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Sample Glossary Entry:

META-NARRATIVE An overarching explanation or story of how the world is—for example, the liberal/capitalist story of material progress through the hidden hand of the market; the Marxian drama of class conflict culminating in proletarian revolution; the Freudian plots of father–son rivalry and mother–son love; the Enlightenment’s story of progress and triumph of reason. Meta-narratives attempt to derive general social principles that are precisely explanatory/predictive in the same sense as scientific laws, i.e., universally true theories. Postmodernists view meta-narratives as totalizing discourses that are imprisoning and are ultimately linked to structures of power.

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Dialogical Planning in a Fragmented Society

**CRITICALLY LIBERAL
PRAGMATIC
INCREMENTAL**

by
Thomas L. Harper
Stanley M. Stein

Practicing planners must pay some attention to theory, engage in critical reflection about current practice, and participate in the generation, legitimation, and “reweaving” of new planning practices. The survival of the profession depends on it. A profession that chooses to remain ignorant of its own “theory” will inevitably be in a reactive posture . . . a deeply ironic position for a profession that claims expertise in helping society envision and realize a better future.

Developing a dialogical planning approach requires a reexamination of planning theory and its unresolved debates. We believe that such an approach is workable for contemporary pluralistic liberal democratic societies in an era of postmodern fragmentation.

—Harper and Stein



Dialogical Planning in a Fragmented Society

• Critically Liberal • Pragmatic • Incremental

Dialogical Planning in a Fragmented Society

- Critically Liberal
- Pragmatic
- Incremental

Thomas L. Harper
Stanley M. Stein

Thomas L. Harper
Stanley M. Stein

This book is the culmination of a critical study of a certain conception of philosophy and its application to planning. The conception of philosophy that links the various chapters is based on what can be referred to as neopragmatism, an approach that has been best expressed

or implied in the writing of Hilary Putnam, Richard Rorty, and, in particular, Donald Davidson, John Rawls, and Ludwig Wittgenstein.

The chapters flow from philosopher Stanley Stein's examination of neopragmatism and his thinking about how this philosophical approach can be useful in the field of environmental design—specifically, how it can be applied to planning procedures and problems. Thomas Harper provided the context for this theoretical application from his academic background in economics and management as well as his practical experience with political decision-making processes, community planning, and economic development, to illustrate the approaches examined.

The result is a fresh synthesis of ideas—a new approach to thinking about planning theory and its implications for, and relationship with, practice. Philosopher Michael Walzer has asserted that “Philosophy reflects and articulates the political culture of its time, and politics presents and enacts the arguments of philosophy. . . .” Similarly, the authors view planning theory as planning reflected upon in tranquillity, away from the tumult of battle, and planning practice as planning theory acted out in the confusion of the trenches. Each changes the other in a dynamic way. The authors’ hope is that this book will demonstrate the intimate and inextricable link between them.

—Harper and Stein (Preface)

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What is the best planning approach for a contemporary liberal democratic society? We believe that a workable approach for public planning in the contemporary fragmented social and political context should have certain attributes in addition to the communicatively rational and practical-action orientations. The approach we have advocated to public planning is first and foremost liberal in its normative values and neopragmatic in its philosophical orientation. It is also critical in its evaluation of actual institutions and incremental both in its justification and in its practice.

Although we are cautious about labels, . . . we decided to use the label “Dialogical Planning” to denote our approach. We argue that our dialogical approach can incorporate useful and valid elements from both modernist and post-modernist perspectives. However, we certainly have no intention of imposing its dominance or hegemony on anyone. We will seek to convince our readers, by giving good reasons and advancing sound arguments, that this is a productive shared approach. Our goal is to set forth a firmer normative theoretical grounding for planning that is reflective and incorporates best practices.”



THOMAS L. HARPER is professor in the planning program of the Faculty of Environmental Design, University of Calgary. He did graduate work in management at Carnegie-Mellon University and in economics at the University of Chicago and the London School of Economics. He has served as Canadian liaison to the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning, was president of the Association of Canadian University Planning Programs (ACUPP), and is currently ACUPP's representative to the Global Planning Education Associations Network. He is on the editorial board of the *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, the biennial *Dialogues in Urban and Regional Planning*, and the annual *Canadian Policy and Planning*. A member of the Canadian Institute of Planners, he has consulted for government, community, and private-sector clients and has served on boards and committees for numerous community, social service, educational, and church organizations.

STANLEY M. STEIN is Resident Philosopher, Faculty of Environmental Design, University of Calgary. He holds a doctorate in philosophy from the University of Calgary. In collaboration with Thomas Harper, he has published widely on the practical implications of philosophical and ethical aspects of planning theory, the ethical and economic justifications of government intervention, environmental ethics, and social institutions. Stein believes that new problems and crises facing society in a contemporary world require reconceptualization of old categories, descriptions, and ways of thinking to generate a new interdisciplinary approach to theory and practice. He serves on the editorial board of the *Journal of Planning Education and Research*.

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