

...OPEN-SYSTEMS PLANNING...

A New Approach

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ABSTRACT

Comprehensive rational planning has, since its conception, aimed to mitigate the local political process by implementing a method of decision-making coupled with visioning. However, despite its best efforts, the process appears to be flawed as it sometimes defeats the actual implementation process intended to follow the “plan’s” approval—namely providing a means for a community to execute its goals while assimilating the community’s collective best interests. The following logic analyzes the current model of planning, its critiques, alternative organizational theories as applied to planning, and concludes with a proposed alternative termed “open-systems planning.”

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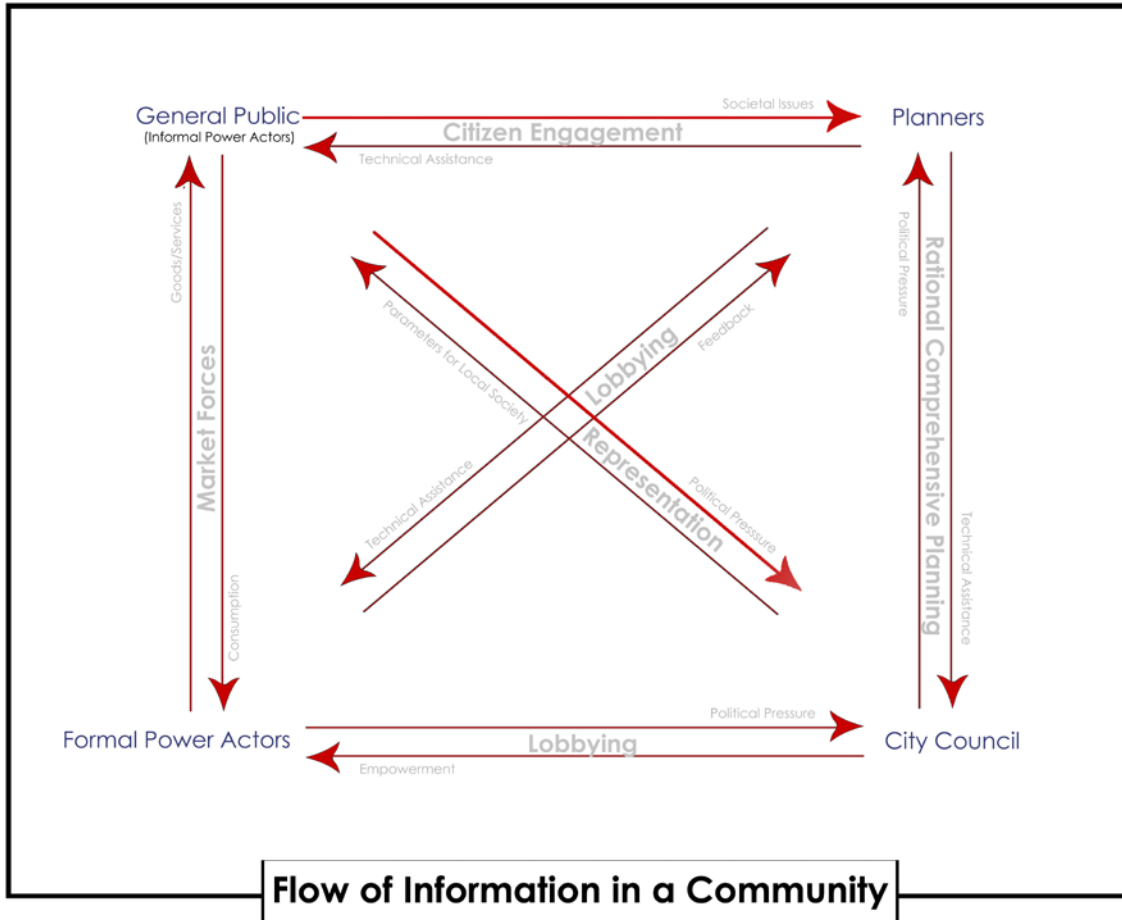
Comprehensive rational planning has, since its conception, aimed to mitigate the local political process by implementing a method of decision-making coupled with visioning. However, despite its best efforts, the process appears to be flawed as it sometimes defeats the actual implementation process intended to follow the “plan’s” approval—namely providing a means for a community to execute its goals while assimilating the community’s collective best interests. The following logic analyzes the current model of planning, its critiques, alternative organizational theories as applied to planning, and concludes with a proposed alternative termed “open-systems planning.” It intends to further the conversation on the dynamics between informal and formal planning action.

RATIONAL COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

Urban planning would not be possible without transference of information, of course, within a community. As seen in the image below entitled, “Flow of Information in a Community” (Borich and Khan 2005), it is evident there is a dual dynamic within each of the main four community groups either affiliated directly or indirectly with planning and planning action. As noted by Etzioni (Etzioni 1989), information is not necessarily knowledge. With the exponential growth of resources to access knowledge available, local residents, planners, city staff and elected officials are scrambling to position themselves to best catch the actual knowledge found within the information transfer. Daily this becomes more difficult (Toffler 1970) forcing alternative, more “effective” concepts to be considered. Even so, planners are charged with, upon receipt of their education, understanding the complexities of society and physical city—a near insurmountable task due to finite capabilities due to limited resources, time, and even knowledge. Herein lays the difficulty with the first of several misconceptions about the efficacy and adequacy of contemporary planning.

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MISCONCEPTION ONE: Planners can handle absorbing all knowledge to comprehensively recommend the “best solutions” for their community.



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It is important to recognize the dynamics and relationships within the chart above are not collectively “rational planning”, per say as planning is a process reliant on technical knowledge processes where first planners define the problem, then model or analyze the situation, designing one or more potential solutions, and finally carry out a detailed evaluation (Friedmann 1987). The rational model is based on the economic theory of maximizing utility and efficiency, where, in the case of communities, is ideally manifest in a balance between personal rights and collective rights (Platt 1996). A critique of rational comprehensive planning is it is not possible to be values-neutral. As rational as planners intend to be, it is humanly impossible to block out values from the process. Inevitably planners manipulate the planning process (Forester 1999) by

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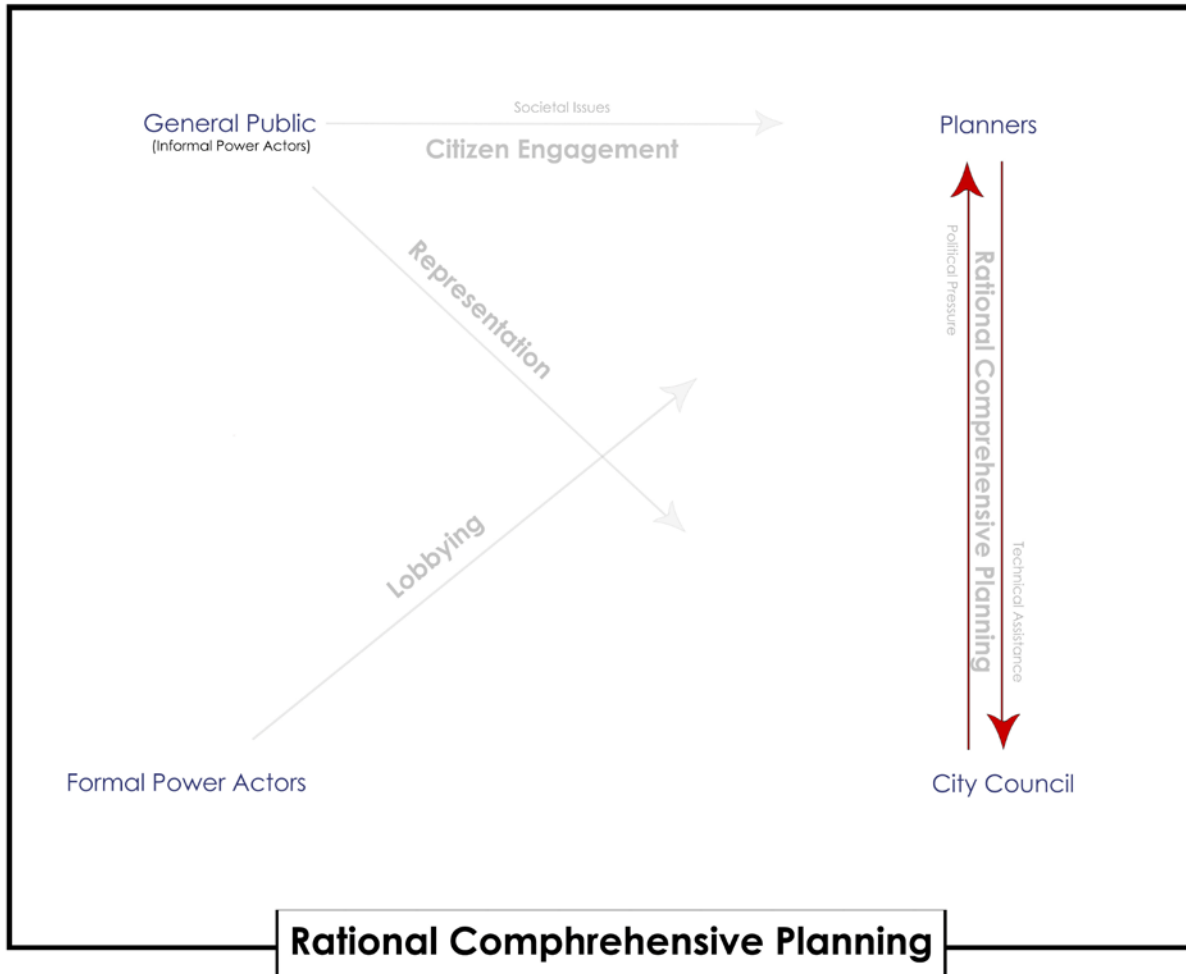
bluffing, deceiving, negotiating, posturing, or falling subject to political vulnerability. In fact, John Forester in a critique of Flyvbjerg's *Rationality and Power*, cited numerous famous cases—Cleveland and Aalborg to name just two--around the world where planners did, in fact, interject values with intentions of achieving the best-case scenario implementation in the future (Forester 1999).

MISCONCEPTION TWO: Planners are always values-neutral and thus rationally make decisions for their Greater Community.

Planners plan and create scenarios to recommend for implementation, while community members engage in citizen participation; Friedmann's most compelling argument is the knowledge and reasoning needed to plan is inherently technical, which in turn validates the role of the planner as a separate role. If everyone had knowledge, which by nature some don't because of limited access to power and resources (Alinsky 1972), it could be argued planners would be unable to defend their position of technical experts. And, if this were the case, comprehensive rational planning as we know it would be made obsolete. Instead, in reality rational comprehensive planning is mainly a dialogue between the elected officials and planning or community development department of a community. It is supported, many times legally, by the citizen participation process where community members voice their input and feedback but are not at the "table".

MISCONCEPTION THREE: Comprehensive rational planning is inclusive of the public. (Most cases require citizen participation input for legal purposes; this is considered second-order participation.)

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The chart above shows the dynamics of the rational comprehensive planning process (based on the influence of Herbert Simon (Simon 1997)). Legal accountability is perhaps the main logic for planners retaining what is recognized as their “technical knowledge”. When a plan is being implemented it must be able to demonstrate it was based on rational, comprehensive visioning on the part of the “Community”. However, while the technical knowledge is important, it is largely impossible to include day-to-day social dynamics within a plan as they are not legally defensible notions. For instance, neighborhood revitalization might be a goal of the plan, but specifically revitalizing an area for, perhaps Latinos, becomes borderline special-interest serving. It is instead the responsibility for the community to interpret the plan to serve their societal needs; a rather cumbersome TECHNICAL comprehensive plan document, although, can be alienating

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to many without the skills to understand the technical vocabulary (Stein and Harper 2003). It appears it is often not possible to marry societal needs and long-term planning as societal issues are much more susceptible to change in a given period of time than a parcel of land. If the current plan-development included societal issues, it would still be only a snapshot as plans are typically updated every 5-20 years or so.

MISCONCEPTION FOUR: Societal issues are a cornerstone of rational comprehensive planning.

Plans created by the rational comprehensive process are a product of power relations mainly between the elected officials and planners. As shown in the chart above, planners impart their technical knowledge while politicians exert political pressure to receive the “best” scenarios to choose from for their constituencies (Peterson 1981; Flyvbjerg 1998; Forester 1999). In a true rational comprehensive planning example efficiency would be maximized, thus eliminating the direct influence of any outside community organizations or members. And, as we know, in most communities community members take part in the process through board placement, formal social networks, and informal social networks.

MISCONCEPTION FIVE: True comprehensive rational planning occurs in communities.

According to Francis Bacon, “knowledge is power”; Flyvbjerg, takes this notion a step further and conjectures power can also determines what is reality (what knowledge is to be held as truth) (Flyvbjerg 1998). In the rational comprehensive planning system, as explored above, power AND knowledge remain largely between planners and elected officials, with “lay” community members remaining second-order participants. However, since this is never the case, alternative models need to be reviewed.

Habermas (communicative rationality authority), Foucault (power is everything and in every instance of social relations), Stanley and Harper (advocates of the importance of trust in addition to power relations), and Caro (biographer of most prolific private-citizen builder in the

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history of the United States, Richard Moses) (Habermas 1971; Caro 1975; Foucault 1982; Stein and Harper 2003), all agree power is key to understanding community growth; but as Forester critiques a large gap has been left missing good power compared to bad power in rational planning decision-making, visioning, and implementation (Forester 1999). Furthermore he, along with Alan Altshuler, argue rational planners aren't rational (Altshuler 1965; Forester 1999). All this begs the question, what is really happening then to plan for our communities?

While not as extreme as Foucault, Stein and Harper (through a critique of Flyvbjerg's book) cites *trust* as an important notion missing from the discussion (Stein and Harper 2003). In reality, citizen participation occurs mainly under ownership of technical assistance (planners with technical knowledge) experts. Meetings' settings are often set on the terms of professional planners, which numerous factors (such as meeting time, locational discomfort, uncomfotability with the group or other individuals present) can incite community members from not showing up, from limiting their input and feedback, and growing further distrust of the process in the mean time. In addition, as stated earlier, planners may not even be aware of these dynamics as group and individual social psychology is not considered a usual course for planning education.

As a result, the societal input into the citizen participation process is generally partial and potentially misleading to the technical planners, who, in turn, translate this information to be a part of a static document for five to twenty upcoming years. Once approved, the plan becomes difficult to implement by the general public due to their lack of technical jargon in addition to the unwieldy format of the plan itself. Even if community members were able to understand the legal and technical matters of the plan the current content leaves little applicability for them to relate (and thus motivate) and put the plan into practice. When community members DO come up with a new issue needing to be addressed between update periods often they end up sensing from the community planners "We don't want to plan, we already have a plan!" Saul Alinsky spent a great portion of his career mobilizing those outside of the traditional power structures (underprivileged, younger, less-entrenched individuals looking to make a difference, but became despondent about the efforts because several key elements

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were overlooked in his efforts: these “informal” power actors are very transient, they communicate in different methods than normal organizations, and do not operate within normal organizational hierarchies (Alinsky 1972).

Meanwhile, formal power agents (people who have official roles or stature with the community) often have easier access the local power structures due to their existing community involvement and social networks. They are also more likely to understand the technical jargon of a plan. This process often can lead a battle of power and special interests at the implementation “table”.

In short, an integrative, continuous participation-loop doesn’t cycle through in rational comprehensive planning. Planners feel the need to be mainly technical assistants for all (formal power actors, informal power actors, and city council) to retain legal standing and validity in reference to their decision making and visioning recommendations. But, because of this lopsided citizen participation becomes ineffective and their technical assistance to city council is muddled (Lindblom 1959. .) due to the sway of political pressure. Two systemic planning processes appear to replace the loop—informal power actors do their own processes of informal action planning and the city council does its own process of formal action planning (Friedmann 1987; Sandercock 1999).

ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES

Flyvbjerg, along with Forester, and Innes, follow in a long line of so-called power-theorists that leans towards the Habermasian notion of communicative rationality (Healey 2003). This **communicative planning systems** posits power is within communication and determines the dynamic of interactive practices according to the dynamic of the social power structures involved (Healey 2003). It calls for planners to use their technical expertise to communicate the plan and planning process to both the elected officials and to the public. However, this system relies heavily on consensus building while relying on position-based and interest-based methods. While an improvement from rational comprehensive planning, consensus building can impede

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plan implementation or visioning for both planners and local community members. For example, although planners retain the majority of technical planning knowledge within communities, regular residents are capable of planning and implementing their own visions (Zukin 1995; Chase, Crawford et al. 1999; Sandercock 1999).

MISCONCEPTION: Consensus building is always a good thing for plan development.

Formal versus informal power is the conceptual notion above; planners, elected officials, and formal power actors (i.e. business community leaders) are of course within the formally recognized power paradigms while community members without titles, but have connections, expertise, or previous formal power can still achieve change (Robinson and R.A.Clifford 1974). This second group can be considered informal power agents (Robinson and R.A.Clifford 1974). A 1970 study by Blankenship conducted an audit of both formal and informal power actors within a community and found a significant correlation between power actors in prominent positions and those with reputations (these individuals would have been formal power actors), while those who were identified by their social participation or decision-making abilities were more diverse, meaning they did not as often hold formal roles of power within a community (thus would have been informal power actors) (Aiken and Mott 1970; Robinson and R.A.Clifford 1974). This study indicates formal power actors are more easily identified in nodes, while informal power actors are more dispersed and numerous within the community and do not have the need of technical knowledge to take action in their community (Aiken and Mott 1970).

Others are positing technical decisions will remain within planning departments and value decisions are to be left to citizens, or the general public to the point where a mixture of these two decision paradigms will overcome the lack of collaboration (DeSario and Langton 1987) Over the past third century value decisions have been able to be made by community development. Jim Powers, author of *Neighborhood Power*, asserts there have been three

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different levels of community organizing in society, including asset-based community development, formal participation structures, and community grassroots organizing (Diers 2004). Self-help, technical assistance, conflict assistance, and collaborative planning are four community development models recognized today in academic circles. James A. Christenson and Jerry W. Robinson, Jr., editors of *Community Development in Perspective*, cite most of these areas as different approaches to build community. While each appropriately applies to certain situations, they differ in the level of involvement of participatory input in comparison to the level of efficacy in the results.

The **Self-help Approach**, *the one that is least integrated at present within rational comprehensive planning but has the most potential to make a positive difference*, attempts to empower local residents to remedy their own issues. Akin to laissez-faire economics, this community development model assumes that people can problem-solve and resolve issues on their own accord when given the right organizational tools. According to Donald W. Littrell, author of the "Self-Help Approach", "Self-help is based on the premise that people can, will, and should collaborate to solve community problems. In addition to the practical problem-solving utility of this perspective, self-help builds a stronger sense of community and a foundation for future collaboration. It embodies the notion that a community can achieve greater self-determination within constraints imposed by the larger political economy in which it is embedded...In brief, self-help is a community building strategy." (Christenson and Jerry W. Robinson 1989)

He continued by positing empowering communities to achieve a capacity for self-help is fundamental to both the theory and practice of community development. More important is his distinction between the development *IN* a community and the development *OF* a community. Development *IN* represents the end result of community development while the development *OF* represents how these improvements are achieved (Christenson and Jerry W. Robinson 1989).

As further evidence of the potential need for self-help as a way to connect formal planning to informal planning, he cites how community issues are becoming increasingly

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technical with a growing dependence on state and federal agencies. "Because community problems often become technical problems, community leaders and officials find it easier and more "efficient" to make decisions and take actions without much community input, unless there is organized opposition. This pattern of official decision making is frequently vindicated by an apparent lack of public interest, but such a lack of public involvement is often attributable to a self-fulfilling prophecy...People will need to perceive that options are within their grasp, and that self-help efforts are feasible and appropriate for the task...Self-help efforts may therefore be directed more toward grant writing and/or exercising external political influence than toward finding the resources within the community." (Christenson and Jerry W. Robinson 1989)

The **Technical Assistance Approach**, conversely, can be considered polar to self-help; instead of operating under the assumption people can help themselves, this assumes a group or an individual knows best for a community thereby making the decisions without much input. Analogous to the idea of the City Beautiful movement, contemporary rational comprehensive planning, or even new urbanism, this model is typical of most community planning departments. It emphasizes the product instead of the process (as self-help does) and caters to the expectations of the elite of the community, effectively circumventing the largely open process of self-help. For example, the process of architecture or engineering projects mirrors this in they construct and execute a concept without employing a great deal of involvement in the decision-making process. (Christenson and Jerry W. Robinson 1989)

While loosing attention among academic circles, the **conflict approach** is largely based on the work of Alinsky (1969). Christenson explained the theory by stating, "The procedure is to get people together to articulate their needs and problems, to develop indigenous leadership, and to help organize viable action groups. While the self-help theme emphasizes people working together to achieve their goal, the conflict theme emphasizes polarization of groups based on salient issues and stimulates confrontation between opposing sides." (Christenson and Jerry W. Robinson 1989)

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Collaborative planning, on the other hand, attempts to combine self-help and technical assistance, and asserts each alone does not constitute a solution to contemporary planning in America. To illustrate, The Center for Collaborative Planning website (Planning 2004), states it promotes “health and social justice by providing training and technical assistance and by connecting people and resources. CCP supports diverse communities in key areas, such as asset-based community development (ABCD), leadership development, working collaboratively, and community assessment and strategic planning.” This is precisely where groundbreaking programs and organizations are headed (Healey 2003).

MISCONCEPTION: A balance of community development occurs in rational comprehensive planning.

While these concepts have all been published, little has been done as of late exploring the relationship between informal and formal power, especially as related to the planning and visioning processes. As a result there is a lack of understanding about how the communication related to planning issues between lay residents or informal power actors relates to communication between formal power agents in city planning departments, elected officials, and municipal staff. Two very distinct realms of publication exist pertaining to this topic, one encompassing conventional theorists (Altshuler 1965; Habermas 1971; Foucault 1982; Friedmann 1987; Flyvbjerg 1998; Stein and Harper 2003) where rational planning is implemented by planners and elected officials and the other exploring the more liberal concepts such as grassroots planning (Christenson and Jerry W. Robinson 1989; Etzioni 1989; Zukin 1995; Chase, Crawford et al. 1999; Sandercock 1999; Healey 2003). While widely explored by planning theorists as pertaining to the comprehensive planning model, little is being written in terms of how local INFORMAL power actors are effectively resolving planning issues within their communities.

MISCONCEPTION: Formally recognized community member power actors are the only community members capable of interacting with the planning process.

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Other techno-rational systems include Charles Lindblom's **Incrementalism** (Etzioni 1989; Chilton 2003) which focuses on "moving not so much toward a goal as away from trouble, trying this or that small maneuver without any grand plan or sense of ultimate purpose." (Etzioni 1989) This approach argues decision makers do not need to seek prior consensus in order to make sound decisions in the short run, thus its other title, "muddling through". The main differences between this and a rational approach is it emphasizes short term needs and sees comprehensive evaluation as unrealistic (Etzioni 1989).

Amatai Etzioni took this notion a step further by proposing the "**mixed scanning**" approach. In short, it combines the rational comprehensive model's emphasis on core decision making and long term visioning with incrementalists' stressing the working on pressing needs of the immediate time period (Etzioni 1989). One follows the other and cycles back to the beginning. His critique of rationalism argued a full scan of all relevant data and choices is theoretically and realistically impossible, and he critiqued incrementalism by arguing it did not distinguish between core and peripheral matters (Etzioni 1989).

Normative rationality systems include **Social Learning Theory** (Bandura 1977), **Social Mobilization Theory**, and **Transactive Planning Theory** (Friedmann 1987). Yet, to date no models attempt to integrate informal planning action (without technical planning knowledge by community members) and formal planning action beyond possibly collaborative planning, incrementalism, and mixed scanning. These models fall short of full integration (or at least adequate) as they do not attempt to understand the social psychological integration of the two systems of power and knowledge.

COMMUNICATION EVOLVING

While not as extreme as Foucault, Stein and Harper (through a critique of Flyvbjerg's book) cites *trust* as an important notion missing from the discussion (Stein and Harper 2003). Already new systems are beginning to emerge, irrespective of formal planning to support informal trust systems including the work of Harry Boyte (Boyte 2004), Jim Diers (Diers 2004) , and

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Sirianni and Friedland (Sirianni and Friedland 2001) that collectively turns Robert Putnam's assertions that civic life in America is faltering (Putnam 2000; Putnam and Feldstein 2003). In reality, it is in fact the opposite but is moving beyond traditional social interaction.

Wi-fi, internet connectivity, and digital communication, according to some, are usurping the need for face-to-face communication to get things done (Weiss 1988; Mitchell 1995; Vidler 2000). Through email, instant messaging, blogging, online open classifieds such as craigslist, P2P (peer to peer) networking sites such as Friendster, and video/audio streaming some are positing our society is moving towards the virtual-communicative norm (Crumlish 2004; Boyd 2005). Meanwhile, there are others that are linking, directly the virtual world with the physical world of community building. Online-gurus such as Danah Boyd, Ph.D. Candidate in Sociology at the University of California (Berkeley), and Christian Crumlish, author of the bestseller *Power of Many*, are citing the benefits of first connecting online to those with like goals, interests, etc. and second continuing to build a collaborative effort in person. Boyd states on her website, "Social networking has invaded all aspects of social software. From blogrolls to Buddylists, people have learned to negotiate implicit networks in everyday digital interaction. Yet, in a re-popularization of a 1997 fad, social networking has achieved popular and technological prominence in its explicit form. Dozens of sites have emerged to address how social networks can help people connect to have sex, find jobs, sell cars, and waste inordinate amounts of time." (Boyd 2005)

Crumlish picks up where Boyd left off by describing in his book, "...how ordinary people are using online social networking to locate others who share their interests and kindle face-to-face communication. The development of social networks on the Web touches countless aspects of our everyday lives. With instant access to people of similar mindsets, near or far, we can readily form partnerships with more people and in more ways than ever before. It's now possible to use Internet tools to organize a rally, energize a political campaign, arrange a date, join a support group, or sell a product, as naturally as we use a phone." (Crumlish 2004; Boyd 2005) He cites Meetup.org as a huge breakthrough in connecting people of similar passions to then take the next step and meet; these gatherings are almost always at third places, a site of

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neutrality and comfortability (Crumlish 2004). While conventional social scientists and self-declared urbanist writers seem mostly unable to move past the idea of how to empirically tie informal community problem solving to community improvement, evidence does still exist in peripheral dialogues exploring this connection.

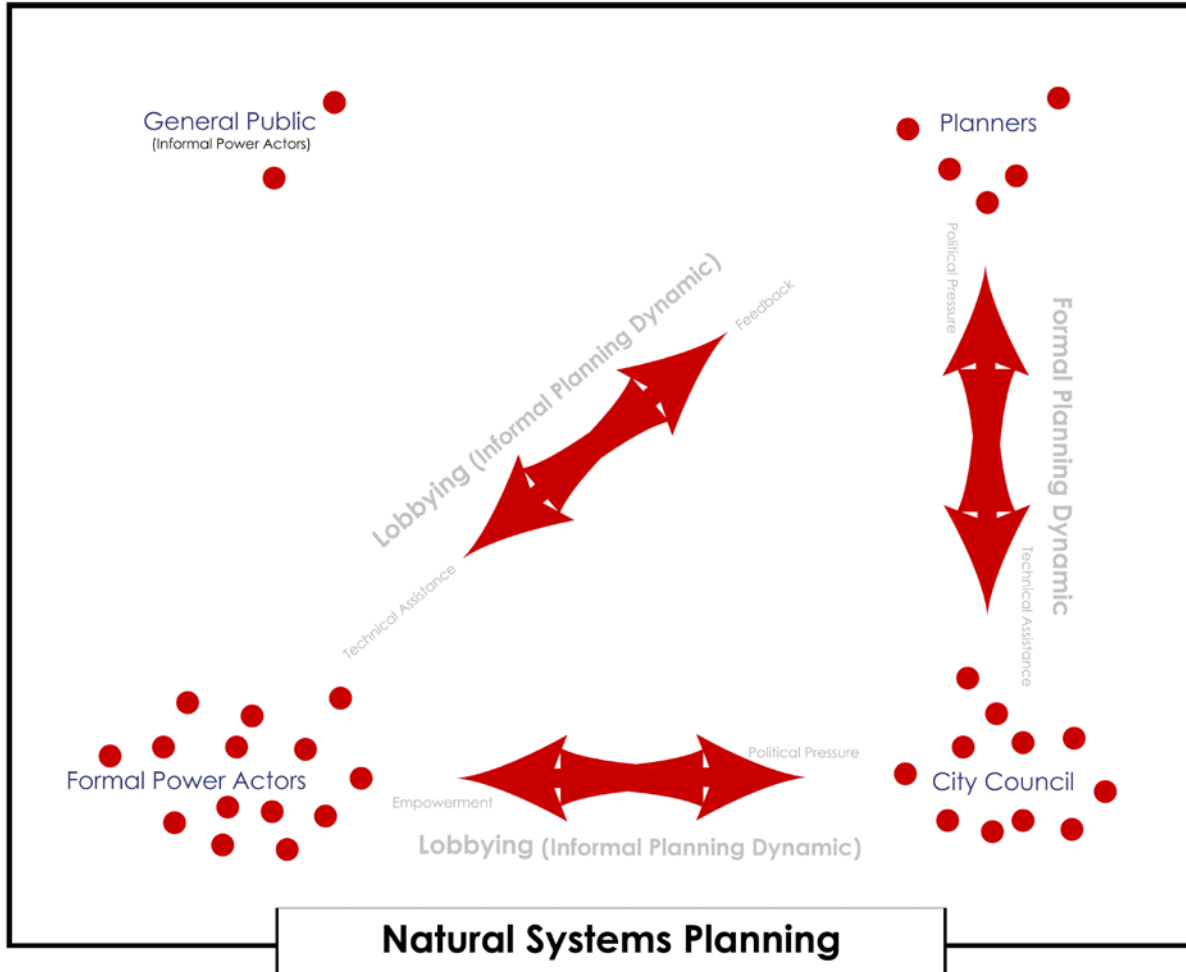
In addition to recognizing the need for examining communication transference between individuals at grassroots communication, the notion of information transference alone must also be reviewed. One notion, buzz, explains how people latch on to vital information through key people within a cluster of similar folks (Rosen 2000). Essentially a slang word for important information, buzz generally is the spread of messages based on Emanuel Rosen's, author of *The Anatomy of Buzz, Ten principles of social networks that affect buzz* (Rosen 2000): 1. The networks are invisible. 2. People link with others similar to them. 3. People live in clusters. 4. Buzz spreads through common nodes. 5. Information gets trapped in clusters. 6. Network Hubs create "shortcuts". 7. We talk to those around us. 8. Weak ties are surprisingly strong. 9. The Net nurtures weak ties. 10. Networks go across markets. While a great deal of buzz occurs that has nothing to do with planning, it is premature to assume just from literature it is not prevalent.

A NEW SYSTEM OF PLANNING

Collectively this information is pointing towards an alternative means of planning dynamic, and there are models that hint at what could be implemented. Perhaps the closest manifestation of a real system of planning is natural system planning. Derived from the work of W. Richard Scott (Scott 2002) on organizational theory comparing **rational systems** (emphasizing efficiency and core, long term planning-example *Robert Moses of New York at the turn of the Century*), **natural systems** (where fundamentally social groups interact within informal and formal structures-example *Microsoft's team management campus system*), and **open systems** (where there is a complexity and variability between individuals and groups-example *Visa Card*).

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Natural systems theory, when applied to planning, recognizes that, while still bounded as a system (thus the three arrows), there are teams and individuals that interact on different levels



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and work on different knowledgeable areas within the system. For instance, the economic development team may be working with a developer on a new subdivision while discussing a marketing scheme with the local businesses in downtown later that day. It is much less hierarchical than rational planning as greater amounts of information transference occurs between different levels in greater volume. Replacing the mechanistic model of structure for rational systems planning, the organic model is employed. In short, rational planning is designed (thus the technical application of planning knowledge and expertise) while natural systems planning leans towards natural growth. (Scott 2002)

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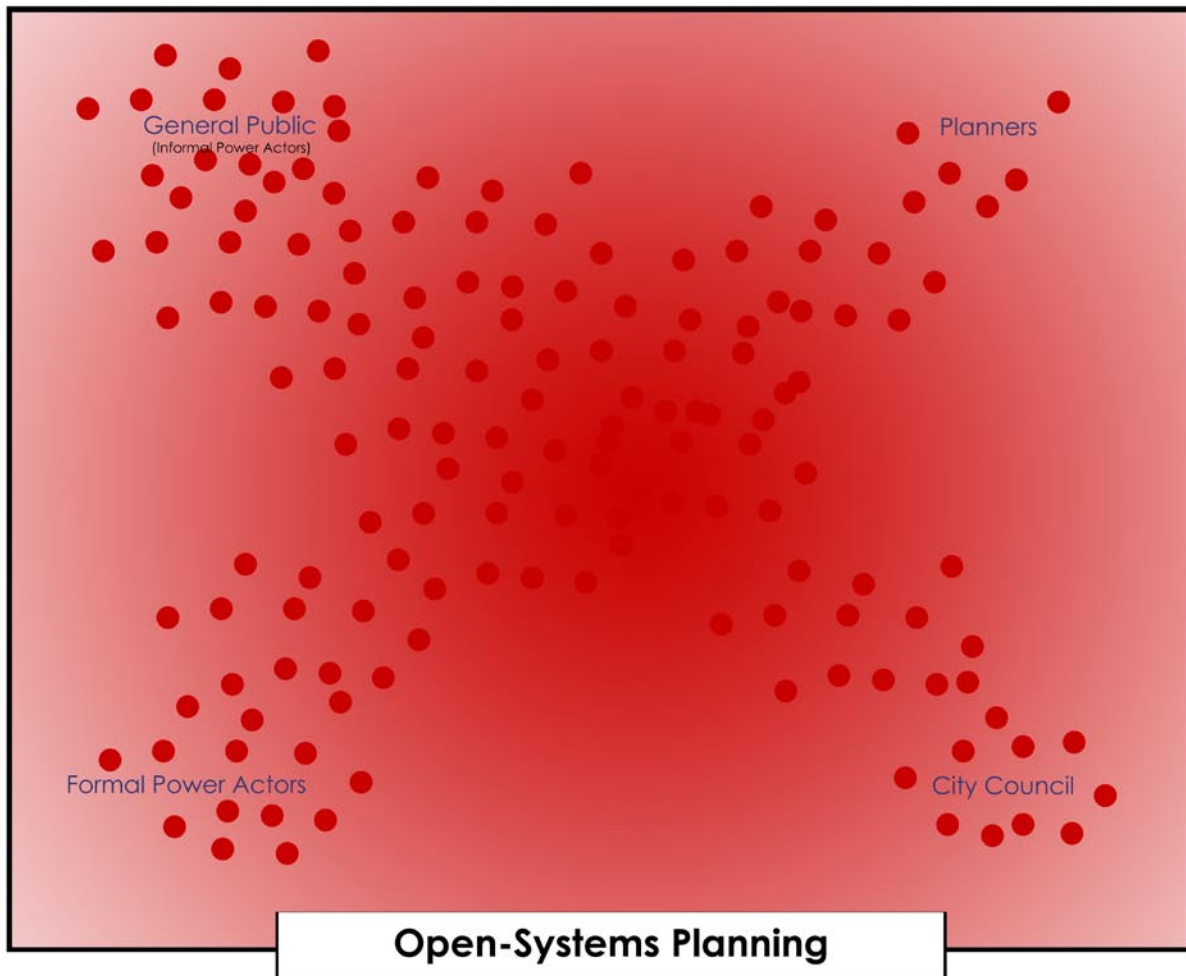
In reality planning today is probably a balance mostly natural systems planning with strong elements of rational comprehensive planning. While this is an improvement from mere rational comprehensive planning, holes still exist where the plan remains static because of inadequate citizen participation (as outlined above), and societal issues are either momentarily considered or not at all in the plan formation or update processes. The third solution based on Scott's open systems approach to organizational behavior may be a solution when applied to planning theory.

Open systems theory, according to Scott, represents the step beyond natural systems organization. If rational systems is visualized as a linear exchange, and natural systems is viewed as a matrix of points of collaboration between entities and individuals, then open systems would be those points of collaboration everywhere—completely porous boundaries. To give a specific example, applying the three to communication, calling someone could be rational systems (two way-interaction), dial-up could be natural systems (once connected a greater matrix of connectivity), and broadband could be open systems (on all the time to all information).

When applying this notion to planning theory, think of the points of communication about community to expand to the Greater Community, not just between Formal Power Actors, the planning department, and the elected officials. The boundary of participation would become more complex, loosely coupled, highly dependent on vastly increased information flows, able to change, and open to the inclusion of new elements. However, several things need to change for this to be possible.

The *first* reconceptualization of the planning system would have to occur between the planning department and the other three groups. Instead of relying so heavily on technical assistance, self help knowledge would be integrated into their role, teaching community members how to resolve their own planning issues through the vocabulary of technical planning knowledge as well as outside of the vocabulary. While of course this is threatening to their validity in concept, this merely relieves the five-to-twenty year pressure on

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assessing a snapshot of the community (including its societal dynamics) through top-down technically-laden citizen participation. In addition, instead of having ownership of collaboration rest on planners, planners would need to significantly increase their passive participation in local community meetings as well as attend informal third places (Oldenburg 1999; Oldenburg 2001; Gugino 2004) to keep a pulse on informal communication outside of what is brought to their attention formally. This again, would exponentially expand the flow of communication BETWEEN formal plan updates. It would also empower local community members to actually work to further implement the plan by being a part of the continual process.

Second, a new type of plan would need to occur. Hopkin's web of plans (Hopkins 2001) would begin to support the altered notion of continual plan update and interaction of planning

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entities. While it is important to do rational comprehensive (long-term) planning, there is great potential to engage local residents in creating a dynamic plan where less detailed problems be listed while shifting the focus to ephemeral vision and goal identification. By doing this local residents not capable of plugging into the more formal process within the rational system (for whatever reason) may feel empowered (coupled by a greater sense of ownership and self-help knowledge from planners) to engage the process.

Third, if less pressure were to occur on the natural systems planning triad (again Formal Power Actors, the planning department, and the elected officials) an increase in day to day inclusions of societal issues would also occur through this lateral communicative exchange and interaction. Again, this dialogue may manifest itself during the passive participation of planners in community life. However, further study must occur to examine the relationship between the dynamic inclusions of societal issues with the legal foundations of rational-comprehensive planning.

Interestingly enough, open systems planning is beginning to spontaneously emerge on its own (without self-declaration of doing so) in the United States, especially in the last decade. Community revitalization organizations, largely founded for young leaders within communities, are jumping on Richard Florida's Creative Cities bandwagon (Florida 2002; Florida 2005) and helping shape the vision and future on their own IN CONJUNCTION with the formal rational comprehensive planning processes already existing in their community. While not fully open-systems adjusted from natural systems planning (it is doubtful that any system can truly ever become fully open systems planning in this era) these organizations have anywhere from a few hundred to almost 50,000 members all working on community revitalizing from a whole range of topics such as physical renovation and revitalization, core-city economic redevelopment, loft building downtown, increasing social nightlife, teaching leadership skills, and more.

Metropolis St. Louis (<http://www.mstl.org>) seems to be at the forefront of this movement; however a new model altogether abandoning the non-profit traditional organization model has emerged over the last year, bringing this type of system one-step closer to a true open-systems

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approach. individualsTOGETHER (<http://www.individualstogether.org>), a local organization in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois, has created an entirely new organizational model where membership dues, boards, formal positions, and even meetings have all been discarded to a new fluid transference of information and ACTION. They are working to reinvigorate grassroots action while working with the formal planning staff and power actors to realize the goal of community revitalization from that end. Also, they are recognizing the evolving needs of community participation and action in a digital, information-heavy world by combining the buzz theory listed above. Alinsky would hopefully be proud.

CONCLUSION

In short, this paper is a call to arms to evolve, not abandon, contemporary rational-comprehensive (or natural systems) planning. By creating and increasing a self-help mission and ethic within planning departments the transference of ownership in formal community planning will expand to include the previously existing informal planning processes. New tools to truly have a web of plans include societal issues must be developed, but when they are a fluid, porous system of open systems planning will naturally evolve, making the visioning and implementation of a community's plan for itself a more dynamic, less static, process. There are already a number of advances within community development theory, communications theory, organizational systems and models. It is now hopefully time to integrate these progressions and further enhance the process of planning theory.

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