

The four traditions of planning theory

A summary of Friedmann's work by Roseland (2000, 89)

Social reform: includes the disciplines of sociology, institutional economics, and pragmatism. It recognizes the state as the vehicle of social action. Planning is a scientific endeavor to make state action more effective. The economy can be adjusted to serve representative needs through business-cycle analysis, input/output analysis, economic policy models, and others.

Policy analysis: includes the disciplines of systems analysis, welfare and social choice, and policy science. It concentrates on decision making as a means of identifying the best possible courses of social action. Planning is a decision process which emphasizes stages that begin with the identification of goals that will structure the decision and ends with program analysis, which evaluates the correctness of the decision. This is the rational model participated in by technical planners who view themselves as social engineers serving the existing power base.

Social learning: includes the field of organization development. It is an effort to minimize the contradictions between what we know and how we act. Planning attempts through social experimentation to change social behaviour. This is accomplished by doing: knowledge is validated practice, and theory is enriched from lessons learned from experience. Planners and client actors are involved in nonhierarchical exchanges of information to further learning.

Social mobilization: includes neo-Marxism, the Frankfurt School (of critical theory), and a category Friedmann calls utopians, social anarchists, and radicals. It is a view of the primacy of action from below. Planning is a political activity which attempts to change the status quo of oppression and alienation under capitalism. Social mobilization emphasizes the politics of disengagement and confrontation. The planner's role is one of community organization, advocacy presentation and interpretation of data, and representation within and cooptation of the decision-making process.

Source: M. Roseland / Progress in Planning 54 (2000):Table 1.

Box 2.5

Features of the emancipatory paradigm

- 1 It focuses on the lives and experiences of diverse groups (e.g. women, minorities, and persons with disabilities) that traditionally have been marginalized.
- 2 It analyses how and why resulting inequities are reflected in asymmetric power relationships.
- 3 It examines how results of social enquiry into inequities are linked to political and social action.
- 4 It uses an emancipatory theory to develop the research approach.

(After Mertens et al., 1994.)

Source: Robson (2002) Real World Research, p. 28.