THE ARGUMENTATIVE TURN in Policy Analysis and Planning

FRANK FISCHER AND JOHN FORESTER, EDITORS

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Edited by

Frank Fischer and John Forester

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To Mary Ellen and

Frank Fischer

and

To Kate and Daniel

Falcão Forester

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Editors' Introduction

Frank Fischer and

John Forester

What if our language does not simply mirror or picture the world but instead profoundly shapes our view of it in the first place? This question lies at the heart of controversies in contemporary social science between phenomenologists and behaviorists, objectivists and relativists, and symbolic interactionists and institutionalists.[1] This question also animates major debates in epistemology and social philosophy; witness such major figures as Wittgenstein, Austin, Gadamer, Habermas, Foucault, and Derrida, and a new, if hardly illuminating, vocabulary of labels: postmodern, postempiricist, poststructuralist, postpositivist, and so on.[2]

The controversy of relevance to policy analysis and planning here involves central questions of truth and power. If analysts' ways of representing reality are necessarily selective, they seem as necessarily bound up with relations of power, agenda setting, inclusion and exclusion, selective attention, and neglect. If analysts' ways of representing policy and planning issues must make assumptions about causality and responsibility, about legitimacy and authority, and about interests, needs, values, preferences, and obligations, then the language of policy and planning analyses not only depicts but also constructs the issues at hand.

Thus Giandomenico Majone begins his recent *Evidence, Argument, and Persuasion in the Policy Process* with the words, "As politicians know only too well but social scientists too often forget, public policy is made of language. Whether in written or oral form, argument is central in all stages of the policy process."[3]

So, too, following Deborah Stone's recent *Policy Paradox and Political Reason,* can we see that policy-making is a constant discursive

struggle over the criteria of social classification, the boundaries of problem categories, the intersubjective interpretation of common experiences, the conceptual framing of problems, and the definitions of ideas that guide the ways people create the shared meanings which motivate them to act.[4] These discursive struggles involve far more than manipulative rhetoric. The institutionally disciplined rhetorics of policy and planning influence problem selection as well as problem analysis, organizational identity as well as administrative strategy, and public access as well as public understanding.

The growing concern with the place of argumentation in policy and planning practice draws upon diverse theoretical perspectives: from British ordinary language analysis to French poststructuralism, from the Frankfurt school of critical social theory to a renewed appropriation of American pragmatism. From these rich sources we come to important research questions. We need to understand just what policy analysts and planners do, how language and modes of representation both enable and constrain their work, how their practical rhetoric depicts and selects, describes and characterizes, includes and excludes, and more.

Bringing together the work of authors drawing upon such diverse traditions, the essays that follow examine and refine the turn to argumentation to reconstruct our understanding and practice of policy analysis and planning. This book, accordingly, explores practically and politically a simple but profound insight: Policy analysis and planning are practical processes of argumentation.[5]

In actual practice, policy analysts and planners do a great deal more than they have been given credit for doing.[6] They scan a political environment as much as they locate facts, and they are involved with constructing senses of value even as they identify costs and benefits. When meeting with representatives of other agencies and affected parties, analysts protect working relationships as well as press on to gather data. As they attempt to foresee streams of consequences, analysts try not only to predict those consequences, but to understand why they are consequential, how they will matter ethically and politically.[7]

To see policy analysis and planning as argumentative practices is to attend closely to the day-to-day work analysts do as they construct working accounts of problems and possibilities. Recognizing these accounts as politically constrained, organizational accomplishments in the face of little time and poor data, we can evaluate the analysts' arguments not only for their truth or falsity but also for their partiality, their selective framing of the issues at hand, their elegance or crudeness of presentation, their political timeliness, their symbolic significance, and more.

Policy and planning arguments are practical productions. They can play many roles at once, including description, prediction, evaluation, agenda setting, symbolic reassurance, and proposal testing. But always these arguments make claims that can be criticized by others or can subtly shape their attention to issues at hand. Thus, the argumentative turn in policy analysis and planning leads us to study critically the production of analysts' claims—not to take them as "truth," and not to take every claim to be as valid as any other. So the focus on argumentation in practice gives no ground to relativists. We should be more suspicious than ever of policy arguments that cannot meet public tests of evidence. If we cannot distinguish policy argument from sales talk, we should consider it propaganda undeserving of the name "analysis." So, too, we should recognize that policy arguments with little relation to decision processes may only be rhetorical justifications for the exercise of power; they are expressions of practical ideology at work, but hardly arguments that have contributed to the deliberative work of decision making or informed public opinion.

To understand what policy analysts and planners actually do, we need to assess the political conditions in which analysts work. We need also to probe the daily politics of problem definition and framing, of rigor tension with engagement, of rationality in constant tension with sources of bias.

No one knows better than practicing planners and policy analysts how intricately related are the issues of analytical content and institutional setting. A director of a metropolitan city planning department once stated the problem beautifully. Asked about the difficulties of presenting project analyses at contentious commission meetings, he remarked, "The most difficult part of that is knowing what *not* to say." He knew that his words mattered, and what he could or couldn't say practically depended on his reading of the particular political setting in which he found himself.

But, like many planners, policy analysts know that if they attend only to political, organizational, and institutional conditions, they will quickly sacrifice the substantive integrity of their studies. They know too that if they care only about the internal coherence and quality of their analysis, they can produce reports that are careful but too late, rigorous but perhaps irrelevant to decision makers' needs, formally elegant but dangerously oblivious to crucial political concerns. In practice, clearly, analysts must attend to the demands of both substantive analysis and cogent articulation.[8] We can think of this necessary duality of practice—these moments of analysis and articulation—as reflecting the challenge

of doing politically astute and rationally sound policy analysis and planning.[9]

Yet, unless we understand the argumentative character of policy and planning analysis, the requirements of being politically astute *and* rationally sound will appear to be wholly contradictory. As long as students and practitioners of policy analysis and planning think of the political and the rational as antithetical and mutually threatening, planners and policy analysts will seem to have impossible jobs. For these analysts are political animals whether they wish to be or not. Vulnerable to external political events and influences, they work in complex organizations structured by complex political processes. They tackle messy issues involving diverse populations with multiple and conflicting interests.

Despite such an apparently crazy environment, these analysts are asked, and often mandated by law, to produce rationally considered, systematic assessments of policy choices. They are asked not just to present data as window dressing for decisions already made (though, of course, that happens too), but also to apply their expertise and judgment in a rational and professional, and not whimsical or arbitrary, manner.

Yet as policy analysis and planning are generally understood today, analysts cannot fill both roles without constantly apologizing for one or the other. Seeking to anticipate and respond to political pressures and influences, analysts can feel sheepish in public in seeming to compromise the abstract rationality of their analyses. Alternatively, in seeking to abstract their analyses from the actual review and implementation processes at hand, analysts may feel vulnerable to charges that they have neglected the political realities that will determine whether anyone will really listen to their analyses.

In assessing policy analysis and planning as argumentative, we wish to exploit the systematic ambiguity of the term *argument*, for it refers both to an analytic content ("the logic of the argument") and to a practical performance ("the argument fell on deaf ears"). We argue that all policy analysis and planning is systematically ambiguous in this way, requiring attention to content and performance, to technical analysis and political articulation.

In the essays that follow, the focus on the argumentative character of analysts' work integrates institutional and political concerns with substantive and methodological questions. This is the practical challenge the argumentative turn illuminates: to do their work well, in real time, planners and policy analysts must make practical arguments that

are internally coherent *and* externally compelling, persuasively gauged to real and thus diverse political audiences.

As editors of this volume, we have distinct but complementary research interests. Intrigued by what planners do in everyday practice, Forester continues to be astonished by the richness of that work and the poverty of analytic models that claim to represent what planning and policy analysts actually do. Struck by the continuing strength of claims to expertise in highly political contexts, Fischer investigates how complex institutional forces shape the public's understanding of policy processes and policy substance. In this volume we have assembled a series of probing accounts of policy analysis and planning that seek to do justice to the actual complexities of that practice. We have sought essays that speak at once to issues of truth and power while denying the province of neither, essays that clarify how the most benign claims of analysts can work in subtle symbolic and political ways, essays that honor the challenges of practice while locating that practice both politically and institutionally.

Our focus on argumentation in policy analysis and planning echoes the oft-cited "linguistic turn" in twentieth-century philosophy. By focusing on the work of argumentation we can avoid radically separating epistemological concerns (the claims made "within" the argument) from institutional and performative concerns (how in *deed* the argument is made).

Our concern with argumentation stops far short of turning all policy issues into textual matters, unless that simply means that interpretation is an essential element of knowing. We are concerned with embodied and articulated interpretations—planners' and policy analysts' claims actually made, spoken or written—as offers seeking to shape a listener's or an audience's understanding of a practical problem. The controversies surrounding poststructuralism are not the focus of this book. Instead, we pay close attention to the actual performances of argumentation and the practical rhetorical work of framing analyses, articulating them, constructing senses of value and significance, and so we illuminate the discretion involved in such institutionally staged, organizational performances.[10]

What do we stand to gain by understanding policy analysis and planning as argumentative processes? What can we say to the skeptic's query, "So what?"

First, we can appreciate the many ways practitioners formulate and construct what "the problem" shall be taken practically to be—before they can delineate plausible alternatives or recommendations. In a few

words, problem solution depends on the prior work of problem construction and reconstruction, and this work is deeply rhetorical and interpretive, if little understood.[11]

Second, the argumentative view is a deeply practical one. We ask not only *what* an analysis claims but when it does, to whom, in what language and style, invoking what loyalties, and appealing to what threat and dangers.[12] We study, for example, not only the economic policy analyst's findings but the rhetoric of the economic analysis as well.[13]

Third, when we recognize policy analysis and planning as argumentative, we can understand immediately how they can be complex exercises of agenda-setting power. In some cases, what analyes do not say matters more than what they do say. Analysis focuses attention selectively and deliberately, enabling a more focused consideration of some alternatives and excluding others from practical consideration altogether. So we can study the micropolitics of analytical practice by assessing the political constitution and influence of analysts' practical arguments.

Fourth, a focus on argumentation enables us to assess the organizational networking, "boundary spanning," relationship building, and ritualized bargining that analysts must do to work in policy and planning processes at all.[14] If we are too focused on the work of technical analysis, we may look too much to the content of presumably ultimate documents; in doing so we will be likely to miss the rich work that precedes and follows document production: the scanning of the political environment for support for and opposition to potential recommendations, the anticipation of threats and dangers that policy and planning measures might counteract, and the subtle negotiating that transpires between agency staff who are always seeking to learn, to protect working relationships, and to maintain their own strategic position as well.

Fifth, we can see more clearly that "problems" can be represented in many languages, discourses, and frames. We can explore the link between the language of the analysts' arguments and the language of the political setting in which they work. We can be more sensitive to the ways that shifts in political power—from election to election, elite to elite, or coalition to coalition—are reflected not only in policy decisions but in the very language in which policy issues and choices are presented to the public in the first place.

Sixth, recognizing the argumentative character of policy analysis and planning practice, we can more readily appreciate its potentially pedagogic functions. In urban planning, for example, we can appreciate planning analyses less as engineering exercises to calculate results and

more as potentially democratic efforts to educate public opinion about urban issues and options.[15] The argumentative view does much more than simply announce the underwhelming news that policy analysis is an interpretive enterprise. Instead, this view suggests far more provocatively and productively that careful analysis of policy and planning problems can develop better technical information *and* cultivate the moral imagination of all those involved in the policy and planning process.[16] Perhaps the point is better made in reverse: when planners and policy analysts forget that decision makers and affected publics alike can be baffled and mystified by the languages of expertise, the analysts' efforts are likely to create more heat than light, more neglect than serious consideration, an impoverishment rather than a refinement of public understanding and ethical imagination.[17]

By focusing on the argumentative character of policy analysis and planning, this book takes a practical turn from abstracted epistemological problems of analytical practice to the political and sociological staging and significance of that practice. In sociological terms, these essays teach us about the context-specific rhetoric character of analytical practices—the ways the symbolism of their language matters, the ways the consideration of their audiences matters, the ways they construct problems before solving them.[18] In political terms, these essays teach us about the ways policy and planning arguments are intimately involved with relations of power and the exercise of power, including the concerns of some and excluding others, distributing responsibility as well as causality, imputing praise and blame as well as efficacy, and employing particular political strategies of problem framing and not others.[19]

These essays are concerned with the contingencies of democratic deliberation.[20] Planning and policy arguments cannot be presumed to be optimally clear, true, cogent, and free from institutional biases. Democratic deliberation is always precarious and always vulnerable, if inevitably argumentative as well. Through thoughtful, passionate, and informed argumentative processes, what Benjamin Barber calls "democratic talk," citizens can learn, and policy and planning analysts can promote that learning. Yet, planning and policy arguments can be skewed by inequalities or resources, by outstanding and entrenched relations of power and production, and by the deliberate play of power, and in such cases we find not what Robert Reich calls "civic discovery" but civic manipulation instead.[21]

In sum, a focus on the argumentative practices of planners and policy analysts can provide both ordinary realism and theoretical insight. This view can enhance our sense of realism simply because inter-

preting, marshaling, and presenting arguments is what analysts do all the time. This view can produce theoretical insight, too, because it can help us learn from current theories of rhetoric and discourse, interpretation, and practical judgment to reveal not only the daily challenges faced by practicing planners and policy analysts but the skills those analysts already employ—skills whose qualities students of planning and policy analysis may barely recognize today.

The essays that follow are presented in three complementary sections, beginning with cases and ending with more general theoretical implications.

Part 1 introduces the ways policy argumentation can shape decision-making and deliberative processes. In "Policy Discourse and the Politics of Washington Think Tanks," Frank Fischer shows that the argumentative turn emerges as much from political conflict as from epistemological debates. Examining the uses of public policy analysis in the Johnson and Reagan eras, Fischer identifies an emerging policymaking strategy based on the use of technocratic policy expertise and think tanks. Elite policy discourse coalitions not only involve experts from liberal and conservative think tanks in national policy agenda setting, they also align the articulated advice of leading experts with the interests of economic and political elites.

The result, Fischer argues, is a politicization of policy expertise, a process of argumentation and counterargumentation that substantially changes the actual practice of policy analysis. Having demystified the technocratic conception of policy analysis as *science*, this politicization of the analytical process opens the door to a postpositivistic, interpretive, and dialogical conception of policy analysis—a topic explored further in the following essays.

Pursuing many of these same themes, Maarten Hajer's "Discourse Coalitions and the Institutionalization of Practice" illustrates how two competing coalitions, which he dubs the "ad hoc technocratic" and the "ecological modernization" coalitions, have struggled to control the discussion, formulation, and implementation of acid rain policy in Great Britian. For Hajer, the challenge to "argumentative analysis is to find ways of combining the analysis of the discursive production of reality with the analysis of the (extradiscursive) social practices from which social constructs emerge and in which the actors that make these statements engage." Toward this end, Hajer introduces the concept of a discourse coalition, "a group of actors who share . . . an ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categories" through which a given phenomenon is

politically framed and given social meaning. When the narrative or story line of a discourse comes to dominate a society's conventional ways of reasoning and the practices of its dominant social and political institutions, the process is called discourse institutionalization.

The idea of discourse institutionalization allows Hajer to explain how the discursive practices of the ecological modernization coalition triumphed over those of the technocratic coalition without resulting in a new policy direction. The ecological coalition failed to supplant the technocrats' hold on the institutional practices of the environmental ministries. The key to success, Hajer argues, ultimately lodges in a discourse coalition's ability to imbed its own linguistic categories in the very structure of the methodologies and practices that shape and guide everyday policy deliberations. As his analysis demonstrates, even though the technocratic discourse has begun to lose its force—if not its credibility—its influence continues through bureaucratically institutionalized policy procedures.

Robert Hoppe and Bruce Jennings take up the challenge of specifying an interpretively oriented professional practice based on argumentation. They focus on the troublesome questions of decision criteria and judgments that inevitably lie at the heart of political argumentation: How should planners and analysts make judgments about competing policy claims in a world of clashing ideologies?

In "Political Judgment and the Policy Cycle: The Case of Ethnicity Policy Arguments in the Netherlands," Robert Hoppe uses the evolution of ethnicity policy belief systems to clarify both the uses of arguments and the task of assessing them. Building on Fischer's logic of policy evaluation, Ronald Beiner's concept of political judgment, and Paul Sabatier's model of policy belief systems, Hoppe links policy argumentation to a four-phase logic of political judgment, with each phase related to the deliberative processes of the policy-making cycle more generally; for example, political agenda setting, policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation. Applying his criteria of judgment to the evolution of ethnicity policy belief systems in the Netherlands, Hoppe illustrates his scheme to chart policy belief systems and assess the structure of specific policy arguments.

To conclude part 1, Bruce Jennings, in "Counsel and Consensus: Norms of Argumentation in Health Policy," examines far-reaching attempts at Medicaid reform in Oregon and proposes that we understand policy analysis as a discourse of counsel and civic consensus. The aim of policy counsel, as Jennings conceives it, is threefold: first, to grasp the significance of problems as they are experienced, adapted to, and re-

sisted by purposive members of the political community; second, to clarify the meaning of those problems so that public officials and policymakers can devise efficacious and just solutions to those problems; and, third, to guide the selection of one preferred policy from the possible set of solutions in light of both a general vision of the good of the community and the more discrete interests of the policymakers themselves.

Jennings also proposes a solution to the nagging question of epistemological relativism that has long plagued advocates of argumentative approaches to policy analysis and planning. One might worry, for example, that argumentation in policy contexts would only lead, even in principle, to an endless cycle of debate, with no way of distinguishing the quality of one claim from another. Jennings argues that such a cycle will be broken to the extent that we can achieve a radicalization of the process of policy argumentation ensuring preconditions for relatively dialogic democratic practices. This idealized solution to the threat of relativism, we should recall, is hardly more idealized than the quite traditional notions of scientific criticism in the community of inquirers whose collective and mutually responsive efforts contribute to what we claim to know at any given time.

The essays in part 2 show how analysts' arguments construct and frame policy problems in quite subtle ways. Jim Throgmorton's "Survey Research as Rhetorical Trope: Electric Power Planning Arguments in Chicago" focuses on the rhetorical aspects of argumentation. Extending the important work of the Iowa Project on the Rhetoric of Inquiry, the essay illustrates the ways planning is as much a rhetorical activity as it is the technical endeavor it is more popularly presented and construed to be.

While *rhetoric* is often viewed by planners and other professionals as "the use of seductive language to sway or manipulate others into embracing a speaker's preferred values, beliefs, and behaviors," Throgmorton shows how much more there is to rhetoric than "gloss and seduction." Rhetorical persuasion, he argues, is fundamental to, and in deed constructive of, central features of our social life, in particular character, culture, and community.

At the heart of such ubiquitous rhetorical persuasion, Throgmorton suggests, lies the use of various rhetorical devices, or "tropes," such as metaphor, metonymy, and irony that permit us to use words to suggest more than their literal meaning. A rhetorical perspective enables us to understand a policy or planning document as an interweaving of such tropes in narrative form. So a rhetorical approach to planning and policy analysis can assess the roles these devices play in proposing explana-

tions, inspiring public visions, and recommending actions. Treating survey research as a rhetorical enterprise, Throgmorton shows how research methodology gains its contingent, specific meaning—and thus its power—from a particular audience, time, place, and articulation.

Martin Rein and Donald Schön's "Reframing Policy Discourse" looks systematically at the process of framing in policy analysis and assesses how frame-reflective discourse functions within communities of inquirers—scientific and political.

Framing, as Rein and Schön describe it, "is a way of selecting, organizing, interpreting, and making sense of a complex reality to provide guideposts for knowing, analyzing, persuading, and acting." A frame is a "perspective from which an amorphous, ill-defined, problematic situation can be made sense of and acted upon." Basic to policy frames are the stories, or narratives, participants are disposed to tell about policy situations. Frequently constructed around "generative metaphors," problem-setting stories "link causal accounts of policy problems to particular proposals for action" and so link accounts of "is" and "ought."

Thomas Kaplan's "Reading Policy Narratives: Beginnings, Middles, and Ends" explores narrative forms of interpreting and explaining policy issues. For example, because its narrative structure emphasizes an organized beginning, middle, and end, a story can be a policy analyst's device for pulling together scattered multiple events into a coherent, readable plot. The analyst or planner who can recognize an "ordering plot" that weaves through differing—even contradictory—values and events of a complex issue can reach insights and conclusions that might not otherwise be attained. To illustrate his claims Kaplan contrasts the narrative strategies of policy documents with the more common chronicle approach in which terse analyses present pros and cons without an integrating plot knitting together qualitative and quantitative elements. The narrative approach allows the analyst or planner to "weave together a variety of factors and come to a conclusion that flows naturally out of these factors." But not all stories are equally good ones, of course, and Kaplan devotes a substantial discussion to differentiating better from worse stories in policy and planning contexts.

In "Learning from Practice Stories: The Priority of Practical Judgment" John Forester explores the descriptive, moral, political, and deliberative work of practitioners' stories in the daily conduct of planning and policy analysis. Planners and analysts tell practical stories not typically to entertain but to teach. These stories present not all the facts of a situation, but the facts that matter, the facts that are taken to be relevant

and important for the purposes at hand. Practice stories not only describe behavior, they also characterize others, constructing selves and identities in the process. These stories also do more, Forester argues; they help shape what others are to take as important in the cases at hand.

But how, given the messiness and complexity of actual practice stories, do planners and policy analysts learn from them? Forester provides two answers. First, planners and analysts learn from story telling in practice because problem constructing must always precede problem solving. Stories can help planners and analysts pay attention to the details that matter and help analysts get a better fix on "what the problem really is."

Second, Forester explores a more novel line of response: we learn from practice stories, he suggests, not through virtual experimentation but in the same ways that we learn from friends. Stories remind us of what matters and what is at stake; they help us to deliberate; they show us a world of passion and engagement that many forms of data presentation do not, and perhaps could not, show us. Forester's account of story telling in practice settings seeks not only to do justice to the complexity of analysts' and planners' stories but also to clarify the practical rationality practitioners may employ as storytellers and as listeners to the planning and policy stories of others.

Part 3 presents four essays that explore the theoretical arguments holding that the argumentative approach is a viable epistemological alternative to the troubled scientistic approaches that still dominate the policy sciences. The section begins with John Dryzek's "Policy Analysis and Planning: From Science to Argument," a review of the epistemological orientations that have traditionally defined policy analysis and planning. Too often, Dryzek explains, the epistemological orientations of positivism and critical rationalism have led us to normative judgments and policy alternatives that are "highly constrained and insensitive to the aspirations of ordinary policy actors." These methods could "never be more than gross oversimplifications of a complex reality, rooted as they are in a single analytical framework chosen from the many that could be employed." This multiplicity of incommensurable analytical frames has undermined the authoritative claims of the more scientistic approaches that have long defined the policy sciences.

Rather than seeing incommensurable frames as methodological barriers to analytical progress, the turn to argumentation in policy analysis and planning appreciates competing frames as the foundation of the analytical process itself. Indeed, the interplay of competing frames is a source of new knowledge rather than an impediment to it, for no single

analytical approach will do for all purposes, for all problems, for all time. Dryzek argues that a forensic model of policy argumentation allows us to tease out the essential and problematic features that define, interpret, and explain any particular policy problem. Still, the forensic model, developed by such writers as Churchman, Mitroff, and Mason, can too easily become relativistic.[22] Thus Dryzek suggests that the forensic approach must be grounded in a radicalized conception of communicative ethics, for only a communicative ethics can supply standards and norms capable of "exposing and counteracting manipulation of agendas, illegitimate exercises of power, skewed distribution of information, and attempts to distract attention" that otherwise govern forensic practice and leave it vulnerable to charges of relativism. Dryzek's discussion of discursive ethics, like Patsy Healey's essay, particularly echoes and extends Bruce Jennings's analysis in part 1.

Healey's "Planning Through Debate: The Communicative Turn in Planning Theory," addresses not only postmodernist suspicions of planning and policy rationality but the challenges of respecting political, cultural, and aesthetic differences as well. She explores planning as a communicative enterprise in which engagement, debate, and deliberation are central. When planning and policy options involve diverse ethnic, racial, territorial, or ideological groups, how can a "plural socialist project" recognize such political differences and assess systematic political economic forces too? Healey suggests that a broadly Habermasian account of communicative rationality can bring systematic analysis and respect for difference together, practically and politically.

As massive environmental problems loom before us, political talk will become more and not less important. These problems are technically complex, and they are politically ambiguous too. Recognizing that participants in plural political processes not only bargain, given their interests, but also refine and learn about those interests, Healey develops a notion of planning through debate that radicalizes earlier pluralists models. She wants to move us beyond "Lindblomian marginal adjustments to the present," toward a vision of political and communicative rationality that is future seeking, future defining.

William Dunn's seminal "Policy Reforms as Arguments" assesses the problem of moving from theory to practice. In this influential essay Dunn explores the failure of the social sciences, as sciences, to provide valid and useful information for practice, and he traces this failure to the conflict between two competing modes of reason: the scientific and that of ordinary language.

Traditionally, the policy sciences have regarded policy reforms as

"experiments," particularly following the theoretical contributions of Donald Campbell and Sir Karl Popper.[23] Dunn proposes that we view policy reforms as ordinary language arguments, rooting policy analysis more congenially "in the everyday social interaction of policymakers, scientists, and citizens at large." Toward this end, Dunn develops a transactional model of argumentation, based on Stephen Toulmin's jurisprudential account of argumentation and its informal logic of the structure of arguments. This account of policy arguments enlarges the number of "frames of reference, standards, and norms employed for challenging and evaluating knowledge claims." By examining policy arguments in this way, a critically oriented social science can uncover the hidden standards and unexamined assumptions that shape, and often distort, the production and application of knowledge.

Complementing Dunn's argument, Duncan MacRae, Jr.'s "Guidelines for Policy Discourse: Consensual verse Adversarial" distinguishes two types of policy-relevant discourse: a deliberative discussion of relatively like-minded participants, and an adversarial discourse of winners and losers. MacRae seeks to provide guidelines not only for strategic argumentation but also for deliberative discourse in which both ends and means are explored, in which claims are examined and refined before being pressed more strategically. In his wide-ranging contribution MacRae argues persuasively that analysts will find themselves engaged sometimes with "reasoned proposal selection" and at yet other times with the "requirements of persuasion"—processes calling, of course, for distinct abilities and sensitivities.

In sum, the argumentative turn in policy analysis and planning represents practical, theoretical, and political advances in the field. Practically, the focus on argumentation allows us to examine closely the communicative and rhetorical strategies that planners and analysts use to direct attention to the problems and options they are assessing. Theoretically, the focus on argumentation allows us to recognize the complex ways analysts not only solve but formulate problems, the ways their arguments express or resist broader relations of power and belief, and the ways their practical arguments are inescapably both normative and descriptive. Finally, our focus on argumentation reveals both the micropolitics of planners' and analysts' agenda setting, selective representations, and claims, and the macropolitics of analysts' participation in larger discourses, whether those are articulated in relatively organized discourse coalitions or through more diffuse, if perhaps more subtly influential, ideologies and systems of political belief.

Notes

1. See, for example, R. Bernstein, *The Restructuring of Social and Political Theory* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978), and his *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983).

2. See J. McGowan, *Postmodernism and Its Critics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990). Cf. note 7 below.

3. G. Majone, *Evidence, Argument, and Persuasion in the Policy Process* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 1.

4. D. Stone, *Policy Paradox and Political Reason* (Glenview, Ill.: Scott Foresman, 1988).

5. Argumentation involves, at a minimum, two challenges: analysis (what is argued) and articulation (how the speaker or writer engages the attention of the practical audience). Analysis without articulation may never make a difference. Articulation without analysis may be empty at best, deceptive flimflam at worst. For related work on argumentation and rhetoric in the social sciences, see, e.g., J. Nelson, A. Megill, and D. McCloskey, eds., *The Rhetoric of Human Sciences: Language and Argument in Scholarship and Public Affairs* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987); for a more systematic analysis of argumentation see D. Walton, *Informal Logic: A Handbook for Critical Argumentation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

6. John Austin wrote of the limits of ordinary expressions, "Fact is richer than diction," and the same continues to be true for the adequacy of accounts of planning and policy analysis practice. See, e.g., M. Feldman, *Order Without Design* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988); L. Peattie, *Planning: Rethinking Cuidad Guayana* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1987); and P. Marris, *Meaning and Action* (London: RKP, 1987).

7. To trace the roots of the turn to argumentation as a research strategy in policy analysis and planning, see F. Fischer, *Politics, Values, and Public Policy* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1980); D. McCloskey, *The Rhetoric of Economics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985); J. Forester, *Critical Theory and Public Life* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985); and W. Dunn, *Public Policy Analysis: An Introduction* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1981). A highly influential precursor in this field was C. W. Churchman; see, e.g., *The Design of Inquiring Systems* (New York: Basic Books, 1971) and *The Systems Approach and Its Enemies* (New York: Basic Books, 1979). In social theory and the humanities, of course, concern with argumentation, discourse, and language is widespread and can be found in the massive literature discussing the work of Stephen Toulmin, Jürgen Habermas, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derrida. For just one of many assessments here see P. Dews, *Logics of Disintegration* (London: Verso, 1987).

8. See Harold Wilensky's *Organizational Intelligence* (New York: Basic Books, 1967); G. Benveniste, *Politics of Expertise*, 2d ed. (San Francisco: Boyd and Fraser, 1977); A. Meltsner, *Policy Analysts in the Bureaucracy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976); F. Fischer, *Technocracy and the Politics of Expertise* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1990); and the work of Feldman, Marris, and Peattie, cited above (n. 6).

9. For an extensive discussion see J. Forester, *Planning in the Face of Power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); and N. Krumolz and J. Forester, *Making Equity Planning Work: Leadership in the Public Sector* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990).

10. For a closer look at the practical communicative work of planning analysts, see Forester, *Planning in the Face of Power.*

11. See the work of J. Seeley, "Social Science? Some Probative Problems," in M. Stein and A. Vidich, eds., *Sociology on Trial* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963); G. Vickers, *The Art of Judgment* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965); and Rein and Schön's and Forester's essays in this volume.

12. See J. Gusfield, *The Culture of Public Problems* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); cf. the remarks of an associate director of a city planning office: "Our staff are sending memos to the mayor all the time, and if they can't write and write well, we look like idiots. If someone can't write, we can't use them."

13. See, e.g., D. McCloskey, *The Rhetoric of Economics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).

14. Some accounts of policy analysis focus on the "interactive" dimension; see, e.g., A. Wildavsky, *Speaking Truth to Power* (New York: Little, Brown, 1979).

15. Compare Norman Krumholz's efforts in Cleveland, where as planning director he used zoning reports as occasions to brief the press and other news media about the issues confronting Cleveland's neighborhoods; see Krumholz and J. Forester, *Making Equity Planning Work.*

16. We might call this a critical Aristotelian approach, adapting the arguments relating literature, moral imagination, and moral learning, sketched by Marsha Nussbaum in her *Love's Knowledge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); see especially in that volume "Finely Aware and the Richly Responsible: Literature and the Moral Imagination." On neo-Aristotelian and critical theories of practical judgment, see S. Ben Habib, "In the Shadow of Aristotle and Hegel: Communicative Ethics and Current Controversies in Practical Philosophy," in M. Kelly, ed., *Hermeneutics and Critical Theory in Ethics and Politics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990); cf. the earlier research of Carol Weiss on the "enlightenment function" of applied research.

17. The point holds whether one is speaking of an EPA official presenting an analysis of waste disposal methods, a Department of Labor analyst assessing a job-training proposal, or a local city planner presenting an analysis of a site-

specific zoning dispute. In each case the narrative qualities of the analysis may either educate others about the issues at hand or baffle them, reveal particular values at stake or fail to identify them, disclose responsibilities or remain silent about them. Cf. Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge.*

18. Compare the work of J. B. White; e.g., "Law as Rhetoric, Rhetoric as Law: The Arts of Cultural and Communal Life," *University of Chicago Law Review* 52, no. 3 (1985): 684–702.

19. Cf. M. Edelman, *Constructing the Political Spectacle* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988). The argumentative turn allows one to focus on the discursive production and implementation of policies and programs—including the discursive suppression of issues, voices, and interests. See M. Foucault, *Power/ Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980).

20. On deliberation, see the closely resonant opening chapters in Majone, *Evidence, Argument, and Persuasion in the Policy Process.*

21. The systematic analysis of unnecessary (contingent) distortions of planning and policy processes of argumentation is a neglected area of research in political theory; see the analysis in "The Politics of Muddling Through," in Forester, *Planning in the Face of Power.*

22. See, e.g., Churchman, *The Design of Inquiring Systems;* R. Mason, "A Dialectical Approach to Strategic Planning," *Management Science* 15, no. 8 (April 1969): B-403–B-414; and I. Mitroff, "A Communications Model of Dialectical Inquiring Systems—A Strategy for Strategic Planning," *Management Science* 17, no. 10 (June 1971): B-634–B-648.

23. See, e.g., D. Campbell, "Reforms as Experiments," in E. Struening and M. Guttentag, eds., *Handbook of Evaluation Research* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1965), 1:71–100; cf. K. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (London: Hutchinson, 1968).

The Argumentative Turn: Policy Institutions and Practices

I

Policy Discourse and the Politics of Washington Think Tanks

Frank Fischer

Much of the discussion about arguments in public policy analysis derives from epistemological and methodological considerations, particularly those raised by criticism of the discipline's technocratic tendencies. By contrast, far too little attention has focused on the political regime shifts that have contributed to the argumentative turn. Indeed, as I have argued elsewhere, methodological shifts in policy analysis have often been influenced by basic shifts in the control of government (Fischer 1987). The failure to recognize the relationship between basic political changes and the practices of policy analysis has led to overly narrow interpretations of the discipline and its development. Too often understood within the confines of scientific terminology, policy analysis has frequently failed to perceive the deeper political forces that in many ways have given shape to the disciplinary project. The purpose of this essay is to illustrate how the argumentative turn emerges as much from larger political and institutional conflicts in the society as from methodological issues.

The first three sections focus on the critiques, both radical and conservative, of the Great Society of the Johnson administration, seen to be the paradigm case of the liberal technocratic strategy.[1] My purpose is to illustrate the liberal strategy's reliance on policy experts and their technical discourses and to identify specific ways in which these discourses functioned to shape the Democratic party's reform agenda. Focusing in particular on the uses of policy analysis, the critics argued that it represented far more than a value-neutral scientific methodology designed to supply better information to liberal policymakers. More fundamentally, critics saw policy analysis as a key element of a technocratic strategy that served—both wittingly and unwittingly—to supplant the

everyday, less sophisticated opinions of the common citizen with liberal "new class" arguments disguised and legitimated in the languages of technical discourses. According to the harshest critics, a growing emphasis on technocratic methodologies increasingly undercuts ordinary political discourse with the specialized languages of the social sciences (Banfield 1980:1).

The essay then examines the conservative political response to a liberal-technocratic reform strategy. As a direct challenge to the liberals' strategy, the conservative politics of the middle 1970s and the 1980s instituted an alternative policy approach that—rhetoric aside—can be interpreted as a conservative version of the liberal reform strategy. Contrary to the stated objectives of the conservative challenge—namely, to sever the political link between liberal politicians and leading policy experts—the primary result has been to *politicize* rather than *eliminate* the uses of policy analysis. I conclude with an assessment of the implications of this politicization of policy argumentation for the discipline of policy analysis.

Technocratic Discourse and the New Class

The theory of technocracy, a variant of elite theory, refers to a governance process dominated by technically trained knowledge elites. The function of the technocratic elite is to replace or control democratic deliberation and decision-making processes (based on conflicting interests) with a more technocratically informed discourse (based on scientific decision-making techniques). The result is the transformation of political issues into technically defined ends than can be pursued through administrative means.

The technocratic approach to policy-making emerged most visibly in the United States during the years of the Democratic party's Great Society and the Vietnam War. Critiques of this period, especially those of the radical Left, singled out the corporate welfare/warfare state and its managerial ideologies of expertise as fundamental political problems. During these years, the Left elevated concerns about the role of experts and intellectuals to a central position in its critique of society. Managerial and policy experts were seen as a "technical intelligentsia" who provided much more than a purely technical service to politicians, as suggested by mainstream interpretations. Indeed, writers such as Alvin Gouldner (1970), Noam Chomsky (1971), and Bertram Gross (1980) portrayed experts as a *driving* force behind the political process itself.

According to the radical version of the technocracy thesis, managerial and policy experts constituted nothing less than a new technocratic class or cadre striving for political power. Moreover, the ascent of this technocratic class was analyzed as a central governance strategy of the liberal corporate welfare state. Technocratic experts were portrayed, in fact, as the social engineers of a liberal political-economic formation fundamentally aligned with the political organization that ruled in its name, the Democratic party. Consider Gouldner's (1970, 500) words: "In the context of the burgeoning Welfare-Warfare State . . . liberal ideologues serve . . . to increase the centralized control of an ever-growing Federal Administrative Class and of the master institutions on behalf of which it operates." As technical cadres of a central governing strategy, these liberal technocrats produced "information and theories that serve to bind the poor and the working classes to the state apparatus and the political machinery of the Democratic party."

Every bit as interesting was the fact that somewhat later in the decade (and continuing well into the 1980s), remarkably similar refrains could be heard from the political Right, particularly from the so-called neoconservatives, who were largely disheartened Great Society liberals. Especially important here were such writers as Irving Kristol, Edward Banfield, Jeanne Kirkpatrick, Nathan Glazer, and Samuel Beer (Steinfels 1979).

Neoconservatives were deeply disturbed by the uses (or misuses) of the social sciences in the Great Society era. Adhering largely to the tenets of traditional democratic theory, they singled out policy experts as a fundamental threat to the future of representative government. Although they distanced themselves from their radical counterparts, neoconservatives also spoke of an emerging technocratic system of government dominated by a new class: the technical intelligentsia. Banfield (1980:5) put it this way: Policy science developed during "a long series of efforts by the Progressive Movement and its heirs to change the character of the American political system—to transfer power from the corrupt, the ignorant, and the self-serving to the virtuous, the educated, and the public spirited." Such motives "inspired proposals to replace politicians with experts in the legislatures and to do away with political parties." Samuel Beer (1978:44) went so far as to describe the phenomenon as a "technocratic takeover." While on its surface the idea of a new class takeover of the policy process is difficult to take seriously, the argument had substantial clout. Indeed, it helped to carry Ronald Reagan into the White House.

What can be made of such arguments? In and of itself, the tech-

nocracy–new class thesis tells us very little about the actual role of expertise in policy-making or the struggles that have shaped its role. In significant part, the problem is due to ideological excesses. Too often the intent has been limited to scapegoating a "technocratic class" as the impediment to either free-market capitalism (the argument of the political Right) or democratic socialism (that of the Left). Stripped of its polemical baggage, however, the thesis does correctly point to a new and more powerful role of experts and expert discourses in the policy-making processes of U.S. government. In fact, the increasing importance of the expert discourses of policy professionals are beginning to reflect a new policy-making style—a kind of politics of expertise—that is emerging as part of contemporary governance strategies. In an effort to move from the abstractions of these ideological critiques to a more concrete understanding of this phenomenon, let us first locate the contemporary origins of this new policy role for experts in the governance strategies of the Democratic administrations of the 1960s, particularly Lyndon Johnson's Great Society.

The Great Society as Technocratic Politics

The Great Society is widely seen as a primary political phenomenon that spurred the contemporary restructuring of policy processes. The technocratic discourse of the period has been widely discussed (Straussman 1978). It was a period that took seriously, in some form or another, the "end of ideology" thesis that Daniel Bell had put forward a few years earlier (Waxman 1968); and numerous technocratic, "apolitical" approaches were indeed introduced during these years.[2] Among the most important was the experimentation with Keynesian tax cuts, which were seen to signify real progress toward the technical—if not scientific—management of economic affairs. During these years, in fact, the economics profession was dubbed the "new priesthood" by *Time* magazine.

Another major technocratic thrust was the introduction in all federal agencies of the Planning-Programming-Budgeting-Systems decision-making technique (PPBS), based on the latest thinking in managerial science. This technique was designed to guide policy deliberation and program evaluation. Lyndon Johnson once described PPBS as the management technique that made possible the Great Society's programmatic assault on poverty (Fischer 1990:152).

Throughout this period the development and implementation of

the liberal political agenda was shaped by the contributions of "policy intellectuals" and the tools of the social sciences. Theodore White (1967) captured this for *Life* magazine in three articles that portray the period as the "Golden Age of the action intellectuals." White described what he saw as nothing less than the appearance of a new system of power in U.S. politics. These new intellectuals, acting in concert with political leaders in both the White House and Congress, were the "driving wheels" of the Great Society. This new generation with special problem-solving skills sought "to shape our defenses, guide our foreign policy, redesign our cities, eliminate poverty, reorganize our schools, and more." Policy professionals represented a "bridge across the gulf between government and the primary producers of really good ideas." The White House served as "a transmission belt, packaging and processing scholars' ideas to be sold to Congress as programs."

Research foundations and academic journals celebrated the significance of this "professionalization of reform" (Moynihan 1965). In the process, policy research became a growth industry for think tanks, university research institutes, and management consulting firms (Dickson 1971). In turn, this promoted the development of the discipline of policy analysis, which emerged as a new and central research focus in the social sciences. Moreover, the strategy set into motion a revolving door that linked the major research universities, government agencies, and Washington think tanks, particularly the Brookings Institution (which is largely identified with the Democratic party administrations of this period).

But beyond the mass influx of economists and social scientists, how was the policy-making process in Washington actually changing? Extending the work of Barry Karl (1975) brings into view a specific political formula, a kind of "liberal reform strategy" somewhat similar to patterns found in earlier periods such as the Progressive era and the New Deal.

Basically, the liberal reform strategy can be delineated in five interrelated steps: (1) a group of experts, mainly social scientists, is assembled by a reform-minded president; (2) the experts devote their time to defining and articulating a social or economic problem and spelling out the need for specific political reforms; (3) a larger group of journalists, philanthropists, and business leaders is then gathered to discuss the problem and to develop a consensus capable of broadening the reform coalition; (4) following these exchanges, a report is produced containing all the assumptions, information, and arguments on which the reform program would be designed and implemented; and (5) finally, with