, efficient, and desirable to live in. These claims are backed by comparisons of 'planned' and 'unplanned' cities historically and hypothetically. In the extreme, the inference is that a city is a design problem to be worked out. This perspective has evolved significantly in the last 100 years and recent versions of these claims, such as Kaiser et al. (1995) and Kelly and Becker (2000) include much more sophisticated claims than the caricature above. They now acknowledge uncertainty, disagreement about interests, different types of plans, and multiple plans in some sort of network of relationships. Neuman (1998), for example, focuses on general or comprehensive plans as two dimensional layouts, and argues that cross-acceptance as developed in New Jersey will be more effective than strict hierarchy, but the cross-acceptance process still focuses on analytically prior consistency and relationships among a recognized set of sanctioned plans. Thus there have been and remain opportunities for focused, theoretical discussion.

These differences were discussed at the Leuven conference in 2003 in a session organized by Philip Berke about the next edition of *Urban Land Use Planning*. Should, as discussed there based on the example of Denver, we try to have a set of plans with a well-structured relationship of consistent ideas across scopes from integrated vision, through regional planning, city plans, small area plans, and implementation documents? This view relies on assumptions of unitary public interests with some stability across scopes. Interests are represented and resolved in a planning process at least partially distinct from formal and informal political processes of action. Can we expect to create such systems of plans that will be effective? Should we strive to achieve such regional consistency and hierarchical structure among plans? How long might such agreements be stable and thus the best information within which to make decisions?

The disagreements are about both explanations and justifications. The emergent plan view argues that we should strive to make use of the many plans that will exist, regardless of their consistency or inconsistency, because there is no clear hierarchy of authority or influence, no stability of unitary interest, no congruence of organizational initiative in time, and no possibility of getting everything done at once. And such a strict hierarchy of authority or plans would be undesirable even if it were achievable.

Importantly, these views are talking about the same phenomena and attempting to engage the same questions. The differences in implications are small but real. Their differing claims affect choices of when, about what, and for whom to make plans. Most importantly, the differing claims yield different expectations for what plans can and should accomplish. The emergent view is more consistent with Mandelbaum's critique of general theory and call for open moral communities. We can accept these claims for plans as operating within social complexity, rather than rejecting as impossible plans in the sense of externally constructed order pretending to overcome complexity.

A coherentist attitude about choosing when to make and how to use plans enables us to pursue the aspirations and goals of comprehensive planning while accepting the impossibility of a general plan and the impossibility of a general theory. That is, the claim that an emergent web of plans is more useful in improving choice of actions than is a hierarchical comprehensive set of plans follows essentially the same argument as the claim that a coherentist approach to using theories is more useful in coping with the world than is a covering law approach to a general theory.

## *Explaining and justifying plans for metropolitan Chicago*

The current situation in Chicago, where no regional plan is accepted as dominant much less as a common aspiration, can be explained through the

emergent plans perspective. The claims being made by Metropoplis 2020, the Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS), and the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC) about their metropolitan plans exemplify the opportunities for justifying multiple and different plans. Table 3 is an excerpt from the 2030 Regional Transportation Plan that acknowledges other plans as benefiting the CATS planning process. It does not give any of these plans foundational priority or hierarchical authority and includes multiple plans of similar scope. It also recognizes that its own

TABLE 3 *'Examples of other regional planning efforts that benefited* Shared Path 2030*' (from Chicago Area Transportation Study, 2030 Regional Transportation Plan for Northeastern Illinois)*

*Comprehensive planning*

- Common Ground: is a pioneering regional planning process that is bringing the Chicago region together to create a shared vision for our common future.

*Advocacy planning*

- Chicago Metropolis 2020: raises the challenge of more closely linking regional land use and transportation planning.
- Center for Neighborhood Technology's Connecting Communities outreach: provides effective communication of transportation concerns at a community level.
- Business leaders for Transportation's Critical Cargo: a joint effort by Metropolitan Planning Council, Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce and Metropolis 2020: makes three major recommendations for improving freight movement in the region.

*Strategic planning*

- The Pace Vision 2020 Plan: envisions a network of service that provides public transportation to everyone in Northeastern Illinois.
- Chicago Regional Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) plan: generated by a partnership including the State of Illinois, City of Chicago and the freight and passenger railroad industry; propose to improve rail performance, ease traffic congestion, increase safety and improve the efficiency of goods movement.
- Lake County Year 2020 Transportation Priority Plan: complements RTP recommendations with a long-range improvement plan for county-level highway, transit and bicycle transportation.
- City of Chicago Central Area Plan: envisions by the year 2020 a beautiful, dynamic urban center known worldwide as a hub of business, higher education and culture.
- DuPage Transit System Plan: proposes a seamless public transportation plan to service the county's travel needs.

planning is ongoing by highlighting elsewhere in the same document the revision process that is already underway. As Bunnell (2002) suggests through several case studies, such a multiplicity of plans is neither unusual nor undesirable.

The comprehensive hierarchical view might argue that these should be consistent plans of different types, but the plans of similar scope disagree about particular actions as well as objectives. The emergent web view argues that plans of regional scope perhaps ought to be made, but not just one of each type, and not one intended to 'get it right' for the region. These plans will be good and useful to the extent that they convey information about how the agencies claiming these plans are intending, in public at least, to operate and that these and other agencies can infer from that, and other information, appropriate actions. Decisions get made because of authority and power that exists. Plans influence these decisions as information, but do not directly change authority or power. Persons who identify as planners often work to change the structure of authority and power, but plans about urban development are not an effective tool for doing so.

Both views might well imagine many plans and even observe the same sets of plans but justify them and evaluate their appropriateness to the situation in different ways. Does it matter whether a regional plan is made first? Does it matter whether there is a Metropolis 2020 plan, a NIPC plan, a CATS plan, a City of Chicago Plan, and a political fight about location and expansion of airports? The two views approach these questions in two different ways: should these questions be resolved into a plan in order to make other plans? Or instead, should these partially contradictory plans be acknowledged as the emergent information available and useful in understanding the world as it is when deciding what to do or when making additional plans? The comprehensive hierarchical view would tend to interpret the situation in the first way. The emergent web view would take the second.

Is the Metropolis 2020 plan an acceptable regional plan given the way in which it was made and the interests it serves? Some have argued that another regional plan should be made to displace it because it was made by the wrong people in the wrong way. The emergent web view can accept that this plan exists and explain why it exists and why it takes the form and addresses the interests it does. Given these explanations, it can justify using this plan in particular ways and justify making additional plans, even additional plans of similar scope by particular people for particular interests.

This instance suggests researchable questions: are plans of many scopes and types for a metropolitan region consistent in significant ways or inconsistent? Why does this happen? Does it affect the ways in which the plans are used? Does it affect how well the plans work in these particular uses? Must an emergent web of plans be consistent to be useful in addressing regionally intractable problems? This last question highlights the

importance of agreed definitions in scholarly conversations. If a plan is presumed to be a means of control, then changing the structure of plans would change the authority structure in a metropolitan area about say housing or transportation. This change, however, is more precisely a change in decision-making structure through organizational change. It is not a question of whether plans are hierarchical, but whether the scope of organizational authority covers the metropolitan region. The Metro 2020 Plan, authored by the Commercial Club, advocates changes in regional authority over transportation decision-making. Putting an agenda item in a plan to advocate change can be effective if it increases the effectiveness of the advocacy. The Commercial Club's plan thus has the opportunity to influence issues of regional scope precisely because it is not part of an a priori hierarchy of consistent plans.

This disagreement between emergent web of plans and hierarchical comprehensive plans is focused to the extent the talk is indeed about the same phenomena, plans that are observable, and about the interpretation of why these plans exist, how they should be used, and whether other related plans should be made. This is not a general argument about 'planning versus markets' or 'community organization versus comprehensive plans'. It is an argument about what a plan for urban development or redevelopment in a particular situation should include, when it should be made, and how it should relate to other plans.

## *Interdependence among theories for planners*

Taken a step further, the coherentist attitude about plans and the Chicago region example show how a focused disagreement about the handling of plans relates to disagreements on other issues in planning theory, as summarized in Table 4. Arguments for multiple interests rather than a unitary public interest and markets rather than command argue against traditional comprehensive plans, but they do not argue against emergent webs of plans. Emergent plans do not rely on a notion of a unitary or even a stable public interest, expertise untainted by political action or interests, rationality as a procedural standard for the interests of society, consistency among plans, or comprehensiveness as a standard for the effectiveness of plans in coping with the world. The ideas of emergent plans can still explain, however, why cities as municipal entities make plans and rely on them for certain types of decisions, why groups with locationally durable financial, physical, and social capital make plans of particular kinds and when, why, and about what it is worth their doing so. Emergent web explanations and justifications are robust to notions of distorted authority and influence and other notions of power and multivocal, multicultural societies. These explanations and justifications across issues in planning theory can be made coherent. They are neither contradictory nor independent of each other.

TABLE 4 *Relationships among justifications for plans and justifications for related issues in planning theory*

| ***Plans*** | ***Command versus market*** | ***Social choice*** | ***Micro-political processes*** |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Hierarchical comprehensive*<br>Should create consistent, hierarchical set of plans in public interest | Should resolve social complexity by command and control in private and public agencies of large scope and hierarchical jurisdiction | Should find and pursue a public interest based on consensus that is unitary and stable | Should seek and achieve consensus through intentional processes focused on enabling collective action in public interest |
| *Emergent web*<br>Should create plans of various scopes specific to interests of each group so as to yield information useful when deciding what to do in specific choices of action | Should resolve social complexity by spontaneous orders that emerge in systems from interactions and motivations of many, changing scopes' authority | Should acknowledge many interests and changing coalitions that should be resolved in the face of particular choices about action | Should seek effective action through critical, multivocal, multi-actor reflection and contention in specific situations |

The coherentist approach makes salient how differences in claims about other major issues – command versus markets, social choice, and micro-politics – interact with claims for these two attitudes toward plans. A claim for hierarchical order and shared public purposes is one response to social complexity, and this response is apparently consistent with claims for hierarchical comprehensive plans. It does not, however, follow that rejecting claims for hierarchical control of social complexity because of impossibility theorems and complexity theory inherently makes plans worthless. A coherentist attitude about plans claims that ill-structured explanations and justifications in aggregate can be sufficient, all things considered, to justify making and using plans to help in coping with interdependence, irreversibility, indivisibility, and imperfect foresight. Each plan and relationships among these plans need meet only a coherentist expectation of considered judgment in particular situations, acknowledging changing circumstances over time. There is no need for the functional equivalents of a positivist covering law, no need for controlling, analytical priority given to any plan or set of plans.

Hierarchical comprehensive plans are, superficially at least, consistent with a command economy, formal mechanisms of collective choice yielding a public interest, and rational micro-level processes. If plans can work without being controlling or consistent, however, then claims about making and using plans can be coherent with claims about market-oriented spontaneous order, unresolved conflicting interests, and micro-political critical action. These possibilities of coherence among different sets of claims among planning theories enable us to focus attention on questions about making plans, which are of significant interest to the profession and practitioners, in relation to the other questions that are currently more salient among academic scholars of planning theory.

It is often asserted that scholars who focus on plans are inherently also claiming ideas about rational action as a systems-level explanation, rationality as a basis for procedure, and rationality as a justification for action (e.g. Sandercock, 2004). It is often further asserted that work on plans contradicts claims that such action occurs in a complex of social and political relationships and that such action could be enhanced by micro-political explanations and justifications about individual actions from social theory and ethnographic observation. The emergent web view of plans suggests that these assertions of inconsistency should be challenged: are these theoretical arguments actually contradictory?

A recent statement of the argument for planners as politically astute and activist change agents was made by Sandercock (2004). At one level, we could ask how Checkoway (1986), Reardon (1998), or Harwood (2003) would operate differently as local change agents. This question frames relatively precise but important disagreements within a set of expectations: planners come with agendas of their own, choose to work with and for interests on the basis of moral claims about whose and what interests they want

to advance, and must find ways to relate their own commitments to those of communities and individuals, all without simplistic assumptions about expertise or direct participation. Forester's (1999) focus on the micro-politics of action creates, through detailed descriptions of multiple instances, understanding of how these processes work. Mandelbaum's (2000) consideration of open moral communities imagines ways in which such relationships succeed and fail. These understandings are sufficient to be useful in coping with the world, coping with both how the world works and justifying what to do in specific situations based on moral claims.

What behaviors are effective? This question need not, and generally in the planning literature does not, assume that making or using plans is pertinent, that an organization as client exists, or that persons with whom a planner works know what they want. Implicit in this question, however, is a presumption that there is something that a planner can do that can improve the situation faced by a community in its own terms, the planner's terms, or both. The primary issue is how to achieve change, not how to make or use plans. This is certainly an appropriate focus because many situations of interest to persons who identify as planners do not justify making plans. This brings us to the potential relationships between the micro-politics of what planners do and should do as political actors and those situations in which this does or should include making and using plans.

It is crucial to recognize, however, that these two views, 'micro-political action' (using Forester's terms in a slightly more general way) toward chosen social projects (in Sandercock's sense) and 'plan making', are not disagreeing about responses to the same focused question. For the most part they are disagreeing about what questions are worth asking and for which situations. These two conversations put aside each other's sets of questions in deciding to focus on their own. Questions are set aside because participants in that conversation believe that different answers to these questions would make no meaningful difference in coping with the world, no answers can be found, answers of sufficient quality for coping with the world have been found, or other questions are just more interesting.

More fundamentally, each conversation sets aside questions because its participants want to focus on other questions and cannot talk about everything at once. It is possible and even fruitful to consider how forecasts might be useful in plans without simultaneously considering whether different cultural experiences will lead people to respond to forecasts differently or to focus on multicultural responses without considering relationships of forecasts and plans. It is even more fruitful, however, also to think about how these questions interact so as to think about whether asking both questions at once might matter. That is, it is worth considering the terrain of planning scholarship at several resolutions so as to find focused disagreements and to discover how disagreements relate to other disagreements.

Can planners who make or use plans use micro-political explanations or justifications for action? A casual empirical argument says yes because at

least some of the examples used by Forester, Hoch, and Mandelbaum are about making or using plans. Moreover, planners who have made or used plans know that they have interacted with colleagues, volunteer planners, and citizens in ways that are described in micro-political case studies. Persuasion, influence, authority, resources, and personal relationships past and future affect how we operate in any kind of situation. On the face of it, there is little contradiction between the scholarly work of these two conversations until we focus on very specific circumstances or relationships. And with such focus, we find that making and using plans in the emergent web of plans view is coherent with other recent claims with respect to other issues in planning theory.

## *Conclusion: focused disagreements about plans*

Mandelbaum argued that a general theory of planning is impossible. In the terms he set that question, we agree. The aspirations he set, however, are important. It is possible to move toward these aspirations through a coherentist approach to planning theory scholarship. A coherentist approach is a useful way to cope with the scope of planning theory scholarship and a useful analogue for advancing our understanding about how, in what circumstances, and why we should make and use plans.

This approach has important implications for planning theory scholarship. We can and should be careful to focus our scholarly attention on questions that will improve our ability to cope with the world, both through explanation of how the world works and justifications for actions. We can do this by recognizing illusions of disagreement and identifying conflicting claims, missing evidence, or missing arguments rather than just reframing current claims as if we are trying to win a debate without adding to the evidence or backing at hand. Disagreement should not be presumed without asking whether the contradiction might disappear through more careful focusing of questions. Micro-politically savvy actors can, and in some circumstances should, plan and use plans, rather than arguing that the conventional view of hierarchical comprehensive plans is impossible without considering other interpretations of plans. Plan-makers and users should consider what micro-political action says about what plans will be observed, whose interests they will serve, and whether they will work as intended. Market advocates can and should consider under what circumstances plans (not changes in property rights) occur in markets and when they can be justified as increasing efficiency or adaptability. Advocates of plans should consider the scope of plans and relationships among plans as essential questions, rather than assuming that a larger scope, consistency, and authority to implement are already fully justified in existing theories.

Planners can and should act now, preferably based on undebunked claims about what to do. This includes what we do in affecting human

settlements and what we do in planning scholarship: we can and should recognize the micro-politics of planning scholars and the potential of forethought about conducting research on more than one question when deciding what research to do individually and in many collectivities. In doing so, we can work toward the aspirations that Mandelbaum set for our scholarly and moral communities.

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## RESPONSE BY SEYMOUR MANDELBAUM

I wrote 'Impossible' to mark the end of a period in which I abandoned the notion that the progressive development of what was still after all a young field would someday ground planning in a confident and complete social technology. I suspect that what Lew and Kieran kindly describe as my 'classic' article would not have been so durable if the title had not been both provocative and obvious.

Some readers interpreted my argument as a denial of all social generalizations but that was clearly a mistake. The critical term in the title is not 'general' – planning is obviously rife with both large empirical generalizations and abstract theories. Most of my difficulty in writing the essay centered in providing a definition of completeness. Even with long acquaintance I know that the notion of judges who distinguish between fair and unfair complaints seems an intellectual stretch. However, without such a notion, the table would be overwhelmed by a vacuous criterion of brevity. With such a notion the assertive title and the argument behind it both survive but they still carry the provocative hopes of a planning science.

Those hopes are part of the ordinary practices of theorists. If I believe that Lew Hopkins's account of the (four-eyed) logic of planning is a 'contribution to knowledge', then should I not anticipate that over time a complete general theory will seem more and more possible?

My negative answer does not come easily. I observe (following Cohen and Lindblom) that research often increases uncertainty and the recognition of ignorance; that the division of a field into a series of separate domains multiplies the number of borders and border regions complicating the overtly simplifying strategy. The social and intellectual structures of the domains are embedded in distinctive lexicons. Paradoxically, even the synthetic lexicons of mathematics, and of general systems and game theory, both encourage and limit shared understanding within and across domains and texts.

When 'Impossible' was new, I would describe its method as 'sociological epistemology'. I was interested – but only modestly – in the ways in which both knowledge and ethical claims were justified. I was then and remain now principally engaged by the impact of justificatory strategies upon the design of institutions and vice versa the ways in which institutional designs influence justificatory claims.

The essay on coherentist theories expands on the line I took in 'Impossible'. The title and the argument stand but in my own terms the attempts within the covering law model to simplify the prime table yield only a set of paradoxes in which more information appears as less knowledge or, at best, a small measure of enlightenment.

In contrast, Donaghy and Hopkins imagine a conversation about the form and uses of a site, a hazard, an opportunity or a problem. The conversation and the participants change over time. At each moment the appropriate and necessary knowledge grows from the formal plans, the tentative frames and, most particularly, the search for coherence. The complex and impossible myth of the theoretical core, the sequence of empirical squares, covering laws and inter alia the judges are replaced by little worlds and believable participants. In the complex web of republican governance only a small portion of deliberation is framed within discrete episodes of the sort that Charlie Hoch describes. Writing a plan looks both forward and back in time, shifting in rhetorical and analytic requirements as the conversation proceeds.

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## Notes

1. On these points, see Hurley (1989), who, in the spirit of Wittgenstein (1958) observes that seeking coherence among reasons for action is just one of the social practices of our way of life. For an exposition and demonstration of a particularist approach to the study of planning behavior, see Forester (1999).
2. Methodological individualism is the view that any social explanation must appeal to participants' resources, environments and their reasons for acting. See Miller (1987).
3. See Diamond (1997) for an excellent discussion of this issue of explanation from the perspective of an historian. If, however, it *is* the meaning of something we seek to establish, then, of course, we would employ methods appropriate for doing so, such as hermeneutic or interpretive methods. See Apel (1984).
4. In her own work, Hurley seeks internal consistency between her positions on 'mind', 'world', 'values', and reasoned action, or 'what is to be done'. While related, Hurley's coherentist perspective is different from Davidson's (1984) 'coherence theory of truth and knowledge', which upon criticism by Rorty (1986), Davidson modified (2001). Broome (1991) provides an example of an attempt to map the coherence between different positions and arguments.

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