THE OXFORD
HANDBOOKS OF
POLITICAL SCIENCE

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The Oxford Handbook *of*
PUBLIC POLICY

the new group was not particularly interested in building grand dams. Rather, they had been schooled in cost–benefit analysis and economic decision models. Because of their different orientation, they were willing to consider alternative plans that involved multiple dams in different locations. In this process they discovered a plan that avoided flooding the Yavapai's land, but that had the same cost–benefit properties, resolving the dispute. Eventually, it was this plan that was adopted.

Espeland emphasizes that the Bureau and the Indians did not come to any agreement about how to analyze or evaluate the problem of where the dam should be built. In fact, the Indians totally rejected the cost–benefit perspective that the engineers used, which assumed that all options were commensurable. The world-views of the Indians and the engineers remained totally divergent. Rather what they agreed upon was a solution, although the solution was satisfactory for quite different reasons for the two groups. She also points out that resolution totally failed to satisfy the old guard engineers' desires for another grand dam.[11]

For our purposes, Espeland's story is of interest as it is explicitly about a conflict in which an attempt to create commensurability, i.e. buy the Yavapais at some price, fails. It is not possible to solve the problem by evaluating the different components of any solution along a single dimension, though one group, the new engineers themselves, precisely evaluated alternatives in this way. Rather what needed to be found was a solution that allowed the Yavapai Indians to keep their land and at the same time create the needed water resources for local farmers and a quickly expanding Phoenix.

Espeland's story nicely illustrates how coherence in the sense of Richardson (or similarly Rawls's overlapping consensus) can be a central goal. As Richardson points out and the puzzle example illustrates, a solution is only achieved by changing the components of the problem. The new cohort of engineers brought in a new way of thinking about the evaluation of dam sites with the result that new plans were considered. The goals of the original engineers for a grand dam, however, were abandoned. Coherence may often be partial. As a result of new and different perspectives, new pieces are put on the table and potentially added to the puzzle and other pieces, originally thought as essential components (e.g. that the dam be grand), are abandoned. The example also illustrates how the flexibility of one group and the inflexibility of another led to a solution, but a very specific solution.

Cops and ministers. In a series of papers Jenny Berrien and Chris Winship (1999, 2002, 2003; Winship 2004) describe how during the 1990s the Boston police department and a group of black inner city ministers known as the Ten Point Coalition put together a partnership to deal with the problem of youth violence in Boston's inner city. Initially, both groups had an extremely hostile relationship, particularly so between one key minister, the Reverend Eugene Rivers, and the police. By the late

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[11] For discussions of the importance of partial agreements, see Sunstein 1995; Jonsen and Toulmin 1988; Forester 1999.

1990s, however, Boston had become a model for other cities, both nationally and internationally, for how clergy and the police can work together to deal with youth violence. By 2004 over 400 cities had visited Boston to learn about "the Boston Model."

Several things in particular are of interest about this story. First is that both the police and ministers initially had quite different goals. The police saw their job as responding to reports of crime and ensuring that justice was carried out with respect to each crime. The ministers saw themselves as providing "safe houses for decent people" and fighting the police department's maltreatment of Boston's poor black community. Initially, Reverend Rivers was a court advocate for youth who were arrested on drug charges and, as a result, there was strong suspicion that he was a drug dealer himself. In the end, however, both groups came to see their goal as "keeping the next kid from being killed." Initially, neither group saw this as their goal. Multiple times the ministers made clear that when they started to walk the streets at night after an attempted stabbing in a church during a gang funeral, they had no idea what their goal was. They just knew that they had to be "present" in the streets at night even though they were not sure what it was they were trying to accomplish. In the sense described above, they were involved in blind action.

Second, the story is of interest, as the two groups did not come to a common understanding through a series of meetings. To put it in metaphorical terms, there was no "table" in this story around which the two groups sat and worked out a way to work with each other. Rather, the two groups worked out their relationship over time around a series of incidents. In terms of the puzzle example, they found ways to put particular singular pieces together without any conception of what the overall puzzle or even large subparts would look like. The search for coherence was entirely at the micro level. There are multiple examples of this. We discuss one.

In 1991, Reverend Rivers's house was shot up with a bullet barely missing his six-year-old son's head. Rivers was in a difficult situation. He could move his young family out of the tough inner city neighborhood where they lived and he worked. In doing so, he would lose much of his credibility on the street. He had been shot at and ran. Or he could work with the police to apprehend the shooter. He chose to work with the police.

Some police initially thought that Rivers had arranged the shooting himself in order to discredit the belief among street cops that he was a drug dealer. The two cops that Rivers had the most difficult relationship with volunteered to investigate. They volunteered so that they could find out what the real story was. Rivers and the cops suddenly found that they needed to work together. After six months the shooter was arrested. He had actually intended to shoot up the house of a drug dealer next door to Rivers's, but had missed. The shooter was eventually tried and sent to jail with the full support of Rivers.

This incident was critical for two reasons. First, it forced the police and Rivers to work together on the very basic task of finding the shooter. They had to work together to figure out a shared puzzle—who had shot up the Rivers's house.

However, they didn't remotely have any overall agreement about how to deal with the problem of Boston's inner city youth violence. Second, it laid the foundation for a much more general goal that would emerge later of "keeping the next kid from being killed." As a result of the shooting, Rivers was suddenly saying that some kids were so out of control that they needed a prison minister. There was now at least some agreement between Rivers and the police—some kids did need to be in jail.

What this incident and the more general Ten Point story illustrates is how a vision of a common goal (keeping the next kid from getting killed) emerged not by debating or discussing what that vision should be, but rather by having that vision emerge out of a set of common joint actions. Karl Weick (2001, 17) argues that "people commit to and coordinate instrumental acts (means) before they worry about shared goals." Clearly that is what occurred here. The critical work was done at the micro level over a number of years and this then led to an understanding between the two groups that they had a partnership and a common goal.[12]

6. Puzzling about Policy

How can we succinctly describe the common element in our two empirical cases? I would suggest that what actors are doing is "puzzling." What they are trying to figure out is how to rectify a set of seemingly conflicting policy ends. As the example of a jigsaw puzzle (or Scrabble, or a crossword puzzle, or Rubik's cube) suggests, they are trying to figure out how it might be possible to fit the pieces of their puzzle, that is, their various ends, together into a single coherent whole.

It is important to recognize that puzzling as we have described it represents a process that is rational, but rational in a way quite different from standard analysis of means. The key difference is that standard rationality involves choosing among a set of possible options. Puzzling involves discovering which options are possible—what are the possible ways that seemingly conflicting ends can be simultaneously pursued. Put in other terms, puzzling involves discovering the ways, if at all, in which disparate pieces may be put together. Both processes are systematic. Standard rationality involves the analysis of the desirability of different possible alternatives. Puzzling involves determining what the alternatives, if any, are. Thus, puzzling might be said to conceptually precede standard rational analysis. It is a process of determining what options there are. Standard rationality then involves choosing among those options.

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[12] For a discussion of the importance of retrospective sense making for institutions, see Weick 1979, 2001.

How might one puzzle well? Clearly, the most important ability is good perception—the ability to discern which pieces fit together.[13] Aristotle thought that discernment could be learned. It is not a technical knowledge (*techne*), but rather a type of practical knowledge (phronesis) that is learned through experience (Nussbaum 1990; Dunne 1993). In our context, it is through experience that one learns to recognize specific patterns that potentially can be assembled together. Leifer (1991) argues and provides evidence that what differentiates chess masters from lesser players is precisely differences in the ability to recognize patterns, not differences in how many moves forward individuals can see.

Are there are general rules for puzzling well? A few. As we have discussed earlier, inflexible commitment to specific pieces being included can lead to dead ends if in fact those pieces do not belong to the puzzle. In the Orme Dam case, the Yavapai Indians were inflexibly committed to keeping their ancestral dams. With the arrival of a new cohort of engineers, however, the Bureau of Reclamation was able to consider alternative project designs and dam sites. These engineers were then able to come up with a design that met the goals of the Bureau and did not involve flooding the Yavapai lands. If both the Bureau and the Indians had stayed committed to their original positions, they would have been permanently stuck in a dead end. The willingness of the Bureau's new engineers to search for new solutions kept this from happening. Flexibility and avoiding permanent commitments are virtues in puzzle solving. As James Scott argues in *Seeing Like a State* (1998), it may be better to have a plan that is flexible and allows for change than to have the "right" plan.

Our empirical examples have also highlighted the importance of searching at different levels—Dewey's theory of holism. The Orme Dam case illustrates how an overall reframing of the project by the Bureau led them to consider a different set of solutions. In contrast, the case of the Boston police and the Ten Point ministers demonstrates how work at the most micro of levels—literally figuring out how to work together on a day-to-day, situation-by-situation basis—was what created a foundation for a broad-based approach to youth violence. In order to succeed, it may be critical to search at different levels. Furthermore, there is no a priori reason to believe that searching at one level of generality is more likely to be successful than at another.

Finally, the Boston case shows that action that may not be rational in terms of any short-term goal may in fact lead to policy solutions. In terms of the puzzle example, simply by randomly moving the pieces around people may come to recognize new possibilities in terms of which pieces might fit together.[14] This suggests that both patience and a tolerance for uncertainty and for a lack of specific direction may be important to the discovery of which ends can be successfully pursued simultaneously.

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[13] I am grateful to Rachel McCleary for making this point.

[14] For a related discussion of how a seemingly arational process of wandering can lead to new options or solutions, see Thacher and Rein's (2004, 466 7) discussion of cycling.

If one is patient, new possibilities in the form of new options or new information may appear. Wandering aimlessly and patience may in fact lead to the discovery of a solution. To coin a saying worthy of Yogi Berra: "If you don't know where you are going, you might actually get there."

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CHAPTER 6

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POLICY ANALYSIS AS CRITICAL LISTENING

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JOHN FORESTER

1. INTRODUCTION

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In public policy work, we interview people all the time. We try to find out what happened at yesterday's meeting, and we find ourselves asking questions to find out what Harry's done now, what Sue's up to, or how Chris reacted to our new proposal. To work on any new project we may have to "talk to" many different people, and in doing so, we need to listen as much as, or more than to talk as we try to find out about others' perspectives and experiences, their needs and interests, their weak or strong support, and always, too, as we're trying to get a better grasp of the organizational, legal, and practical world we're in with them.

To make new things happen, to find out what we can do effectively in politically uncertain and fluid settings, we need to learn—and to learn, we very often need to ask questions and listen carefully. When we do this, we're "planners" and policy analysts in the most general sense: exploring what's possible, finding out about what we can and can't do. In what follows, I use the term "planners" to refer very generally to all those who need to learn about their environments—public or private, social or natural—in order to change them. As we shall see, "planning for change" not only requires learning in pragmatic and politically astute ways, but in social and political environments, it requires skillful and sensitive interviewing too. But such interviewing, it turns out, is not so simple.

In the world of social science, interviewing can often be formal, but in the world of policy analysis and planning, interviewing may just as often be informal;

no less serious, but more subtle. In the world of social science, clipboards may be appropriate ritual objects; in the world of policy and planning analysis, though, a cup of coffee or something stronger might help an informative conversation along. Social scientists work to analyze—to understand, and perhaps to explain—"what's going on," and although we as policy and planning analysts certainly share that aspiration, we have to do more: we have to assess what's possible in a future political world, what might yet work for better or worse in a politically reconstructed world that does not yet exist! So let's consider how change agents—entrepreneurs, organizers, managers, policy analysts, activists of many kinds—"planners" we shall call them generically—can do this work of interviewing and practical learning and do it well (Schön 1983; Greenwood and Levin 1999; Forester 1999a; cf. Wildavsky 1989).

In public and private sectors alike, planners often work in between diverse "stakeholders." The head of a hospital department wants to improve care and cut costs, and she works in between higher-level administrators and all those working in her department. The manager of a regional parts supply office works in between local customers and more central suppliers. One of the governor's policy advisers wants to get an economic development taskforce going once again, this time to make a difference in the legislature. The director of a community center works between staff, board members, funders, city officials, community residents, interested academics, and yet others. And so on. Call them "administrators," "managers," "policy staff," "community leaders," or "organizers," but they all try carefully to shape future action: they are all "planners" faced with daunting but intriguing challenges.

Not only must these planners try to protect fragile relationships in often contested, fluid, and ambiguous situations, but they also have to bring about sanity and confidence, some practical order, light as well as heat, from the chaos. Often blessed with a bit of thick skin, they will try to respond to others' felt needs, interests, and desires even as these often conflict. Trying to do their work within and through these webs of relationships, these planners must work to understand many points of view, many perspectives, many senses of what counts, what's valuable—for both technical and political reasons.

Technically, understanding multiple perspectives may enhance planners' own understanding of a particular case because the planners themselves have no special access to truth, full or perfect information. Politically, understanding and being able to integrate many perspectives enables planners to address questions of feasibility and power as well.

So planners have to learn through conversations every day—about people, places, and projects—and to do that, they will find themselves doing many different kinds of interviews. A few interviews will be formal, carefully arranged and recorded. But many more will be much more informal: side conversations before, during, or after meetings; impromptu telephone conversations, ad hoc office visits, "getting a heads-up," "checking in," "seeing how you're doing," and so on.

But this inevitably intermediating role that's played by planners can make their interviews quite special. These interviews search not only for attitudes and relationships that now exist but for possibilities that do not yet exist—so that where

some social scientists might be wary of exploring hypotheticals, "What if ...?" questions, those same questions are often crucial, if not altogether essential, for planners.

But in a political world, we know, what any party believes to be possible at all depends on their assumptions about other parties. So planners' and policy analysts' interviews are more typically inter-views: the planners and analysts seek to understand what this neighbors' representative fears about what this developer proposes, what this politician wants as it overlaps and partially contradicts what that politician wants, how this group's concern for "environmental quality" avoids another group's claims regarding affordable housing, and so on. Exploring the stakes and issues in between stakeholders, then, planners' interviews can subtly foster virtual argumentative spaces in which stakeholders not only stake out but explore future possibilities; not only set out positions but clarify, reformulate, and probe the diverse interests they seek to satisfy—and the practical ways they might really satisfy them (Forester 2004*b, c;* 2005).

So planners listening to contradictory arguments find themselves between views, needing to understand them all in order to work with them, sometimes to mediate between them, sometimes simply to acknowledge them, sometimes simply to be able to craft practical responses that will actually address citizens' real interests. This work is not simple, even though we have been exhorted since elementary school to "listen to others." Planners, mediators, negotiators, and organizers all stress the significance of astute listening to their practice as they face situations full of conflict, ambiguity, posturing, and differences of culture, class, race, gender, and values (Forester 1999*a*).

We can now explore this work of inter-viewing and listening to multiple parties— from the planners' "in-between" standpoint—in two ways. First, if briefly, we can note the conceptual problems that arise: what, for example, does it mean for an attentive listener or interviewer to be responsibly "rational" in a very messy world of complexity, incommensurability, emotion, conflicting obligations, and the need to improvise when simply following rules, even optimizing, won't do?

Second, we can address at greater length in what follows the practical problems analysts face here. How in actual cases can planners learn, diagnose, inter-view— under the realistic but daunting conditions of unequal power relationships, diverse forms of conflict, and sheer organizational messiness, each of which involve distinct challenges of their own?

Assessing relations of power often reveals shifting interdependencies, and thus spaces of negotiation, and in turn, contingently shifting degrees of participation and thus possibilities of future cooperation and collaboration—possibilities that understandably skeptical, fearful, and distrusting parties may hardly think to be possible at all.

Assessing conflict carefully can reveal multiple perspectives articulated in complex rhetorical ways, including many postures and styles, all framing future possibilities of action and interaction quite selectively. Assessing organizational messiness and complexity reveals not only unique particulars and encompassing general norms,

but uncertainties and ambiguities as well as layers of distrust and fear, anger and division, interests and desires, too. Here we find that planners' interviews echo—and can learn from—the work that public dispute mediators do both in the early stages they call "conflict assessment" and in the actual process of mediating as well.

2. Inter-viewing in Everyday Policy, Planning, and Public Management Practice

We can begin with four simple examples to suggest the challenges and possibilities of listening and learning in such planning and change-oriented interviews. We then turn, in the following three sections, to consider: (i) what's at stake as planners listen and inter-view well or poorly; (ii) what makes such work difficult; and finally, (iii) what helps.

Consider first, then, a city planner's short story of his own earlier blindness, his own dawning recognition of what was involved in really listening to the people with whom he'd been working (for a time as a social worker). Jim (as we can call him) says:

First I thought I could at least be polite, that I'd be dealing with the poorest and the most downtrodden of society, that even if I didn't have the power to do much, I could be polite. But then I saw that some people were just so personally obnoxious that it was the most I could do to be business like. Being polite to them was more than I could do. Then, some people just expected the agency to give them hell, and they acted like it.

There was one woman   she was just impossible to deal with. She just yelled and screamed and pounded her fists on my desk   and nothing I could say did anything. There wasn't anything I could do; I'd try to talk to her, but she'd yell and demand this and that   she was just irate.

Then once I couldn't take it anymore. I threw my casebook down on the floor, slammed my fist, and yelled right back at her. What happened? She had a big smile on her face, and in the first calm and steady voice I'd ever heard out of her, she said, "Well, there! You'll be all right yet!"

I was astonished. It seemed I hadn't really been paying attention to her, taking her seriously, really listening to her, until then. (Forester 1989, 112)

Now what's Jim telling us? We notice his early orientation to rules, manners, and politeness—all as a hedge against his own powerlessness, "even if I didn't have the power to do much," in the face of the overwhelming need of "the poorest and the most downtrodden of society," as what he could do "at least"—all of which reflects Jim's preoccupation with Jim himself, and perhaps the inadequacy of his position, rather than any specific recognition of particular people and their particular situations. Jim's demeanor begins with manners but retreats to being "business-like" as