

LEARNING TO SEE THROUGH THE SPECTRUM OF THEORY—IT TAKES PRACTICE: CASTING A  
PHENOMENOLOGICAL GAZE INTO THE BECOMING OF PROFESSIONAL PLANNERS IN AMERICA

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## DEDICATION PAGE

*For my family—by blood or otherwise.  
You inspire me to make the world a better place.*

*(This doesn't mean I'm done talking about my research)*

## ABSTRACT

Professional identity is made up of the beliefs associated with a given field and is formed through a process known as professional socialization (Cruess et al., 2015; Hinshaw, 1977; McGowen & Hart, 1990)). When successful, this process results not only in providing a clear image of what the professional role requires, but also in equipping the practitioner to effectively carry out the duties associated with the profession (Ibarra, 1999). Diverse planning theories developed over the past several decades are thought to help planners imagine themselves in their professional role and guide their actions in practice, but little is known about the beliefs of practicing planners or how they relate to planning theory. Going further, little is known about what shapes these beliefs in the first place. The purpose of this mixed-methods post-intentional phenomenological study was to describe the beliefs of planners at different stages of their career while illuminating the experiences that have shaped them into who they are as a professional. Carried out in two phases, study findings from Phase I include quantified beliefs of the planner's role, approach, and philosophies as they relate to planning theory. Phase II findings included the illumination of the production of becoming a planner. This production was analyzed using Elder Vass's (2010, 2012) critical realist theory of emergence, uncovering two provocations which provoke the production of becoming a planner: *micro-interactions* and *macro-interactions*. Together, these provocations gaze into the planner's experience becoming socialized into the profession while providing insights which should be of interest to planning students, educators, administrators, and practitioners alike.

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## PREFACE: A PARABLE OF PRACTICE

*Once upon a time, a planner set out to change the world. She was full of herself, and she had a great idea to guide her. But no one listened. Her efforts went for naught. Then, exhausted from exertion, she heard a voice whispering, "You have failed, because you have forgotten the Secret."*

*Misconstruing the imperative in what she had just heard, the planner went back to where she had begun. There, she gathered together her strongest colleagues, from within both the planning field and appropriate allied fields. Together they set out to change the world. But before they did, they caucused for a while and developed a comprehensive strategy for doing the job, including an integrated hierarchy of power and a set of concentric circles of influence.*

*They carried out their strategy faithfully, but before long, they found themselves stumbling all over each other. Their hierarchy had inverted itself and their circles had collapsed into a heap. Confused and embarrassed, they stopped for a moment, and when they did, they heard the same voice as before, this time speaking with greater volume and urgency. "You have failed, because you have forgotten the Secret."*

*Misunderstanding again, but with renewed commitment, they returned to the origin, where, this time, they joined up with all the planners and fellow travelers that ever existed. Before setting out, they constructed a huge and complex administrative structure for accomplishment and enforcement. Surely, they thought, now they were equipped to accomplish the task.*

*But, just when the assembly of their administrative structure was finished, they realized that, even with their greatest effort, they would be unable to change the world. They had become prisoners of their own constructs. They murmured among themselves, shrugged their shoulders, and then began to laugh at their folly. They recalled the Secret. It was Hope. It was inside them, among them, and all around them. With light hearts, they looked out through the portals of the structure and saw that the world was changed.*

*— Niebanck (2003, p. 209)*



## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Planning is a profession whose goal in contemporary society is to “maximize the health, safety, and economic well-being of all people living in our communities” (*What Is Planning?*, n.d.). In 2018, there were over 4,200 students enrolled in planning programs across the United States aspiring to help meet this ambitious goal (*Guide to Graduate Urban Planning Programs*, 2019). As students progress through these educational programs, which range from two to three years (*Guide to Graduate Urban Planning Programs*, 2019), they expect to learn what is considered pertinent to the planning profession in preparation for professional practice (M. M. Edwards & Bates, 2011; Gunder, 2004). Preparation requires learning new roles, values, behaviors, and knowledges through a process known as professional socialization (Dinmohammadi et al., 2013). Professional socialization is important because it shapes the professional identity of future practitioners (Gunder, 2004). The resulting beliefs then guide actions and decision-making in practice (Elder-Vass, 2010). Educators in professional programs must be aware of how students are thinking about and conceptualizing the profession to ensure they are forming a “balanced and coherent view of the professional role” (Richardson et al., 2002, p. 625). Without balance, educational programs can become too idealistic—creating “unreasonable expectations” of practice (Penpecioğlu & Taşan-Kok, 2016, p. 1040) and leaving students mentally and emotionally unprepared for their transition into the profession (Taşan-Kok et al., 2017).

This is the case in planning, where graduates report being disappointed as they start their planning careers and are treated as “passive technicians” when, as students, they were promised they would “be in a position to change the world” (Taşan-Kok et al., 2017, p. 21). Aside from being disappointed with their role early on, a lack of preparation makes it difficult for young planners to serve the public’s interest until learning to better navigate their role in the professional world (Taşan-Kok et al., 2017). But what *does* the planner believe about their professional role, where do those beliefs come from, and what experiences shape those beliefs throughout their career? Insight into these inquiries requires understanding an evolving landscape which spans from the ivory tower of the academy—where planners begin to be

formally socialized into the profession—to the surrounding fields—where they assume their roles for practice.

The sections that follow outline the study purpose and research questions before providing a Post-Reflexive Statement which explores my relationship to the phenomenon (Vagle, 2018, p. 153). Definitions of key terms are then provided and the chapter concludes with a summary.

### **Study Purpose**

The purpose of this mixed-methods post-intentional phenomenological study was to describe the beliefs of planners at different stages of their career while illuminating the experiences that have shaped them into who they are as a professional. Findings may be useful for planning students seeking insights into what awaits in the professional field after graduation; planning educators looking for ways to better prepare their students to overcome challenges experienced in practice; as well as planning institutions such as the Planning Accreditation Board (PAB) who indicate interest in the socialization of members of the planning profession.

### **Research Questions**

This research was guided by the following questions and subquestions:

1. What is the experience of becoming a planner?
  - a. What beliefs of planning are held by those who identify as planners?
  - b. What impact do social structures have on the planner?

### **Post-Reflexive Statement**

I sometimes forget that my first encounters with urban planning were as an undergraduate studying Geography at the University of Kentucky over ten years ago. We didn't have a formal planning program but the department did offer a couple planning courses: *Introduction to Planning (GEO 285)* and *Urban Planning and Sustainability (GEO 485G)*. I took both. I remember frustrating my professor in GEO 485G because of the direction I went with

our term project, where we were tasked with creating a plan for sustainable development of a particular area in Lexington, Kentucky. Rather than focusing on spatial planning approaches, or zoning, I designed a magazine prototype that was meant to educate citizens on what they could do to live more sustainably and create a more sustainable city. The “C” I received as a final grade did not reflect how much time and effort I put into the course, or how proud I was of the end result.

My next encounters with planning would be more subtle, during the start of my professional career as a geographic information systems (GIS) analyst. During this time I was doing a lot of volunteer work with nonprofit organizations needing assistance with GIS. Their projects took me to communities in Egypt, Morocco, Peru, Argentina, and Colombia. While in each location, I taught GIS workshops which enabled participants to collect and analyze field data in their community. After the analysis, we worked together to create plans to improve these conditions and outlined steps for implementation. When I would return home and talk to my friends and family, I would tell them this was my favorite part of being a GIS Analyst.

Putting on a different hat—this time working as a private GIS consultant—I eventually worked on several military contracts. In this capacity I conducted spatial analysis to inform installation planning processes at military bases around the world. Sometimes my role even required writing chapters for the Installation Master Plans. It was interesting to see the difference in top-down and bottom-up process between working with communities and military personnel to create plans. What the processes shared were leveraging GIS data and analysis to inform future action. In this way, I came to see planning as an application of GIS—an understanding that ultimately guided my decision to pursue a Masters in Urban and Regional Planning.

*“Improving two-way communication between stakeholders and geodesign teams to increase community participation in planning and development”* was the thesis topic I articulated early on to my advisor and captures well the sum of the experiences leading up to my formal planning education. I came to the program as a certified Geographic Information Systems Professional (GISP) and saw this topic as something that would help me expand on issues I had witnessed in practice—particularly in the volunteer work I had done at the

community level. What I found in the program, however, made me question my professional identity (though I wouldn't have referred to it in that way at the time). During many classroom discussions I found myself thinking *"this is like the work I have done in the past."* I may not have known the theories and methods, but I could identify with many of the planner roles described by theory. Increasingly, I found myself drawn to theories which empowered communities through social learning, advocacy, or deliberation. This felt most familiar to the capacity building efforts of the nonprofit projects with which I had been involved. I imagined the planner as educator or facilitator—someone with the resources and knowledge of processes which would enable communities to realize a shared vision for their future. I progressed through the master's program yet still, a voice inside me wondered: *What does it mean to be a planner? Am I already a planner? If not, when should I feel like one?* These questions, amplified by my classmates who shared in this wonder, inspired me to deviate from my thesis "Master Plan" and pursue the topic of "becoming a planner."

Now I find myself identifying with what Matti Siemiatycki (2012) would refer to as an activist-scholar. I am part of the planning community and, at least in terms of scholarship, the voices of the "becoming a planner" are marginalized—arguably ignored—in research. By lifting up these voices, I hope to empower future practitioners and planning professionals alike. Similar to the intellectual journey of John Forester, described in the preface of his book "The Deliberative Practitioner", my interests in planning have "led me to, and then through, the study of philosophies of science" (1999, p. x). We have both "turned to the problem dividing phenomenologists and critical theorists: How to integrate a powerful understanding of hermeneutics, of the importance of interpretation, with an analysis of systematic relations of power that illuminated domination and oppression, resignation and hopelessness" (1999, p. x). Our paths deviate on a philosophical level: whereas Forester's approach is grounded in pragmatism, mine are by critical realism. A key difference, from my current understanding, is how we choose to engage with ontologies—particularly of the social world. From my perspective, we cannot deliberately regulate our interactions with any aspect of reality that our model of reality does not include. Understanding social ontologies unleashes emancipatory potential.

## Definition of Key Terms

For the purposes of this study, the definitions in Table 1.1 were used:

**Table 1.1**

*Definitions of Key Terms.*

Term	Definition
Human Agency (Agency)	A property of the individual which allows them to act in accordance with their beliefs (Elder-Vass, 2010).
Causal Power (Emergent Property)	What makes something that thing and not something else (O'Mahoney, 2012).
Professional Identity	Attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences individuals use to define themselves in a professional role (Schein, 1978).
Professional Socialization	The process of learning new roles, values, behaviors, and knowledges relevant to a profession (Dinmohammadi et al., 2013).
Social Structure (Structure)	The causal powers of specific social groups (Elder-Vass, 2010).

## Summary

This study aims to tell a story of becoming a planner through the experiences of those who are “becoming”—a story which mirrors the profession’s own becoming. I begin by providing background to planning’s claim as a contemporary profession and the moral mandate that justifies this claim (Chapter 2). It situates this study among scholarship seeking to uncover the beliefs guiding planning practice as well as structures which shape these professional beliefs. Chapter 3 provides the details of the research strategy and methods of data collection which align with post-intentional phenomenology. The results of data analysis are reported in Chapter 4 and then discussed in Chapter 5 before concluding with main takeaways from the study and their implications for future research, planning education, and professional practice (Chapter 6).

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

*“In the early 1960s the professional appeared to be dominant everywhere. Over nine million in number, professionals asked us to trust them. And we did.” — Allan Heskin (Heskin, 1980)*

After my general topic was selected, I began reviewing literature to gain insights into the context of what it is like becoming a planner. In line with phenomenological research, this literature review was not exhaustive, but rather was meant to acquaint the phenomenologist with the phenomenon of interest (Dahlberg et al., 2008) without “compromising our openness to what we might learn from the inquiry” (Vagle, 2018, p. 79). Literature across professional fields provided the “professional identity” and “professional socialization” concepts which seemed to articulate the “beliefs” and “becoming” aspects of the planner’s career—respectively.

This chapter begins with an overview of planning’s birth as a contemporary profession while highlighting paradigms which have informed its practitioners. The scope of the literature is then broadened to include professional socialization and identity scholarship from across the professions before introducing critical realism as a metatheory for identity research and then Elder-Vass’s (2010, 2012) critical realist theory of emergence which acts as a “theory to think with” (Vagle, 2018, p. 158) while exploring the phenomenon of “becoming a planner.”

### **Planning: A Child of the Enlightenment**

Around the 19th century, a rise in university professional schools across America sparked a great change in the existing system of professions that had been around since ancient times. What had once been a system of relatively unregulated fields with specialized expertise became “peculiar social creatures” which were separate from the explosion of commercial and industrial activities of the time and organized in a collegial, hierarchical manner (Abbott, 2014, p. 3). Common characteristics of the professions which emerged included providing a social good as their main mission—their *raison d’être* that acts as a “moral mandate” for those identifying as the professionals—and being composed of “a community of like-learned individuals” claiming a sort of “expertise” (Bickenbach & Hendler, 1994, pp. 162–163). It is the

combination of moral mandate and sense of community that can be argued as the distinguishing characteristics between occupations and professions—more than a job or livelihood, a profession becomes a way of life that contributes something beneficial to society (Bickenbach & Hendler, 1994; Hughes, 1963). In exchange for their benevolent contributions, professionals are granted an authority to act based on their professional knowledge (e.g., professional authority) or administrative role (e.g., administrative authority). The former generally grants a professional the autonomy to make decisions based on their individual judgment—as the surgeon does when deciding whether or not to operate on a patient. Administrative authority, on the other hand, grants a professional the power to make decisions based on their positioning within an administrative hierarchy—such as a fiscal officer in an organization approving a funding request (Etzioni, 1964).

Planning's recognition as a distinct profession in America mirrors this larger societal trend, though on a delayed timeline. While sites of ancient cities suggest forms of urban planning have been around for millenia, professional planning in its modern configuration did not emerge until the early 1900s—about a century later than the traditional design professions such as architecture. Events such as the first National Conference on City Planning in 1909 and the foundation of the American City Planning Institute in 1917 (*American Planning Association History*, n.d.) marked planning's coming of age in the system of American professions. Referred to as being “a child of the Enlightenment,” the nascent planning profession was characterized by the pursuit of progress through reason (Sandercock, 1998, p. 61). Through reason, planners would attain the knowledge required to design a stable society that could realize the Enlightenment's aspirations of liberty and equality (Sandercock, 1998).

Those aspiring to become planners attended professional programs where they learned a rational approach to planning underpinned by the enlightenment epistemology. The rational comprehensive model, as it is commonly referred to in planning theory today, set the trajectory and tone of the profession's identity through articulating the following goals, values, philosophies, and methods of practice (Sandercock, 1998):

1. *Planning—meaning city and regional planning— is concerned with making public/political decisions more rational. The focus, therefore, is predominantly on advanced decision making: on developing visions of the future; and on an*

*instrumental rationality that carefully considers and evaluates options and alternatives.*

2. *Planning is most effective when it is comprehensive. Comprehensiveness is written into planning legislation and refers to multifunctional/multisectoral spatial plans as well as to the intersection of economic, social, environmental and physical planning. The planning function is therefore said to be integrative, coordinative, and hierarchical.*
3. *Planning is both a science and an art, based on experience, but the emphasis is usually placed on the science. Planners' authority derives in large measure from a mastery of theory and methods in the social sciences. Planning knowledge and expertise are thus grounded in positive science, with its propensity for quantitative modeling and analysis.*
4. *Planning, as part of the modernization project, is a project of state-directed futures, with the state seen as possessing progressive, reformist tendencies, and as being separate from the economy.*
5. *Planning operates in 'the public interest' and planners' education privileges them in being able to identify what that interest is. Planners present a public image of neutrality, and planning policies, based in positivist science, are gender- and race-neutral. (p. 27)*

Embraced widely by the professional community, the rational comprehensive model became modern planning's first paradigm and underscored the profession's moral mandate: developing plans for the future while operating in the public interest (Bickenbach & Hendler, 1994; Sandercock, 1998). As a *state-directed* project, the paradigm also positioned planning within the bureaucratic sphere, granting planners administrative authority over planning a future in the public's interest.

Planners were guided by the rational planning paradigm until the end of the 1960's, when it began to lose favor due to decades of mounting critiques (Sandercock, 1998). The model had promised a method for selecting the best path toward a desirable future (Hoch, 1994a; Sandercock, 1998), but the embedded assumption of a predictable future failed to account for uncertainty in decision making (Davies & Coates, 2005). Anomalies in practice were further exacerbated by epistemological debates in the social sciences. Feminist, postmodern, and postcolonial critiques held a mirror to planning's underlying philosophical assumptions—the reflections on representation, truth, and power began chipping away at planning's image (Sandercock, 1998) and professional identity became less clear with each piece that broke away (Alexander, 1984).



By the 1980's, scholars were writing about planning's "paradigm breakdown" and reviewing theories to find a suitable replacement (Alexander, 1984, p. 62). Some theorists viewed planners as advocates—developing competing plans that represent their client's values (Davidoff, 1965; Heskin, 1980)—while others envisioned planning as "the science of muddling through" (Lindblom, 1959, p. 79). Yet even others were certain the planner's role should shift to that of a facilitator who engages communities through deliberative practice (Forester, 1988). Each alternative theory painted a different future for planners—showing them all the things they could be while lacking a clear vision which would unite the professional community. When the dust began to settle—sometime in the 1990s—a publication by Judith Innes (1995) proclaimed the emergence of a new paradigm. Building on Habermas's (1984) communicative action theory, planners would turn a page in their professional history—ending the chapter on rational planning and beginning another: Communicative Planning (Innes, 1995).

Planning's new chapter provided clarity and direction across the profession. According to Innes (1995), the communicative planning approach "has helped students and academics to see planning, and has helped planners to see themselves" (p. 183). However, many planning educators were reluctant to remove their eldest child from the classroom (Dalton, 1986, 2001). Fragments of the rational model remained embedded in the new face of planning and it became more clear what planning research and practice should look like than the professional education responsible for preparing planners for practice (Dalton, 2007). When the Journal of Planning Education and Research first hit the press in 1981, it was introduced by the father of planning curriculum—Harvey Perloff—as a forum for discussing the direction of the planning profession and how to answer relevant questions of the time (Perloff, 1981). Questions of that time endure today: what is the role of theory in planning education and how can it be taught in a way that translates into practice (Lowe & Ehrenfeucht, 2018; Olesen, 2018; Sartorio & Thomas, 2019; Vigar, 2012)?

Theory should—at least theoretically—help planners understand the problems of the profession and how to approach them in practice. According to Faludi (2013):

*At some stage in their career, all planners face the question of how a reasonable person would engage in planning. Man's understanding of this world, and his ability to act in it, depends on his constructing an imagery in his own mind. This applies equally well to the*

*planner's understanding of himself and his operations. Thus 'understanding planning' as a problem really means that the planner faces the challenge of constructing an image of himself in his role as a planner; the agencies in which he operates; their procedures; the environment as it is affected by, and is affecting, the operations of these agencies. (p. 8-9)*

We see that theory is meant to not only answer questions of “how to plan” but also “who is the planner that plans?” Having answers to these questions enables the planner to orient themselves within the professional world and guides the construction of their professional identity (Faludi, 2013; Gunder, 2004; Olesen, 2018). Rather than finding themselves in theory, however, planners experience a “growing incongruence” between the philosophical assumptions underpinning planning theory and the everyday reality of their professional practice (Watson, 2006, p. 32). Especially for students transitioning into practice, this incongruence creates tensions as the assumptions that have guided the formation of their professional identity result in an imagined role that does not always align with the realities of practice (Taşan-Kok et al., 2017, p. 21). Furthermore, given that philosophical assumptions influence the professional values which inform professional judgment (Forester, 1988; Howe & Kaufman, 1981) and agency (Elder-Vass, 2010, 2012), these students enter practice unprepared to navigate their role in larger systems and appropriately position themselves to deliver on their moral mandate—serving the public’s interest (Taşan-Kok et al., 2017).

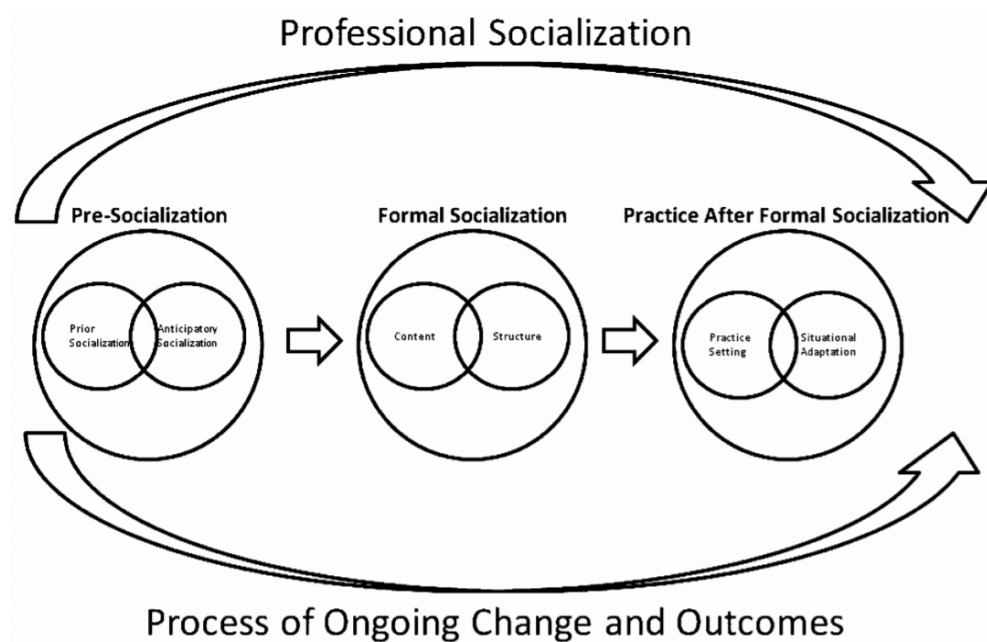
Scholars often describe this phenomenon as a gap between theory and practice (Alexander, 1997; Allmendinger & Tewdwr-Jones, 1997; de Neufville, 1983; Lord, 2014). While this simplifies the narrative by focusing on the primary “doings” of both academics and professionals, it may limit the understanding of the phenomenon by excluding factors associated with a larger process through which professional roles, values, behaviors, and knowledges are acquired and internalized. This process is known as professional socialization and—when successful—results in the formation of a coherent professional identity (Cruess et al., 2015; Hinshaw, 1977; McGowen & Hart, 1990). Successful identity formation is important because it provides a clear image of what a professional role requires and equips the practitioner to effectively carry out the duties associated with the profession (Ibarra, 1999).

In planning literature, identity and socialization are seldom the focus—which is surprising because the Planning Accreditation Board (PAB) maintains a residency requirement for accredited planning programs meant—at least in part—to “[socialize the student] into the norms and aspirations of the profession” (Planning Accreditation Board, 2017, p. 2). More commonly, identity and socialization manifest as subtle threads in the fabric of planning studies focusing broadly on education. An example of this includes Dalton’s (2001) study, where she weaves socialization into a discussion of pedagogical changes in planning education over the years. She includes a section—or thread—entitled “Identity,” however this speaks more to the identity of the profession than the planners themselves—which is also common in planning research. A notable exception to these trends is Gunder’s (2004) study, which draws on Lacanian psychoanalysis to investigate the role educators play in shaping the identity of their students. Aside from providing students with epistemic knowledge and role model-educators who transfer their beliefs of planning to the student, he argues that planning education exposes the students to discourses which make up planning’s identifications—or “master signifiers” (p. 309). Belief in the discourses, according to Gunder, is what “shapes the planner” (p. 309).

### **A Fresh Perspective**

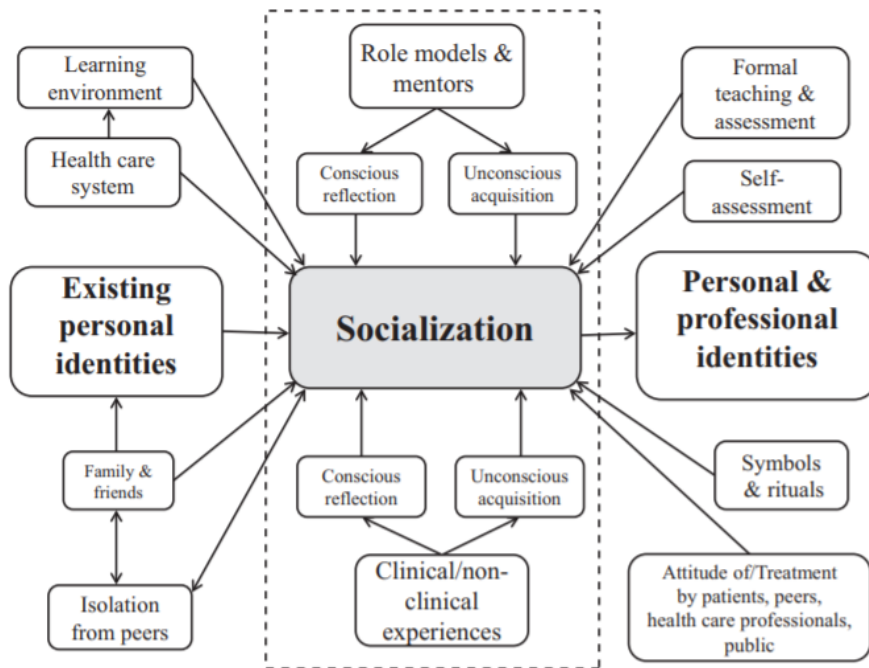
Outside of planning, professions such as nursing, education, and social work have been studying socialization and identity since at least the middle of the last century (Merton et al., 1957). Socialization frameworks which have emerged, such as Miller’s (2010) “Process of Ongoing Change and Outcomes” (Figure 2.1), imagine the “becoming” of a professional as a continuum which stretches across most of their life—beginning before formal education and extending throughout their professional career. Others, such as Cruess et al.’s (2015) schematic of factors involved in socialization in medicine (Figure 2.2), call out the multitude of factors that contribute to socialization and result in new personal and professional identities. Both frameworks are significant to the study of identity formation because they not only remind us to look outside the classroom and discourse-laden textbooks for experiences that shape the professional, but indicate students come to professional programs with identities that have already begun to form—identities that shape their initial perceptions of the profession and the

image they have of themselves in the role of a professional (Cruess et al., 2015). While the role envisioned is a component of professional identity, it does not necessarily capture the internalized philosophies underpinning that role (Figure 2.3). Here, planning theory can help with identity formation by acting as a lens through which students explore not only the role of the planner, but the values and rationalities that guide the planner's approach (Healey & Hays, 2011; Olesen, 2018).



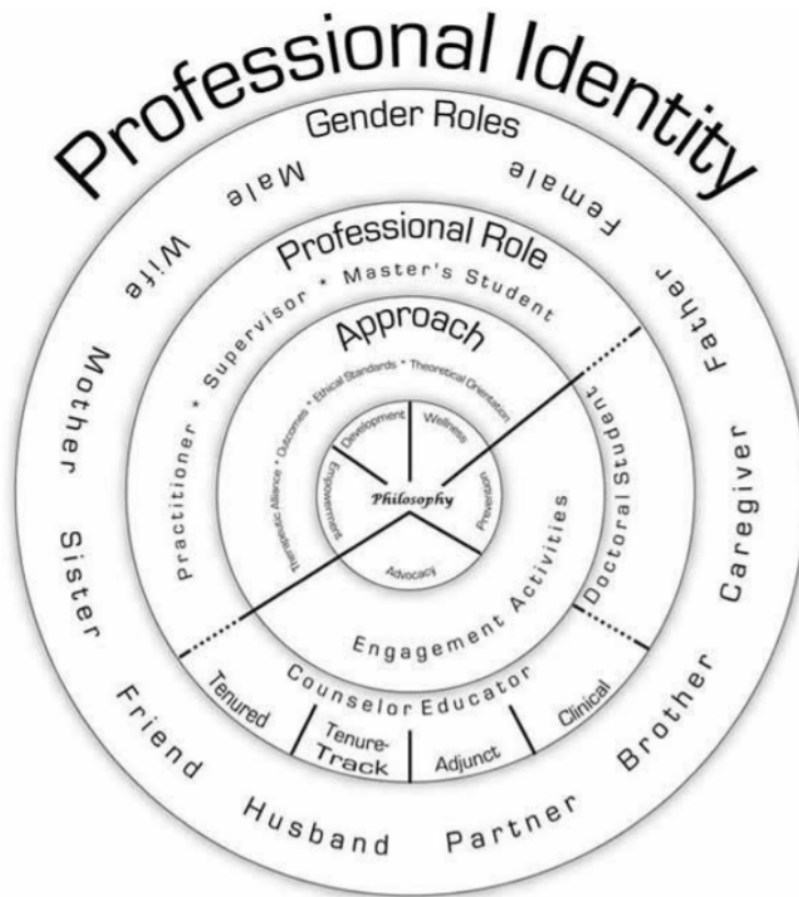
**Figure 2.1** *Process of Ongoing Change and Outcome*

Note: From Miller (2010)



**Figure 2.2** *Schematic of Factors Involved in Socialization in Medicine*

Note: From (Cruess et al., 2015))



**Figure 2.3** *Conceptualization of Professional Identity and Gender Role in Counseling*

Note: From (Healey & Hays, 2011)

To facilitate discussions about planning theory and help students to reflect on their roles and identities as planners to be, Olesen (2018) organized planning theory into a framework of planner roles. The framework presents roles envisioned by planning theory and highlights the values and rationalities associated with each role (Figure 2.4). This approach lends itself well to formulating a more comprehensive understanding of professional identity because it provides the language students need to think through the approach (i.e., methods, goals, process, ideals, and values) and underlying philosophies associated with each theorized role.

	The rational planner	The incremental planner	The advocacy planner	The communicative planner	The strategic planner	The neoliberal planner	The transformative planner	The agonistic planner
Ideal of planning	Implementation of politics (separation of policy-making and planning – ends and means)	Plan as you go along (disjointed incrementalism)	Planning is an expression of values	Planning is a social (communicative) process	Planning is partly implementation of politics and partly policy-formulation	Planning is a constraint on the freedom of the market, only necessary to deal with externalities	Planning is normative, empowering and therapeutic; pluralistic (culturally sensitive)	Planning as agonism (not antagonism)
Methods and techniques	Methods for plan-making, surveys, spatial analyses (theories in planning)	Analysis of the current (political) situation, bargaining, negotiating, the science of muddling through	Working from the values of the group in question to make an alternative plan	Participation, dialogue, consensus building, storytelling	Tools for effective decision-making, tools for future thinking: SWOT-analysis, scenario-building	Combination of centralised state power and rules, and local autonomy, working with the business community and developers	Working with people, communicating in diverse ways, learning from stories, less focus on creating documents	Participation, dialogue, storytelling, but not necessarily consensus
Planning process	Planning is plan production, the planning process ends with the plan, focus on producing (physical) results	A process of push and tug – aimed at reaching agreements	The production of rival plans for different interest groups, democratic process where everyone can question rival plans, the 'best plan wins'	Planning is about learning about others' everyday lives	Planning is about effective decision-making and implementation of political goals	Driven by economic interests, 'efficiency' is key	Open, communicative and democratic	Planning is an agonistic process, which has a potential to embrace different views and perspectives in a non-consensual way
Role of the planner	The planner should take a non-ideological and objective stance as an expert	Coordinator: bureaucrat working towards viable solutions, getting things done	Subjective, working for disadvantaged groups outside local government; a critic of mainstream plans; troublemaker; educator	Providing information, engaging in deliberation (i.e. facilitating, mediating, moderating debates, synthesising, etc.)	The planner works towards realising political goals and acts as political advisor	The planner as an 'enabler', working with economic interests to meet their needs	Change agent: the planner should work with people, especially the weakest groups, to empower them	The planner should be aware of that some views are being suppressed in a planning process
Goals of planning	Planning is related to the power of experts and their technical, objective abilities, physical goals	Focus on short-term goals and only a few alternatives	Planning should improve urban democracy and the lives of disadvantaged groups	Communication, building trust and relationships for further collaboration	Planning is related to the power of politics	To help economic development and to alleviate its externalities	Helping people live together in a multicultural society, alleviating fear of the 'other', and transforming society	Democratic decisions that are partly consensual, and partly, accept unresolvable disagreements (agonistic pluralism)
Values	Are decided by politicians	Are decided by politicians (important stakeholders), defined along the way	Planning should work with disadvantaged communities and change society, working from personal values	The ideal speech situation, openness to the better argument, communicative rationality	Are decided by politicians	Belief in the market and its freedom	Democracy and openness; plurality, diversity, difference	Belief in conflict/strife (agonism) as a productive thing for planning and democracy. Critical of neoliberalism as a hegemonic discourse.
Scientific philosophy	Empirical-analytical (positivism). Planners should act much in the same way as research scientists in search for the best methodology	Pragmatism	Phenomenological/social constructivism – planners should try to understand the lives and values of others and work from this understanding	Phenomenological/social constructivism – planning is managing co-existence (shaping places in fragmented societies)	Empirical-analytical (positivism). Analyses are used to support (legitimise) political goals and visions	Empirical-analytical (positivism). Planning should consist of rules and consistent rational methods, which are understandable to outsiders	Social constructivism/phenomenology – learning from people's stories, no single 'right' solution	Scientific philosophy: Social constructivism, post-positivism. Political philosophy: radical left, neo-marxism

**Figure 2.4** *Framework for Teaching Planning Theory as Planner Roles*

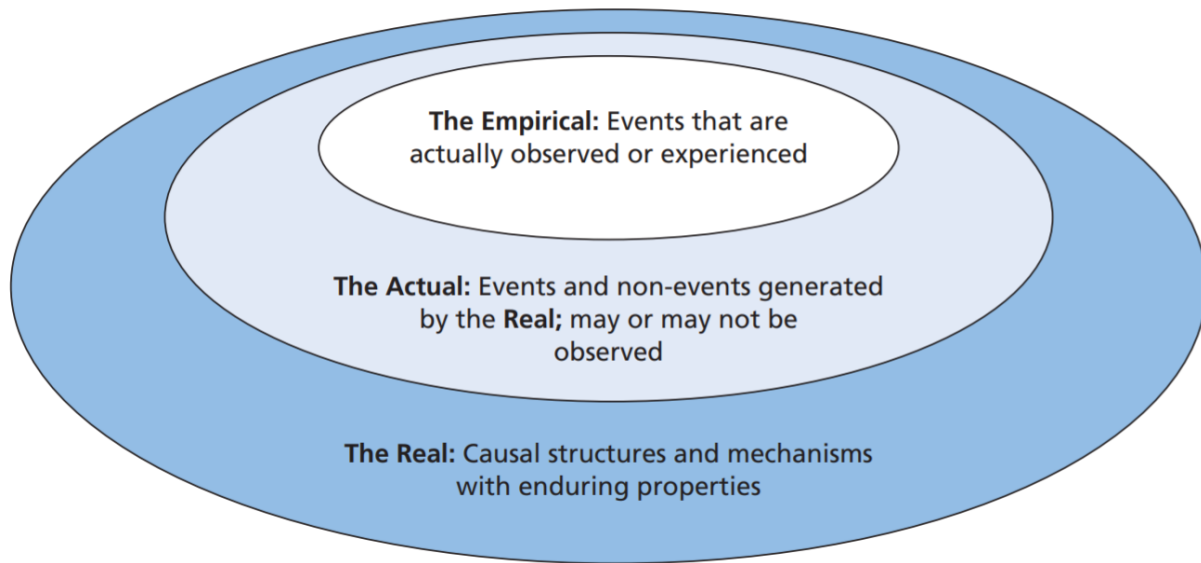
Note: From Olesen (2018)

## Critical Realism as a Metatheory

Critical realism (CR) is a metatheory developed by Roy Bhaskar (1975) and operationalized by Sayer (1999) and Danermark (2019) which bridges elements of realism and social constructivism in an attempt to reconcile what are commonly perceived as limitations to

both—notably in regard to ontology and epistemology. Ontology, from a CR perspective, is not reducible to epistemology. Proponents of CR believe in an external reality that exists beyond what we can empirically know and that reality serves as the backdrop to a social reality. Due to the existence of social events and phenomena beyond what we can know or observe, CR is concerned with theories which help identify causal mechanisms driving them. Both the external and social realities contain causal mechanisms and rational judgment is used to select which mechanisms offer the strongest explanatory power. Important to this study are critical realism’s stratified ontology (Figure 2.5)—which distinguishes between causal structures and mechanisms, the events generated by these structures and mechanisms, and the observation or experience of these events—and depth ontology (P. K. Edwards et al., 2014). Depth ontology “helps conceptualize how identities change” by associating actual events with “generative mechanisms that have real but contingent effects” (P. K. Edwards et al., 2014, p. 70). In other words, depth ontology invites the researcher to transcend the empirical level of reality to “fully understand the phenomenon under study” through a process of retroduction (Fletcher, 2017, p. 189).





**Figure 2.5** *The Stratified Ontology of Critical Realism*

Note: from Saunders et al. (2009)

In this research, participants provided lived-experience descriptions (LED) of events which they believe shaped who they are as a professional planner. This allowed identity formation to be observed at the empirical level and, by exploring the experience of events through theoretical lenses at the actual level, provided the potential to illuminate causal structures and mechanisms operating at the level of the real. Identifying these causal structures and mechanisms opened up opportunities to suggest solutions for structural change.

### **Emergence Theory**

The importance of understanding professional identity and its formation through socialization is underscored by the critical realist theory of emergence advanced by Elder-Vass (2010, 2012), which offers justifications for a causal link between beliefs and actions: experiences shape beliefs and dispositions which, in turn, shape decision-making. Drawing from critical realism, Elder-Vass focuses on the interplay between social structures and human agency. His theory argues that it is “specific groups of people that have social structural power” and that “the social world is composed of many overlapping and intersecting groups, each of which has the causal power to influence human individuals” (Elder-Vass, 2010, p. 4). In the

context of professional and organizational studies, emergence theory situates individuals within larger social entities—from casual interaction groups to more formal associations and organizations. Human agency is a property of the individual which allows them to act in accordance with their beliefs. However, an individual's role can be combined with others in various social groups to create new entities with properties which emerge as causal powers. Reflected back on the members of the social group, causal powers such as authority and normativity can then shape individual beliefs and agency. In the context of this study, agency can be seen as deliberate or habitual actions guided by professional identity. The planner's "becoming", on the other hand, refers to the shaping of this identity by social structures.

### **Summary**

Planning theory was born out of the rationalities of the enlightenment and has undergone many re-imaginings since. Each new theory presented another possible role for the planner but distanced the profession from a coherent identity shared by its members. Understanding professional identity is important because identity alignment is linked with effectiveness in a professional role (Freidson, 1994; Ibarra, 1999) as well as judgment and professional actions vis-à-vis human agency (Elder-Vass, 2010, 2012). Scholarship from professions outside of planning have been studying identity and its formation for decades. Planning should be aware of frameworks associated with this area of scholarship as they provide a fresh perspective on both education and practice which could benefit the profession. Little is known about the professional identity formed by planning students and practitioners, or the structures which shape these identities. I hope to open up space for this discussion.

### CHAPTER 3: METHODS

*There are times in life when the question of knowing if one can think differently than one thinks, and perceive differently than one sees, is absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all. People will say, perhaps, that these games with oneself would better be left backstage; or, at best, that they might properly form part of those preliminary exercises that are forgotten once they have served their purpose. But, then, what is philosophy today—philosophical activity, I mean—if it is not the critical work that thought brings to bear on itself? In what does it consist, if not in the endeavor to know how and to what extent it might be possible to think differently, instead of legitimating what is already known?*  
(Foucault, 1990, pp. 8-9)

This chapter details the research strategy and methods of data collection employed for this study. These methods were guided by the following questions and subquestions:

1. What is the experience of becoming a planner?
  - a. What beliefs of planning are held by those who identify as planners?
  - b. What is the relationship between planner beliefs and social structures?

#### **A Mixed Methods Approach**

This research seeks to understand trends in beliefs of planning (e.g., values, ideals, philosophies) across the profession before looking at the experiences of individual planners forming those beliefs. In this way, the study is both extensive and intensive. A convergent mixed methods research design provided the means to gain complementary views of the phenomena through the use of both qualitative and quantitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Zachariadis et al., 2013) and was found to be compatible with the ontological and epistemological assumptions guiding this research. Quantitative data were used to reveal demi-regularities, or tendencies (Danermark et al., 2019) in regard to planner beliefs across the profession while also providing specific details related to individual planner identity. Qualitative data, in the form of lived-experience descriptions and identity self-descriptions, were used to uncover structures associated with forming planner identity (Vagle, 2020) and then brought into conversation with quantitative data to explore the phenomenon from different perspectives or strata.

## **Towards A Critical Phenomenology of Practice**

A goal of this research is to understand the experience of structures which impact the planner's ability to create change so they are better prepared to meet them in practice. I was drawn to phenomenological approaches due to the nature of my research being inspired by a sense of "wonder" about the planning profession and interest in learning from the experiences of current practitioners. According to van Manen (1990), phenomenological studies "begin with wonder." The purpose "is to 'borrow' other people's experiences and their reflections on their experiences in order to better be able to come to an understanding of the deeper meaning or significance of an aspect of human experience" (p.62). An approach to research design drawing from the tradition of phenomenology is consistent with this goal and is suitable for uncovering the experiences that shape the identity of professional planners (Creswell, 2013; van Manen, 1990). More specifically, this study draws on the post-intentional approach to phenomenological research to situate the phenomenon in a context which can be used for social change (Vagle, 2020). Emergence theory, described in Chapter 2, is used as a critical "theory to think with" when exploring the phenomenon (Vagle, 2018, p. 158)—turning a critical lens to the experience of planning practice and moving this research toward a critical phenomenology of practice.

## **Synopsis of Research Process**

This research follows the methodological process for post-intentional phenomenology, described by Vagle (Vagle, 2018) as a "non-linear, five-component process" that should be viewed "in an open and shifting cyclical pattern" (p. 140):

1. Identify a post-intentional phenomenon in context(s), around a social issue;
2. Devise a clear yet flexible process for gathering phenomenological material appropriate for the phenomenon under investigation;
3. Make a post-reflexion plan;
4. Explore the post-intentional phenomenon using theory, phenomenological material, and post-reflexions; and

5. Craft a text that engages the productions and provocations of the post-intentional phenomenon in context(s), around a social issue.

What follows is a description of each component in the context of how it was applied to this research.

### ***Identify A Post-intentional Phenomenon***

This study was selected because I was personally connected to the topic. After selecting the topic, I began a partial review of the literature. Reading about challenges faced by young planners entering practice further invigorated my interest in the topic because it connected the interest to actual issues in practice.

### ***Gather Phenomenological Material***

This study focused on the phenomenon of becoming a professional planner. In seeking to understand this experience, four areas of inquiry were explored. Informed by the conceptual framework, the phenomenological material needed for this study falls into four categories: (i) contextual, (ii) demographic, (iii) perceptual, and (iv) theoretical. An explanation of each type of material follows:

1. Participants lived-experience descriptions provided contextual information related to experiences they feel shaped who they are as a planner.
2. Demographic information pertaining to the participant's years of professional planning experience and presence of formal planning education helped situate the responses in relation to advancing through their professional career. Variables related to work experience were aligned with those used by Dalton (2007).
3. Planning students' and practitioners' perceptions of their identity provided insights as to who they believe they are, or who they want to be.
4. An ongoing review of literature in the areas of identity formation and professional socialization provided the theoretical grounding for the study.

In contrast to other forms of phenomenology which rely solely on qualitative material, post-intentional phenomenology makes use of any material required to understand the phenomenon: “if the phenomenon calls for numbers (i.e., frequencies, measures of central tendency), then include them. If the phenomenon calls for fictional writings, photo elicitation, or re-enactments of lived experiences, then include such material” (Vagle, 2018, p. 151). This study made use of a variety of data sources for phenomenological materials—both qualitative and quantitative—to gain insights into the planner’s beliefs and the experiences which shaped them. These sources were then aligned with the research questions to provide a concrete link between the variety of data and the question(s) they help to answer (Vagle, 2018, p. 152):

Research Question

Data Sources

Q1: What is the experience of becoming a planner?

- Participants’ beliefs of planning via responses to quantitative survey (Google Forms)
- Participants’ written identity self-descriptions collected via Google Forms survey
- Participants’ resumes via email or LinkedIn profile (PDF)
- Participants’ written lived-experience descriptions (LED) collected via Google Forms survey
- Researcher’s Post-Reflexion Journal

Q1.1: What beliefs of planning are held by those who identify as planners?

- Demographic information provided by participants via responses to quantitative survey (Google Forms)
- Participants’ beliefs of planning via responses to quantitative survey (Google Forms)
- Participants’ written identity self-descriptions collected via Google Forms survey
- Researcher’s Post-Reflexion Journal

Q1.2: What impact do social structures have on the planner?

- Participants’ written lived-experience descriptions (LED) collected via Google Forms survey
- Participants’ written identity self-descriptions collected via Google

- Forms survey
- Participants’ resumes via email or LinkedIn profile (PDF)
- Researcher’s Post-Reflexion Journal

**Pilot Study.** After Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was granted, a pilot study was conducted to test the survey instruments and verify that the results had potential to provide insights into the research question. Two participants completed both phases of the study and results were shared with committee members. Upon their approval, full recruitment began.

**Phase I: Quantitative (Demographics and Context).** Convenience sampling invitations to participate (Appendix A) were emailed to potential participants via member mailing lists of 47 chapters of the American Planning Association; the University of Hawai’i at Mānoa’s Alumni Association; the University of Hawai’i at Mānoa’s student email list, and 97 accredited planning programs across the United States. Invitations to participate were also shared on LinkedIn. Invitations contained a link to an online recruitment form, allowing potential participants to learn more about the study and provide demographic information if they were interested in participating. Participants who completed the recruitment form were confirmed via email, then sent a questionnaire which required responding to prompts about their beliefs of planning based on Olesen’s (2018) planner roles (Appendix B). The questionnaire was sent along with an Informed Consent form (Appendix C) and was used to identify participants interested in Phase II of the study. 164 responses were completed by planning students and practitioners across the United States. Survey questions were aligned with the professional identity framework described in Chapter 2 (see Table 3.1) before being redescribed through planning theory and reviewed to identify rough trends—or demi-regularities—in the data (Fletcher, 2017).

**Table 3.1**

*Mapping Survey Questions to Professional Identity Framework*

Identity Component	Survey Question
Role	<i>Which do you think best describes the role of the planner?</i>

Approach	<i>How would you describe your preferred approach (e.g. methods and techniques) to planning?</i>
	<i>How would you describe the planning process and its purpose?</i>
Philosophy	<i>How would you describe your philosophical outlook in relation to planning?</i>
	<i>How would you describe the goals of planning?</i>
	<i>Which do you think best describes values in planning?</i>
	<i>What is the ideal of planning?</i>

**Phase II: Qualitative (Context and Perception).** Participants for the qualitative portion of this study were selected through purposeful sampling, a widely used technique in qualitative research for identifying and selecting information-rich cases (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2002). Phenomenological research requires participants who have first-hand experience with the phenomenon being investigated (van Manen, 1990). Participants who self-identified as being either a planning student or practitioner were assumed to have experienced the “becoming” of a professional planner. Those who completed Phase I and indicated they were interested in continuing the study were emailed a link to the Qualitative Survey (Appendix D). 17 participants provided qualitative responses which were used for analysis and 5 were selected to include in the phenomenological text. Selected participants do not represent a subset of the population—or empirical sample—but rather “examples of experientially rich descriptions” (van Manen, 2014, p. 353). These examples were used to find what is singular and unique about the phenomenon rather than being generalized (van Manen, 2014).

### ***Keep a Post-reflexions Journal***

Post-reflexion is a concept born out of similar concepts in descriptive phenomenology and reflective lifeworld research that invites the phenomenologist to explore “how they play a part in producing the phenomenon” while asking them to “locate and name their assumptions about what is normal and what surprises them” (Vagle, 2018, p. 153). It is similar to reflexivity in qualitative research, however post-reflexion is meant to continue throughout the research



process and is eventually used for analysis (Vagle, 2018). While post-reflexing, Vagle recommends paying attention to the following:

1. Moments when they/we instinctively connect with what they/we observe and moments in which they/we instinctively disconnect;
2. Our assumptions of normality;
3. Our bottom lines, that is those beliefs, perceptions, perspectives opinions that we refuse to shed; and
4. Moments in which they/we are shocked by what they/we observe (2018, p. 154)

In this study, post-reflexing began once IRB approval was granted and the pilot study had been completed. A physical notebook was used to track thoughts, feelings, and wonderings about my assumptions related to the phenomenon and the research process. Post-reflexing began with the writing of the Post-Reflexive Statement (Chapter 1) and continued as I gathered and analyzed phenomenological material.

### ***Explore The Phenomenon***

In phenomenological research, data are not analyzed, phenomena are explored (Vagle, 2018; van Manen, 1990; Van Manen, 2016). To aid in the exploration of the phenomenon, Vagle (2018) recommends that post-intentional phenomenologists select theories to think with when reviewing phenomenological material and post-reflexions. Emergence theory was selected to guide the coding of social structures encountered by planners in their lived-experience descriptions (Table 3.2). Italicized codes represent social groups identified by Elder-Vass (2010) while the code identified in bold represents a new social group which was identified during the coding process.

**Table 3.2**  
***Abductive Coding of Social Groups***

<b>Social Group</b>	<b>Description</b>
<i>Norm Circle</i>	Composed of individual members that share a commitment to endorsing and enforcing a practice. They share a collective intention to support the norm, and as a result they each tend to support it more actively than they would if they did not share that collective

	intention. The commitment to endorse and enforce the norm that is the characteristic relation between members of a norm circle.
<i>Interaction Group</i>	Two or more people interact in a manner that is shaped by their conventional understandings of the situation and of the appropriate way to behave in situations of this type. These are often relatively short-lived interactions, with no necessary commitment of the parties to each other, or to longer term persistence of the interaction.
<i>Ad hoc Group</i> <sup>1</sup>	<p>A group of two or more people who are committed to the group on an as-needed basis for a predetermined reason. Its parts can include both individuals and individuals as representatives of other associations and organizations. Like an organization, it often has formalized roles and can persist beyond the duration of a single interaction situation. However, what distinguishes it from organizations and associations is that there is no intention of an ongoing commitment to the group.</p> <p>In planning, this can be used to describe public meetings, planning charrettes, or collaboration with other organizations.</p>
<i>Association</i>	A group of two or more people who have a continuing commitment to the group as such and not just to any normative institutions that the group may happen to instantiate. Perhaps the key respect in which associations differ from interaction groups is that as a result of this commitment the group can persist beyond the duration of a single interaction situation. Its members are likely to have a sense of the group's continuation as a group even when they are not engaged in interaction with each other and they will tend to engage in repeated interactions. One implication is that there is a degree of stability in the membership of the group over a period of time, although associations may allow some turnover of membership.
<i>Organization</i>	Any organization is an entity composed of a group of human individuals, structured by a set of relationships between them. These relationships are formalized in the roles or social positions occupied by the people in the organization.

<sup>1</sup> This social group was added during the abductive coding process

### ***Craft A Phenomenological Text***

In post-intentional phenomenology, phenomenological texts are considered to be free form. According to Vagel, phenomenologists “are free (and even encouraged) to play with form, bringing all that [they] have from the phenomenological material, [their] post-reflexion journal, and theories to bear” (p.160). Preparing the text is seen as a craft which weaves together all material from the study, paying particular attention to productions—or the “ongoing ways in which the phenomenon is being shaped over time”—as well as provocations which “ignites something about the phenomenon” (p. 160). The final text is organized “by the shape you want to communicate” (p.160).

## **Participants**

This section provides demographic information of the participants.

### ***Phase I: Quantitative***

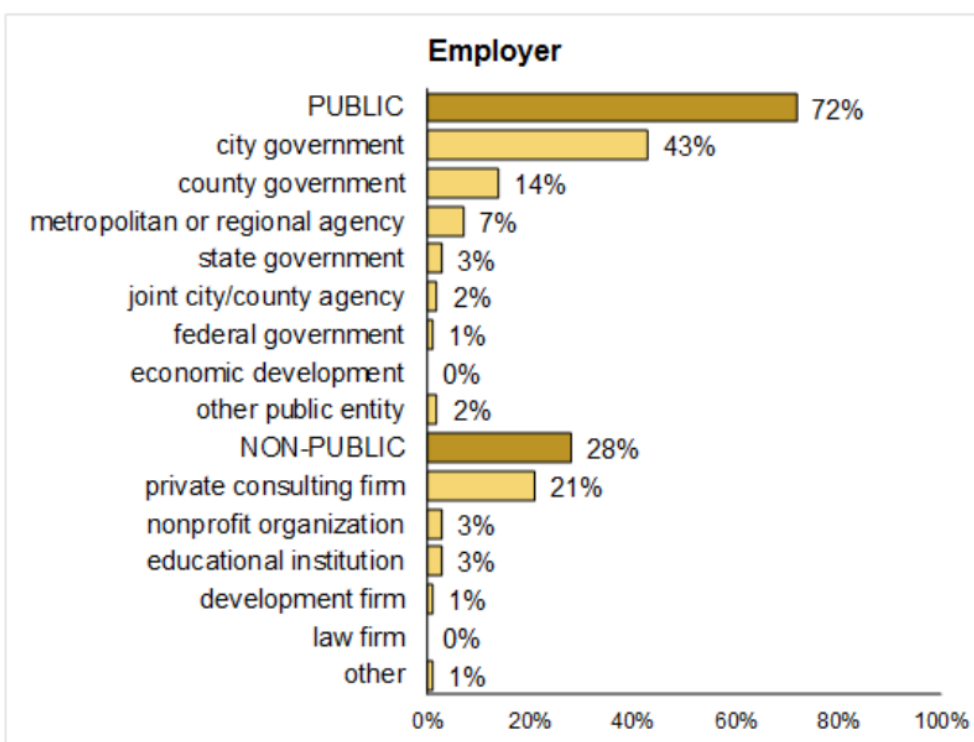
Participants for Phase I of the study (details shown in Table 3.3) were recruited through invitations circulated through email lists. Out of the 201 participants who enrolled in the study, 164 completed the quantitative portion of the survey for a response rate of 82%. Demographic variables were selected to roughly align with the variables used in Dalton's (2007) study. Modifications included the addition of "Student" as an employment type and, rather than asking for specific degree information, this survey asked if participants had attended an accredited planning program. This difference was meant to capture participants who are either in the process of completing their degree, or started a degree without finishing.

**Table 3.3**  
*Sample Statistics*

	Count (Enrolled)	Percent (Enrolled)	Count (Completed)	Percent (Completed)
<b>Employment type</b>				
<i>Government/Public</i>	109	54%	83	51%
<i>Industry/Private</i>	37	18%	27	16%
<i>Civil Society/Nonprofit</i>	6	3%	5	3%
<i>Academia/University</i>	33	16%	33	20%
<i>Not employed as a planner</i>	16	8%	16	10%
<b>Years of work experience</b>				
<i>Student</i>	70	35%	69	42%
0-10	65	32%	49	30%
11-20	40	20%	29	18%
20+	26	13%	17	10%
<b>Certification and education</b>				
<i>AICP Certified</i>	72	36%	53	32%
<i>Attended an accredited planning program</i>	156	78%	133	81%

To get a feel for how the study sample compares to national statistics, we can use information reported by the American Planning Association (APA) on their membership. While not every planner is a member of the APA, recruitment for this study was largely facilitated by circulating recruitment notices through their mailing lists. We see from their (*Employment and*

*Work Environment Characteristics*, 2018) survey (Figure 3.1) that the percentage of government employees is much higher than the study sample and, assuming academics and students were captured in their data as “educational institutions”, this percentage is much lower than the study sample. I believe this difference can be attributed to my recruitment strategy including accredited planning programs across the United States. Circulating recruitment notices through their mailing lists may have resulted in the inclusion of more faculty and students who are not affiliated with the APA—increasing the percentage of Academics while decreasing the percentage of Government employees.



**Figure 3.1** *American Planning Association Membership Survey*

Source: American Planning Association (*Employment and Work Environment Characteristics*, 2018).

### **Phase II: Qualitative**

The survey used for Phase I was used to recruit participants for Phase II. Those indicating they were interested in continuing the study were emailed the qualitative survey. 76 participants expressed interest in Phase II and 17 completed the survey for a response rate of 22%. The low response rate may have been due to the time commitment required for

completion, or due to shifting priorities along with the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Responses were reviewed to determine suitability for inclusion in Phase II. Criteria for inclusion was based on having provided a “thorough and rich description of the phenomenon and who collectively represent the range of multiple, partial, and varied contexts that you have identified” (Vagle, 2018, p. 147). Additionally, a strong link was needed between the participant’s lived-experience description (LED) and their identity self-description. Based on these criteria, 5 participants were selected for Phase II.

### **Ethical Considerations**

IRB approval was obtained before the study began and recruiting emails made it clear that participation was voluntary. The aim of the study was explained and informed consent (Appendix C) was sought from all participants.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

### Phase I: Beliefs of Planning Across the Profession

The research asks what beliefs of planning are held by planners. Quantitative survey data collected were meant to identify trends in the beliefs of planning. Through the lens of emergence theory, planning's identity is viewed as an emergent property of the beliefs of individual planners. None of the participants identified with only one planning theory—indicating a need to work across theories to understand planner and planning identity. This section presents survey results in the form of radar charts to help visualize identity across a spectrum of theory.

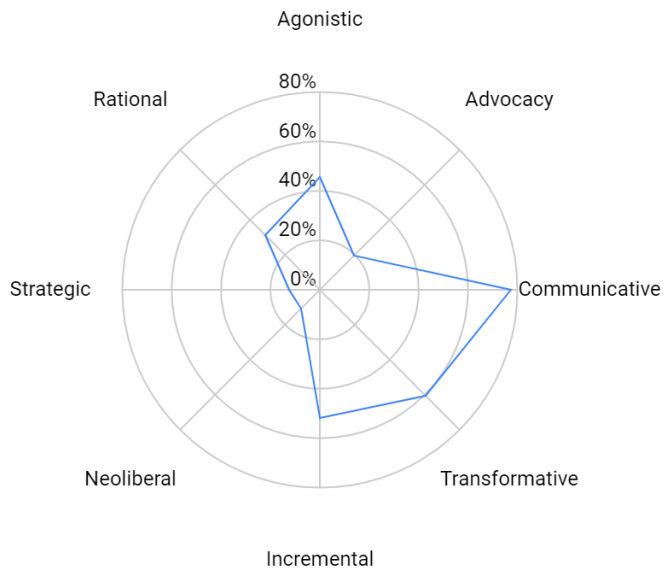
#### *Planner Role*

Responses regarding the planner's role mapped directly onto the professional identity framework and can be found in Appendix E1. Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1 show the demi-regularities of survey responses related to the role of the planner. Most participants selected multiple responses to describe the planner's role and a strong majority (77%) identified with the role advanced by communicative planning theory. Over half of the participants saw the planner's role as at least partially being described as a change agent and, to a lesser extent, a bureaucrat. The sense of being a bureaucrat may stem from the high percentage of participants being employed in the public sector.

**Table 4.1**

*Demi-regularities: Planner Role*

Survey Response	Theory	(n = 164)
<b>Planner Role</b>		
<i>Providing information, engaging in deliberation (i.e. facilitating, mediating, moderating debates, synthesizing, etc.).</i>	Communicative	77%
<i>Change agent: the planner should work with people, especially the weakest groups, to empower them.</i>	Transformative	61%
<i>Coordinator: bureaucrat working towards viable solutions, getting things done.</i>	Incremental	52%



**Figure 4.1** *The Planner's Role as it Relates to Planning Theory*

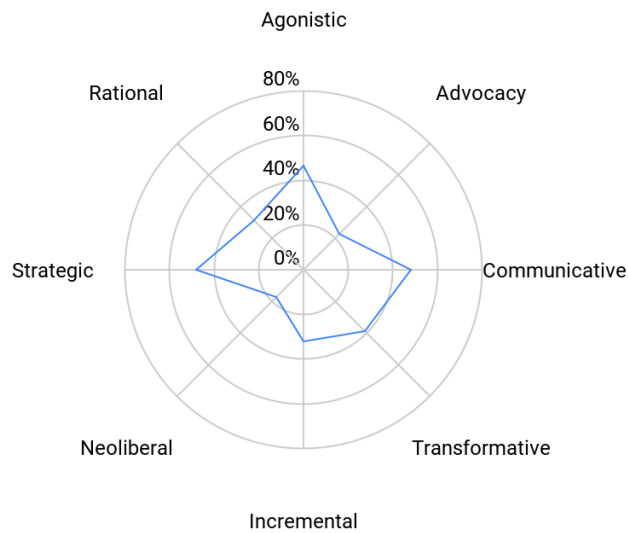
### ***Planner Approach***

The planner's approach was composed of their responses to questions regarding the methods and process of planning (Appendix F2). Results, shown in Table 4.2 and visualized in Figure 4.2, were more evenly distributed across the various planning theories than the planner's role and some participants responded with 'Other' to indicate that any or all of the responses could be used depending on the situation.



**Table 4.2***Demi-regularities: Planner Approach*

Survey Response	Theory	(n = 164)
<b>Methods and Techniques</b>		
<i>Participation, dialogue, consensus building, storytelling</i>	Communicative	52%
<i>Tools for effective decision-making, tools for future thinking: SWOT-analysis, scenario-building</i>	Strategic	50%
<i>Participation, dialogue, storytelling, but not necessarily consensus.</i>	Agonistic	47%
<i>Traditional methods for plan-making, surveys, spatial analyses (theories in planning).</i>	Rational	44%
<b>Planning Process</b>		
<i>The planning process has the potential to embrace different views and perspectives in a non-consensual way.</i>	Agonistic	46%
<i>Planning is about effective decision-making and implementation of political goals.</i>	Strategic	46%
<i>Planning is about learning about others' everyday lives.</i>	Communicative	44%
<i>Open, communicative and democratic.</i>	Transformative	43%



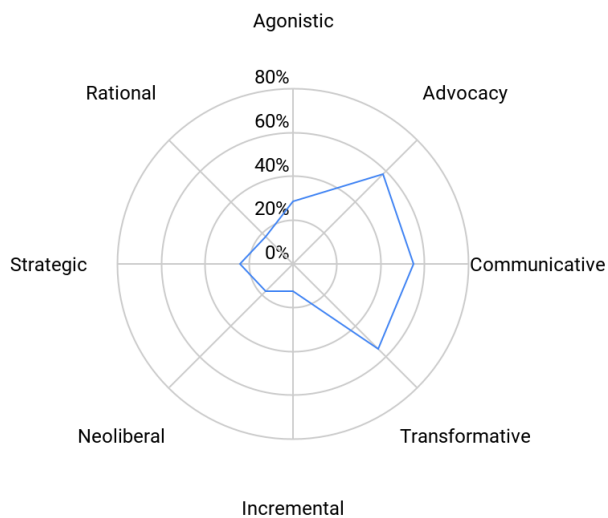
**Figure 4.2** *The Planner's Approach as it Relates to Planning Theory*

### ***Planner Philosophy***

The planner's philosophy was composed of their responses to questions regarding the philosophy, goals, values, and ideals of planning (Appendix G3). Responses, shown in Table 4.3 and visualized in Figure 4.3, aligned with Advocacy, Communicative, and Transformative theories were in the top three most selected for each belief, with the exception of planner ideals.

**Table 4.3*****Demi-regularities: Planner Philosophy***

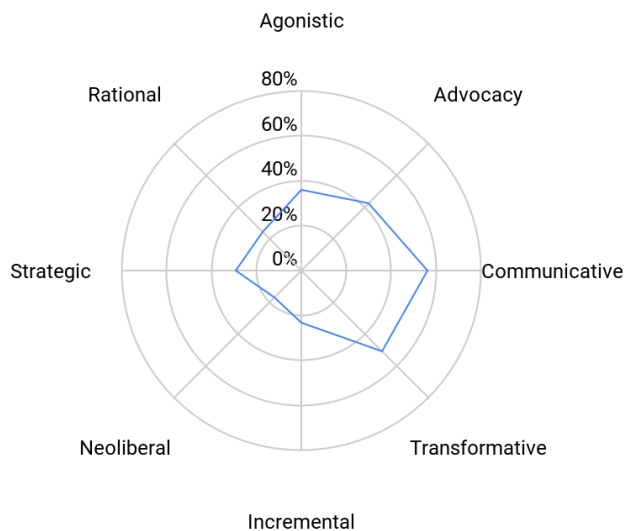
<b>Survey Response</b>	<b>Theory</b>	<b>(n = 164)</b>
<b>Philosophical Outlook</b>		
<i>Planners should try to understand the lives and values of others and work from this understanding.</i>	Advocacy	71%
<i>Planning is managing co-existence (shaping places in fragmented societies).</i>	Communicative	60%
<i>Learning from people's stories, no single 'right' solution.</i>	Transformative	50%
<b>Goals</b>		
<i>Communication, building trust and relationships for further collaboration.</i>	Communicative	70%
<i>Helping people live together in a multicultural society, alleviating fear of the 'other', and transforming society.</i>	Transformative	63%
<i>Planning should improve urban democracy and the lives of disadvantaged groups.</i>	Advocacy	59%
<b>Values</b>		
<i>Democracy and openness; plurality, diversity, and difference.</i>	Transformative	68%
<i>Planning should work with disadvantaged communities and change society, working from personal values</i>	Advocacy	52%
<b>Ideals</b>		
<i>Planning is a social (communicative) process.</i>	Communicative	65%
<i>Planning is an expression of values.</i>	Advocacy	51%
<i>Planning is partly implementation of politics and partly policy-formulation.</i>	Strategic	51%
<i>Planning sees conflict as inevitable and seeks to show how people may accept and channel it positively.</i>	Agonistic	41%
<i>Planning is normative, empowering and therapeutic; pluralistic (culturally sensitive).</i>	Transformative	38%



**Figure 4.3** *The Planner's Philosophy as it Relates to Planning Theory*

### ***Demi-regularities of Planning's Identity***

Thinking of the planner's identity as nested beliefs (i.e., role, approach, philosophy), we can also look at the overall identity of the profession (Figure 4.4). This reveals a trend—or demi-regularity—in planner beliefs of the profession and highlights alignment with the following planning theories: Advocacy, Communicative, and Transformative.



**Figure 4.4** *Planning Identity*

## Phase II: Becoming a Planner

Beyond uncovering the planner's beliefs of planning, this research sought to understand the experience of planners forming those beliefs. Specifically, the primary research question asked: what is the experience of becoming a planner? The "becoming" of a planner was operationalized by professional socialization and identity formation. Lived experience descriptions (LED) were provided by students and practitioners who identified as being a planner to gain insights into experiences they felt shaped who they were as a planner (their beliefs). The impact of these experiences on professional identity were "observed" at the empirical level by asking participants to describe how they saw themselves as a planner in light of the experience described in their LED.

The extensive data collected in Phase I revealed a salient demi-regularity—that many planners see their role as advocates, change agents, bureaucrats, or often a combination of these. This hinted that important moments—or events—in the planner's "becoming" would be when their agency collides with social structures in a professional context and led to the subquestion: *What impact do social structures have on the planner?* In critical realist (CR) terms, the planner agency is guided by their professional identity whereas the experiences that shaped them can be seen as structures. Structures can also be seen as constraining the desired actions of the planner—their agency. In these moments, there is the potential for changes to the planner's identity—and therefore their future agency—or for the planner's agency to change the structure.

Consistent with post-structural phenomenology, each participant's LED was read to get a sense of the meaning of the overall experience. During this process, it quickly became apparent that many LED contained multiple "events" that had been linked together as one experience. During the second reading, individual events were coded, resulting in a total of 68 events. Individual events were then read while thinking with a critical realist version of emergence theory—specifically the theory advanced by Elder-Vass (2010, 2012) referenced in Chapter 2.

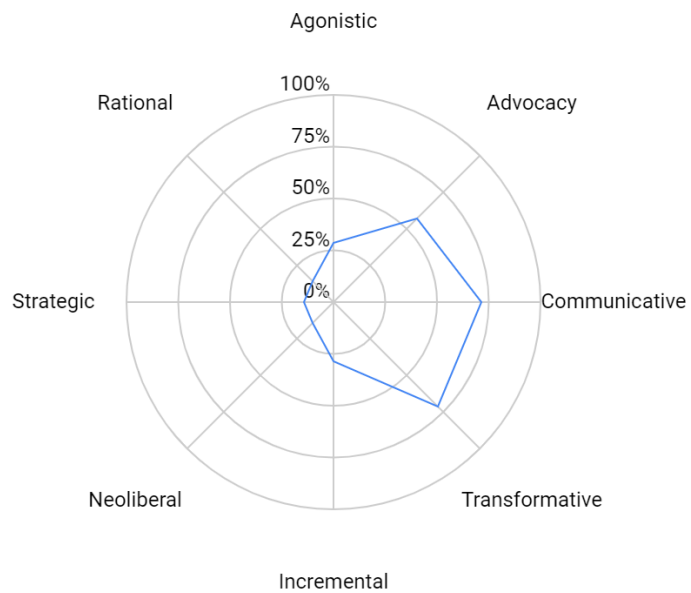
### ***Introducing the Planners***

This section introduces five planners whose experiences will be used to describe the interaction between structure and agency in the becoming of a planner. Individual employment information (e.g., years of experience, which sectors, etc.) and professional identity results from Phase I are shown together to provide their professional context before presenting data which illustrate structures encountered which shaped how they see themselves as a planner.

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#### **Anita**

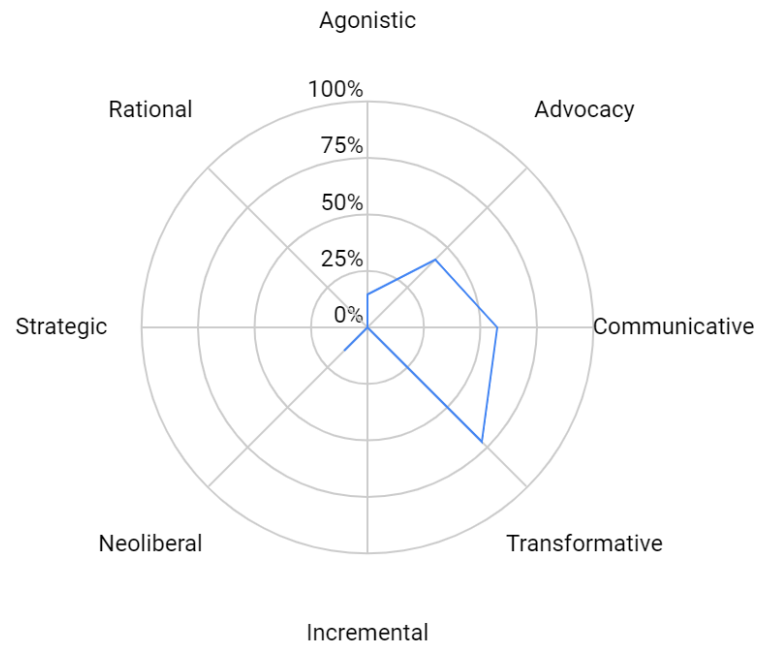
Planning student enrolled in an accredited planning program with no professional experience.



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**Kennith**

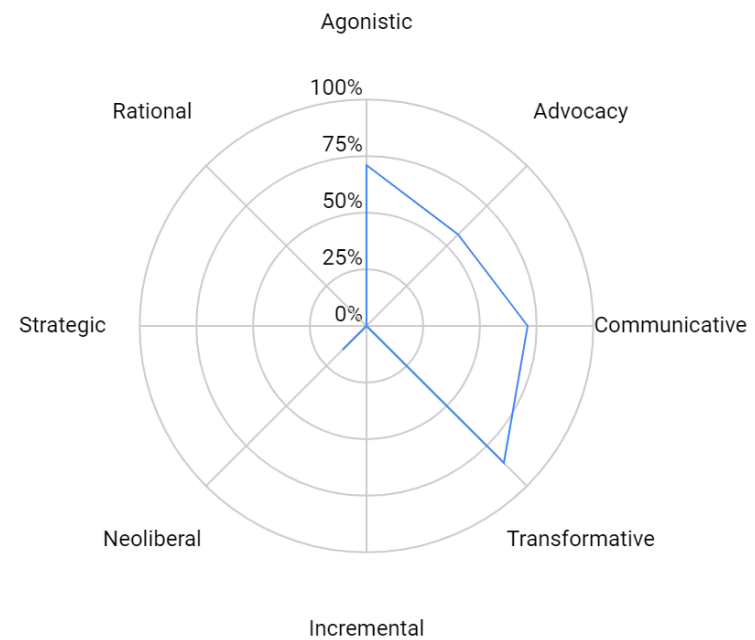
2 years of experience working in the public sector. Not AICP certified but attended an accredited planning program between 2015-2019.



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**Joey**

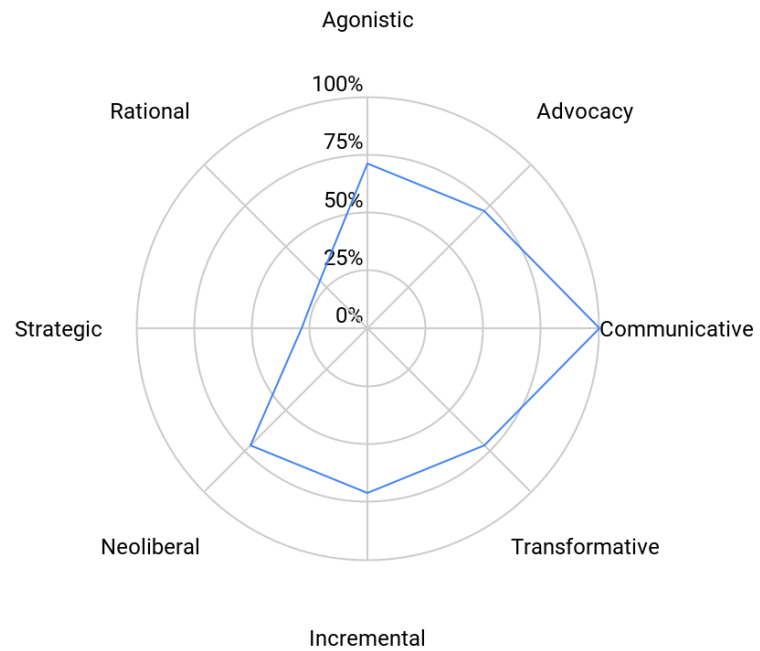
3 years of experience as a planner working with government, civil society, and universities. Not AICP certified and did not attend an accredited planning program.



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**Donald**

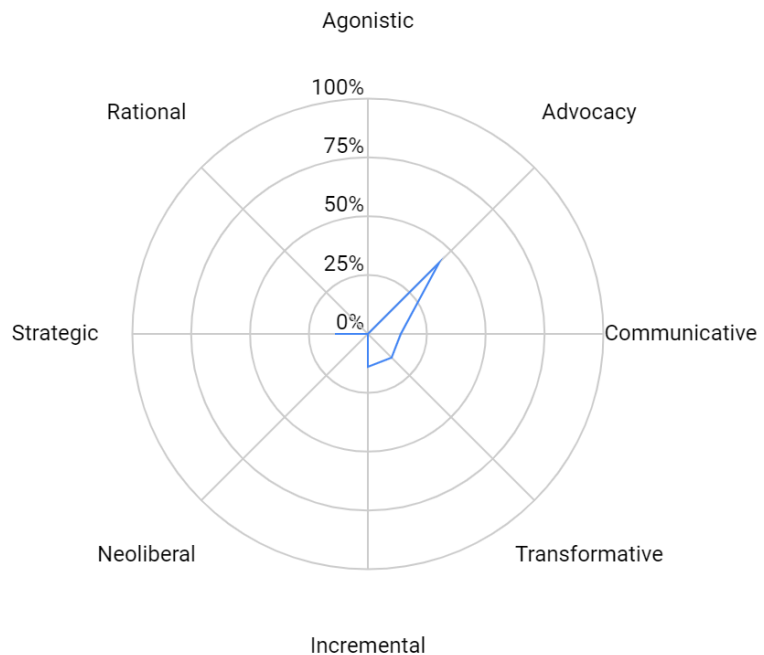
8 years of planning experience working in public, private, and civil society. Not AICP certified but attended an accredited planning program between 2010-2013.



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**Lucy**

8 years of experience working in both the public and private sector. AICP certified, attended an accredited planning program between 2012-2014.



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**Figure 4.5** Phase II Participants

***The Production of “Becoming” A Planner***

This section juxtaposes the planner’s experiences and resulting views of themselves as a professional. Each experiential case represents a moment where structure and agency come



together, and were organized by the number of years working as a professional planner. Taken together, they represent the production of becoming a planner. Through these experiences, we see that structures can lead individuals to the profession, channel, constrain, or reaffirm agency, as well as shape identity. Experiences are presented in the words of the participant to preserve their voice. Modifications were made only to anonymize data, correct grammatical errors, and omit what were perceived as extraneous details. In this way, the text has been constructed.

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#### **ANITA: ORIGIN STORY (INITIAL IDENTITY)**

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##### **Experience:**

*I did not know I wanted to pursue planning until the very last semester of my undergraduate degree, after taking an urban planning class. My instructor really showed me what is possible with planning and how it can be practically applied to the world. To say he is responsible for my current trajectory would be an understatement. I got into planning because I want to help people. I believe that planning, more so than anything, has the potential to improve the quality of life for millions and millions of people in our urban spaces. I believe in the power of government to spark change, and more specifically, to lead in the empowering of its citizenry to make change on their own.*

---

##### **Self-Reported Identity:**

*I hope to be a planner that empowers the communities I work with to influence the type of change they want to see. I believe, and want to emphasize, citizen participation above all else (and to achieve this, tearing down the walls and hurdles that limit participation in the first place). I don't want to be a paternal expert, but an empowering guide, applying my knowledge and lived experience to the practice.*

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### KENNITH: IDENTITY SHAPED (THROUGH ORGANIZATIONAL ROLE)

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**Experience:**

*I was very ignorant my Junior year, and my white privilege was showing and I was completely blind from it. After many discomfoting encounters, talks, lectures, I finally embraced that discomfort, to understand how even though I didn't see myself as a racist or a xenophobe, I was doing things and actions that were not correct and being called out was the best thing for me. I understood that as a white male in the profession, which make up most of the planners in the U.S, I had to make a stand and understand that change won't happen in this field unless I take action, as a white male, against prejudices, injustices, and rethinking what planning is today in the 21st century. A big stepping point for me as a person, a human being.*

---

**Self-Reported Identity:**

*I could go forever regarding this statement so I will leave it here. I see myself as a planner who wants to create change with the profession that actively takes strides to become more open, committed to social justice and understands that some of the practices we are using today are outdated and need to be thrown away. As a planner, I want to establish relationships, embody collaboration and work towards solutions that actually transform communities.*

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### JOEY: AGENCY CHanneled (THROUGH PUBLIC VOICE)

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**Experience:**

*During our public involvement process we held focus groups to dive deeper into the transportation priorities and concerns of residents. We asked participants to identify their top priorities, among other questions. At one of the focus groups, in response to the question about what they chose as their top priority, and why, a participant responded that safety should be our top priority, because they personally know three people who have been impacted by car crashes, two people who died, and the other severely injured. Hearing this story, and seeing this person become emotional made me really think about how the safety of our transportation system can really impact lives. It made me sad to think that this person lost people they care about because our transportation system is not safe.*

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**Self-Reported Identity:**

*As a planner, I see myself as someone who must be the voice to prioritize safety, rather than efficiency in our transportation system, and someone who must prioritize safety in the work that I do.*

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**DONALD: AGENCY REAFFIRMED (THROUGH CHANGING STRUCTURE)**

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**Experience:**

*The town planner, my boss, was much older than me and seemed to be stuck in what I considered to be antiquated approaches to planning. Ultimately, my frustration with his approach to planning led me to pursuing new job opportunities. With that said, it has been interesting to reflect on my time at the town and the influence that I had. During my time there, I helped to shift thinking about "economic development" from a focus on big-box retail, business recruitment, etc. to a focus on quality of life enhancements that would in turn attract people and business.*

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**Self-Reported Identity:**

*An advocate for planning "best practices." This entails advocating for infill, economic development that focuses on support for locally-owned and operated businesses, focus on investment in quality of life amenities, a range of housing options, a focus on creating vibrant downtowns, etc. In advocating "best practices," I also have found value in providing data that helps to educate folks about the benefits of these practices. Principles and philosophies are easy to debate, hard facts are not quite as easy to argue with.*

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**LUCY: AGENCY CONSTRAINED (BY ORGANIZATIONAL AUTHORITY)**

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**Experience:**

*I was working for the County and feeling like a cog in the wheel. I felt like everything I tried to do, whether advocating for an applicant, trying to get support for a regulatory update or planning update, or even presenting to the Board of County Commissioners, was met with nothing but contempt and resistance. It is worth noting that the Board was primarily politically conservative. It felt demoralizing, but worst yet-- humiliating. I was denied a promotion and told I was "too emotional" and had "too many ups and downs" to be the Senior Planner. My coworker who had less experience than I did but was more of a paper pusher and clock puncher than I was willing to be was given the promotion instead. It was a huge blow to my self esteem and my understanding of what makes a good planner. I left the job 6 months later to pursue private consulting. Originally, I had hoped to get back into hazard mitigation and long range planning, but have found it much easier to find clients who simply need help navigating the bureaucracy that I hated while working in the public sector. It's not glamorous work, or even what I wanted to do when I got my degree, but I have been able to help some people who genuinely needed it. I'm at a crossroads in my career and am trying to decide whether to keep going with planning, or hang it up and go back to school for something else that will at least allow me to travel more often.*

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**Self-Reported Identity:**

*I'm just here to either buffer citizens from the rage of politicians in the public sector, or assist citizens in facing those politicians in the private sector. I don't think my job as a planner is anything I hoped it would be when I was a student.*

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## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to describe the beliefs of planners at different stages of their career while illuminating the experiences that have shaped them into who they are as a professional. This study contributes to scholarship seeking to uncover the beliefs guiding planning practice as well as structures which shape these professional beliefs. The quantitative findings begin to explicitly link planner identity and theory while qualitative data provide phenomenological examples of events that shaped these beliefs. The explicit focus on events that shape planner beliefs provides a level of precision which illuminates planner entanglements with social structures.

This section begins with a discussion of the beliefs which make up planner identity and socialization before diving into the structures which shape this identity. Following these sections, I will highlight limitations to this study, recommendations for future research and finally implications of the findings and conclusions drawn. Notes from my post-reflexion journal are included in boxes in line with relevant passages.

### Beliefs of Planning

The tapestry of planning identity has most strongly incorporated threads which have stayed rather consistent throughout official statements by professional planning bodies (e.g., APA, AICP, and PAB) and the updating of accreditation standards. Data indicate that planners overwhelmingly see themselves as operating to produce positive societal change: as Anita puts it, *“I got into planning because I want to help people. I believe that planning, more so than anything, has the potential to improve the quality of life for millions and millions of people in our urban spaces.”* This suggests the presence of several of Gunder’s master signifiers in planning: (1) *public good/interest*; (2) *social justice/well-being*; (3) *societal guidance/linking knowledge to action*; and (4) *future orientation* (2004, p. 303). What seems to have changed since this discourse was introduced with the rational comprehensive model—is how this public interest is measured and interpreted. Alternative planning theories which arose around the time of the “paradigm breakdown” have advanced ideologies that suggest increased dialog and open participation in decision making are needed to achieve this positive change. The strong

presence of advocacy, communicative, and transformative planning theories in the collective identity of the profession suggest these are common beliefs among planners and confirm another of Gunder's master signifiers: *communicative/participation/community engagement* and is illustrated by Anita's desire to "*emphasize citizen participation above all else.*" A relatively strong presence of beliefs aligned with agonism may also confirm Gunder's suspicion of an emerging agonistic discourse as a master signifier (2004, p. 303).

*I wonder how many participants are familiar with agonism and, if they are, how they were exposed to it. This isn't something we covered in my planning theory courses and seems increasingly relevant for practice in diverse settings.*

*Post-reflexion | July 12, 2020*

While the core of the planner's philosophy seems to have been clearly guided by theories introduced after the paradigm breakdown, the planner's approach is less focused—equally as strategic and agonistic as it is communicative. This may indicate that planners have not been taught how to approach planning in ways that are consistent with their underlying philosophies (see my post-reflexion note), or that these approaches are, in fact, necessary for their realization—planning practice is a pragmatic “craft” developed over time (Hoch, 1994b). In reality, it is probably both. I say this because the role of the planner is perceived to be change agent, bureaucrat, or sometimes both. The planner's embeddedness in a large political system would almost necessitate a strategic and/or rational approach at times in order to accomplish organizational or larger systemic change.

*I can attest to the skills and methods used for data collection and analysis in planning still commonly being rooted in positivist, top-down approaches. A great example of this is geographic information systems (GIS) being taught to future planners as an expensive, proprietary tool afforded by planning firms and agencies—outside the reach of the communities being analyzed. This illustrates the colonial heritage of geography and cartography and neglects the bottom-up approaches of spatial data collection using open source software which can be used to empower and inform communities while improving their spatial literacy. By not teaching the planner to recognize GIS as both a tool for centralized data collection and analysis, as well as for community empowerment, we may limit their approach to plan making.*

*Post-reflexion | August 23, 2020*

The same may be true in terms of planners believing in agonistic approaches which do not necessarily favor the consensus emphasized by communicative planning. The planner may be experiencing challenges associated with the deepening of social differences (Watson, 2006) that make consensus an unfair or unrealistic goal. What remains unclear is whether planners have been given the proper tools and methods for consensus building in an equitable way, or if practitioners are beginning to view consensus as inherently inequitable in certain situations.

### **Becoming a Planner**

“Becoming” is to transition from one state or way of being to another. In line with the literature on socialization, the “becoming” of a professional is viewed as an ongoing process—one will come to identify as a professional but then continue to redefine or reaffirm their identity through experiences in their professional role. In this section I discuss two provocations that provoke the big-picture production of becoming a planner and arose out of exploring the phenomenological material, theory, and my post-reflexions: *micro-interactions* and *macro-interactions*. The process of abduction was used to redescribe phenomenological material using theoretical concepts. Specifically, Elder-Vass’ (2010) theory of emergence was used as a reference point to identify components of the planner’s ontology and describe causal powers.

#### ***Provocation 1: Micro-interactions***

The first provocation that revealed itself to me during this study refers to the small-scale human-to-human relations which impact the planner’s beliefs. These “micro-interactions” begin to manifest when reading across lived-experience descriptions (LED) and identity self-descriptions—they provoke the phenomenon of becoming by shifting something within the planner and represent salient indicators of emerging beliefs. My post-reflexion note along with the following experiences of Anita, Joey, and Kenneth explore the multiple and varied manifestations of this provocation.

*I was just sitting at my computer reading LEDs and my mind started to drift. I began having flashes of memories of my time working with Ecocity Builders. I feel like so many of my professional beliefs were shaped by the people I met while working with communities in North Africa and South America. The stories they shared and the things I witnessed imprinted on me in a profound way and shaped my empowerment approach to professional practice.*

In terms of the production of becoming a planner, Anita illustrates coming to the profession. Depending on the planner, this could be a transition from pre-socialization to formal socialization or professional practice (see Miller's (2010) framework introduced in Chapter 2). In Anita's case, this is a transition into formal socialization. The lived experience description (LED) indicates that the instructor of Anita's first planning course was able to make connections between real world applications of planning and Anita's desire to help people. The setting described in the LED situates Anita within the organizational social group, in the role of a student. The causal power of this social interaction is one of authority, influencing the perceived credibility of the instructor (Elder-Vass, 2010). While the beliefs illustrated by this experience align with a few of Gunder's (2004) master signifiers in planning, it deviates from his study in that the student already had the desire to help people before this experience. The belief was not adopted from the role model-educator—the instructor merely facilitated or reaffirmed the student's belief that their desire can be fulfilled through the planning profession. As a result of this micro-interaction, Anita believes *"planning has the potential to improve the quality of life for millions and millions of people in our urban spaces"*—echoing the findings of Taşan-Kok et al. (2017, p. 21).

I explored Joey's LED and identity self-description in my post-reflexion journal to better understand the social interaction being described. I ultimately referred to the setting as an ad-hoc social group (described in Table 3.2). What is particularly interesting for those who—like Joey—have beliefs aligned with communicative, transformative, and advocacy theories, is that the LED and identity self-description suggest that planner beliefs can be shaped by the voice of the community. This reveals the ad-hoc social group's causal power: *transformation*. It's the story and emotions of the focus group participant that make Joey, an agent of the state, come to identify as *"someone who must be the voice to prioritize safety, rather than efficiency in our transportation system, and someone who must prioritize safety in the work that I do."* In these cases where community voice is internalized, we can say agency is channeled toward the values



of the community or community member—the actions and decisions of the planner have changed.

*The social interaction described in Joey’s LED doesn’t fit well into the social groups described by emergence theory. Planning would need something to describe social groups like public meetings, planning charrettes, or collaborative processes. These groups still have formalized roles and can persist beyond the duration of a single interaction situation, however there isn’t always an intention of an ongoing commitment to the group—it could dissolve after achieving a particular goal. Going further, these groups sometimes have individuals acting as a representative of an association or organization but act in a different capacity during the social group’s interactions. The causal power would be “transformation” due to the reconfiguration of roles and power.*

*Post-reflexion | March 3, 2021*

Looking at the experience of Kennith, we see the potential for planning education to shape student identity—converging with the works of Gunder (2004) and Dalton (2001). Similar to Anita, Kennith is situated within an organization interacting with others in the organization as a student. Kennith’s experience of authority sparks reflection on his “white privilege” and demonstrates that the ability of planning education to shape identity is not just in terms of how students relate to the planning profession, but how they relate to the world around them: “After many discomfoting encounters, talks, lectures, I finally embraced that discomfort.” As a result Kennith believes in the need for change within the profession and has a desire to “work toward solutions to transform communities”—both of which are reflected in their professional identity chart’s alignment with advocacy, communicative, and transformative planning theories.

*Kennith’s experience makes me think of how much I have learned from my Native Hawaiian instructors and peers. I can honestly say I’ve felt an epistemological shift during my time in Hawai’i and at UH Mānoa that has helped me step outside my western rational mindset, even if just a little. This has resulted in my own leaning toward advocacy, communicative, and transformative planning theories.*

*Post-reflexion | April 1, 2021*

Emergence theory views entities as being composed of parts arranged in a particular way which result in a unique causal power. With micro-interactions we see planners as being composed of their beliefs—or identity—and interacting with others composed of their own. The nature of their interaction is described by the type of social group, or entity, within which it takes place (Elder-Vass, 2010). As illustrated by Anita, Joey, and Kenneth, these micro-interactions provoke the phenomenon of becoming a planner and help it take shape by reforming the planner's beliefs and dispositions. In terms of emergence theory, changes within the planner also result in changes within the entities in which they are a part. This is explored in the next section.

### ***Provocation 2: Macro-interactions***

With the previous provocation, we explored how interactions between individuals can provoke the phenomenon of becoming by changing the planner's beliefs. These beliefs—or parts—make up the planner as a social entity. Through the lens of emergence theory, we can say that any changes to the parts of the entity—in this case the planner—causes a new planner to emerge. While thinking about these changes, and carrying them through the planner's social ontology (see post-reflexion note), the second provocation in this study was uncovered. “Macro-interactions” require us to zoom out a bit and refer to actions and events which produce new effects within higher-level entities in the ontology. In these situations, the planner is viewed as a part of these entities.

*In the context of emergence theory, Joey's beliefs are shaped by public voice. Since Joey is a part of a higher-level entity, that voice essentially shapes the planning institution through Joey.*

*Post-reflexion | March 3, 2021*

Two concepts from emergence theory become important in understanding the macro-interaction provocation: *normative mechanisms* and *coordinated interaction mechanisms*. Emergence theory describes normative mechanisms as having the causal tendency of producing specialized roles within an organization so that it functions successfully (Elder-Vass, 2010).

Through the observance of these roles by members of the organization, coordinated interaction mechanisms emerge. Elder-Vass (2010) uses the example of a barbershop quartet to illustrate this mechanism: “the quartet’s causal power to produce harmonious music, for example, depends on the members’ singing notes that have certain tonal and temporal relations to each other” (p. 155). We see that it is the performance of specialized roles in a coordinated manner that generates the causal power of the organization. In terms of identity, the organization carries its own identity as it relates to the causal power it aspires toward. The LED of Donald and Lucy emphasize their role in the context of higher-level entities in the planner’s social ontology and are used to explore this provocation further.

When referring to the Board of County Commissioners, Lucy’s LED indicates “*the Board was primarily politically conservative*” and through Lucy’s identity chart, we can see a strong alignment with advocacy planning. “*I was denied a promotion and told I was ‘too emotional’ and had ‘too many ups and downs’ to be the Senior Planner. My coworker who had less experience than I did but was more of a paper pusher and clock puncher than I was willing to be was given the promotion instead.*” Thinking in the context of coordinated action, we can retroduce that the tension with the Board stems from acting outside what is imagined of Lucy’s role and the identity of the organization. This lack of coordinated interaction leaves Lucy’s agency constrained by administrative authority within the social structure’s organizational hierarchy.

Donald indicates an experience similar to Lucy by describing his boss as being “*stuck in what I considered to be antiquated approaches to planning.*” While we know Donald eventually left that position due to these differences, it wasn’t without creating a shift within the higher-level entity: “*I helped to shift thinking about “economic development” from a focus on big-box retail, business recruitment, etc. to a focus on quality of life enhancements that would in turn attract people and business.*” Looking at the identity self-description, we also see that Donald has “*found value in providing data that helps to educate folks about the benefits of these practices. Principles and philosophies are easy to debate, hard facts are not quite as easy to argue with.*” This offers a potential explanation for the difference in outcomes between Donald

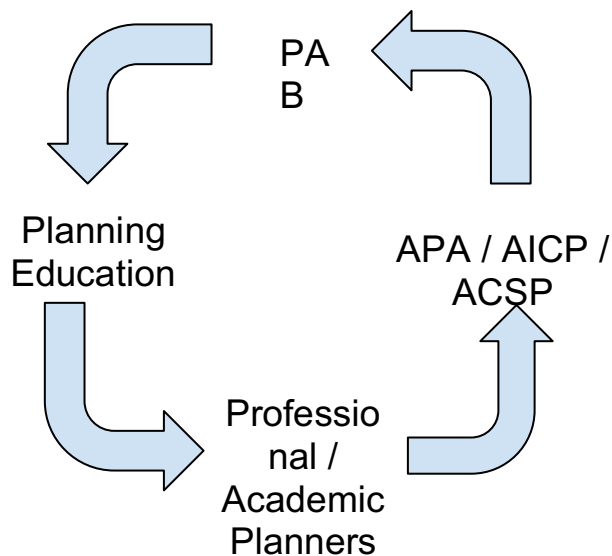
and Lucy—Donald’s role was leveraged to shift the identity of the organization, reinforcing his own beliefs of planning in the process.

*I can feel Lucy’s frustrations. To be a professional and know my decisions are being resisted or overruled by a higher authority would certainly make me feel powerless and maybe even useless. Growing up my Dad always told me things like “where there’s a will, there’s a way” and “can’t never could.” I think in Lucy’s situation I would have to ask what other approach I may be able to take to improve my chances of achieving desired outcomes.*

*Post-reflexion | March 3, 2021*

So far I have shown that the interactions between individuals can create change within the individual by shaping their beliefs. I have also shown that these individuals can create change within higher-level entities—such as organizations and associations—by shifting the entity’s identity. However, a profession isn’t composed of only one organization or association, but many. While a comprehensive description of the planner’s social ontology is well outside the scope of this Thesis, there are other key social entities in the planner’s ontology that are important in understanding how macro-interactions provoke the production of becoming a planner. Those are the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP), the American Planning Association (APA), the American Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP), and the Planning Accreditation Board (PAB). Broadly speaking, these unique entities are joined with a multitude of programs for planning education, planning journals, and planning organizations.

As an entity, the PAB is composed of the AICP, APA, and ACSP. Each of the PAB’s parts are composed primarily of those identifying as professional or academic planners. While higher-level entities such as these may contain many norm circles among the membership, they guide planning’s normativity by endorsing professional ethics and standards. The PAB draws from the normativity of its parts—the AICP, APA, and ACSP—and translates them into accreditation standards for degree programs in planning. Planning educators then operationalize these standards to maintain program accreditation while preparing future generations of practitioners—those becoming planners. The cycle begins again as the next generation of planners bring their beliefs to the professional field and begin shaping norm circles within the profession (see Figure 5.1).



**Figure 5.1** *Macro-interactions in Professional Planning*

### Limitations

This study has known limitations which may have impacted the results. The first is that the survey collected only a limited number of demographic variables. Nothing was collected in regard to gender, race, ethnicity, age, or membership to professional or academic organizations and associations. These variables could provide additional insights into the relations between planners and social structures by accounting for factors such as discrimination. Additionally, the quantitative sample size was small for the target population. It's unknown how many people identify as planners but the American Planning Association membership numbers over 20,000 (*Employment and Work Environment Characteristics*, 2018). Also related to the sample is the lack of phenomenological examples from planners with more than 8 years of experience. Finally, a methodological limitation was the absence of follow-up interviews. Interviews would have provided additional phenomenological materials as well as an opportunity to clarify or

expand what was contained within the lived-experience descriptions and identity self-descriptions.

## **CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

This chapter provides an overall summary of this study followed by implications for planning and recommendations for future research. The summary provides a brief overview of the literature presented in Chapter 2 to frame the research problem and purpose before revisiting the methods used to investigate the research questions. Responses to each research question are provided before moving on to implications and recommendations.

### **Summary of the Research Study**

Echoing the words of van Manen (1990), this phenomenological study began with wonder. My personal experiences becoming a planner sparked a deep interest in learning about and understanding the experiences of becoming a professional planner. Leveraging Vagle's (2018) framework for post-intentional phenomenological research, I conducted a convergent, mixed-methods study to explore this phenomenon while illuminating the beliefs and social structures at play in professional planning practice.

In Chapter 2, a partial review of literature focused on contextualizing planning's claim as a contemporary profession while highlighting paradigms which have shaped the images we construct of the planner, who this planner is, and how they engage in professional practice. Drawing from frameworks across professional fields, a fresh perspective was provided on issues being encountered by young planners entering the professional field. Rather than what is commonly cited in planning literature as a gap between theory and practice, these frameworks suggest issues may—at least for some planners—be attributed to the formation of a professional identity during formal education which is inconsistent with the realities of practice. The critical realist theory of emergence advanced by Elder-Vass (2010, 2012) was then introduced as a theory to think with during analysis to explore the relationship between planner beliefs and social structures.

Chapter 3 then detailed the post-intentional phenomenological methods employed in this study. The philosophical assumptions of critical realism justified the use of a convergent, mixed-methods approach and were found to be consistent with the chosen phenomenological tradition. Vagle's (2018) methodological process for approaching post-intentional

phenomenological research provided a flexible means to investigate the phenomenon of becoming a planner—in terms of both data gathering and analysis—while situating the phenomenon within a larger social context. Two phases of data collection provided a means of quantifying individual planner beliefs while linking those beliefs to qualitative lived experiences which shaped professional identity. The aggregation of quantitative data provided demi-regularities—or tendencies of professional beliefs across the planning profession.

Findings were presented in Chapter 4, illustrating the beliefs that make up the planner's identity while connecting them to planning theory. Beliefs of the planner's role were found to be most strongly aligned with communicative, transformative, and incremental planning theories whereas the beliefs making up the planner's philosophy were aligned with advocacy, communicative, and transformative theories. The planner's approach was found to be more evenly distributed across planning theories. Taken together, the planner's role, approach, and philosophy were most strongly aligned with transformative and communicative theories. For Phase II, the use of phenomenological materials of 5 planners revealed the production of the phenomenon. This production provides a snapshot of how the phenomenon of becoming a planner takes shape over time.

Finally, in Chapter 5 I begin by discussing how the findings fit into current research on planning identity and socialization. Beliefs echo many of the master signifiers outlined in Gunder's (2004) study while also hinting at the emerging relevance of agonism in planning. Understanding the beliefs of planners in practice and how these beliefs connect to planning theory responds to the research question: *what beliefs of planning are held by those who identify as planners?* I then unpack two provocations that were uncovered during the exploration of phenomenological materials: *micro-interactions* and *macro-interactions*. These provocations are viewed as provoking the larger-scale production of becoming a planner as it takes shape through time and space and helps to answer the question: *what is the experience of becoming a planner?*



## Implications for Planning

The results of this study have several implications for planning. First, this is the only known effort to identify and quantify planner beliefs across the planning profession while linking those beliefs to planning theory. The results suggest that many of the beliefs associated with rational planning have been eclipsed by those of communicative and transformative planning theories—especially in terms of the philosophies guiding practice. Presently, the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) requires applicants to demonstrate their use of rational processes in their practice (*AICP Certification Guide*, 2021), suggesting that eligibility criteria unnecessarily limits planners who draw from other theories to inform their practice. If the results of this study can be confirmed through future research, these eligibility criteria should be modified to account for additional planning theories.

Second, this study revealed that diverse planning theories have led to equally diverse beliefs held by individual planners in practice. This presents challenges for planning educators charged with providing their students with a clear image of what their future professional role will require and equipping them to effectively carry out the duties associated with this role. In response to this diversity of theories in practice, educators should consider teaching theory as a means of expressive reflection and projection so their students can use formal education as a space to think through the values and rationalities of the planner they hope to be. To make clear the potential implications of this imagined role in practice, the student should be encouraged to think about their imagined role within the specific political and economic systems surrounding the location where they hope to be employed. Considering the social structures of their personalized planner ontology would provide deeper reflection on what may influence their ability to act and understand how to draw from relevant planning theory to help navigate—or change—these social environments. Implementing this exercise could be done through planning coursework, similar to Olesen’s (2018) approach, or by encouraging self-study research which could be used to fulfill capstone and thesis requirements for graduation. Disseminating this research through professional and academic journals could be of further benefit to both students and practitioners.

*My knowledge of planning theory and understanding of myself as a planner has grown so much through the course of conducting my Thesis research. This has sparked so many new imaginings of what may be ahead of me and made me think more strategically about how and where I will plug myself in to create the kinds of change I wish to see in the world.*

*Post-reflexion | October 20, 2021*

Third, in terms of planning curriculum, the lived-experiences and beliefs of planners in this study indicate future planners would benefit from the inclusion of courses emphasizing social emotional learning (SEL). SEL is associated with cultivating several competencies within students: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and making responsible decisions. Each of these would contribute, at the very least, to the emotional preparedness of planners—equipping them to deal with difficult interactions and environments early in their career. Additionally, for planners with beliefs aligned with communicative, advocacy, and transformative planning theories, SEL would equip students with the skills required to build and maintain healthy relationships and make ethical decisions.

Finally, current planning literature reveals little of the planner's socialization into the profession, nor the identity formed along the way. This study contributes to an understanding of planner socialization by providing cross-sectional experiences along a continuum which extends throughout their professional career. Each cross-section provides an example of—or gaze into—the experience of becoming a planner. While the phenomenon is viewed as only a snapshot in time, the anecdotal examples of the planner's becoming may be instructive for planning students and practitioners hoping to learn from the experiences of others.

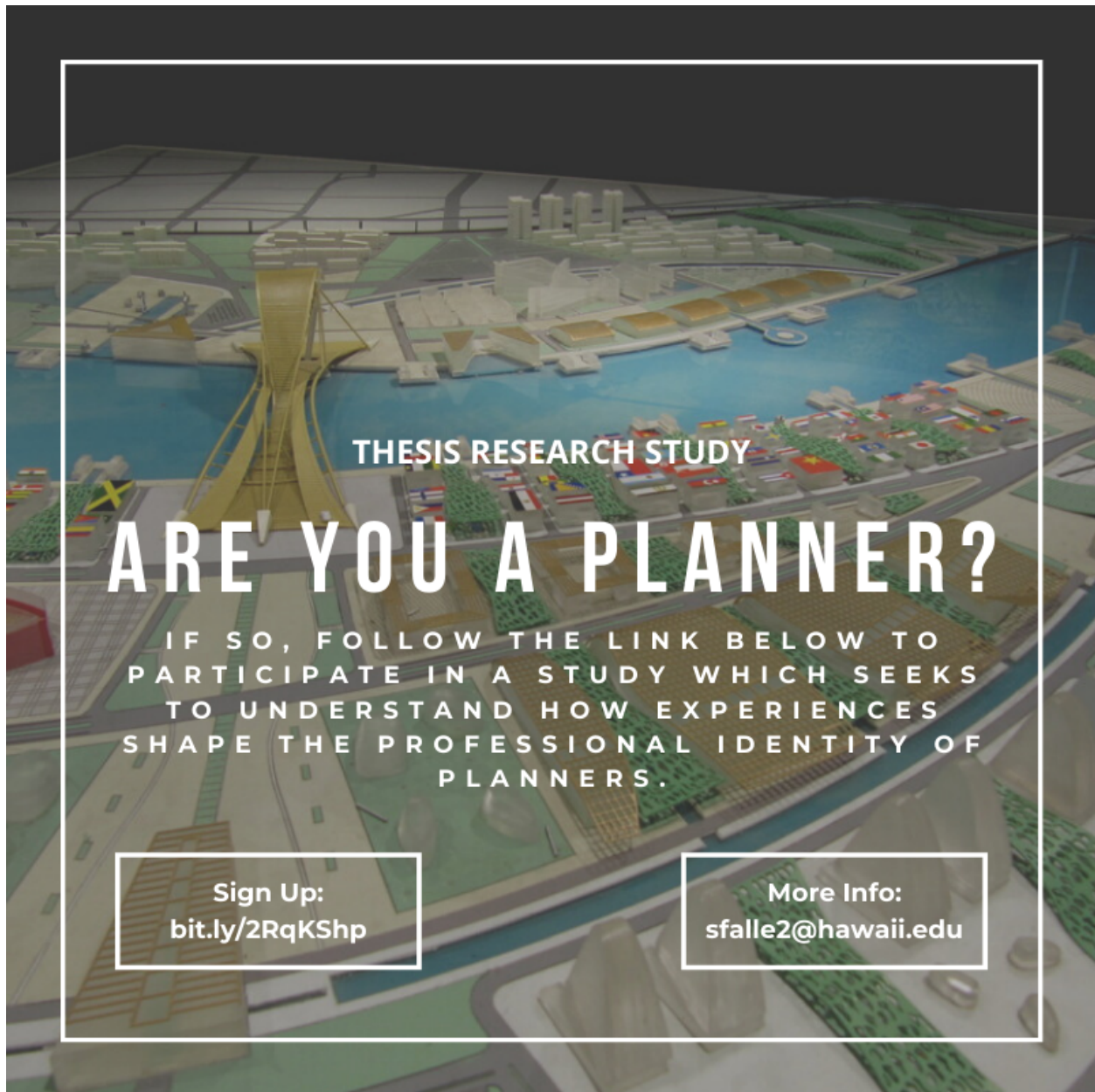
### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Due to the shifting, unstable nature of phenomena, post-intentional phenomenology resists completion. This study provides a snapshot in time of the phenomenon of becoming a planner but this account does not assume the phenomenon is singular or final. Aside from considering means of addressing the limitations described at the end of Chapter 5, or collecting additional phenomenological examples, future research could take countless directions. For my

own interests, I would like to dive deeper into the experience of becoming a planner in a particular region—Hawai‘i, for example. Outside the context of phenomenological research, additional research should consider the transformational potential of ad-hoc social groups in the context of the planning process. The ad-hoc social group was identified during the coding process but much more could be done to validate the need to differentiate this form of group from other social groups described by emergence theory. Quantitative studies should consider creating a more robust survey instrument to measure and visualize planner identity to improve validity. Finally, more work should be done to develop the planner’s social ontology. This would include a more thorough mapping out of planning concepts onto the structural vocabulary offered by Elder-Vass (2010).

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Invitation to Participate



## Appendix B: Quantitative Survey Questions

In this section you will find seven multiple choice questions. For each question, please indicate the responses which best align with your beliefs of planning. You may select multiple responses for each question but you do not have to. Alternatively you can write in your own response by selecting "other".

What is the ideal of planning?

- A. Implementation of politics (separation of policy-making and planning – ends and means)
- B. Plan as you go along (disjointed incrementalism)
- C. Planning is an expression of values.
- D. Planning is a social (communicative) process.
- E. Planning is partly implementation of politics and partly policy-formulation
- F. Planning is a constraint on the freedom of the market, only necessary to deal with externalities
- G. Planning is normative, empowering and therapeutic; pluralistic (culturally sensitive)
- H. Planning as agonism

How would you describe your preferred methods and techniques for planning?

- A. Methods for plan-making, surveys, spatial analyses (theories in planning)
- B. Analysis of the current (political) situation, bargaining, negotiating, the science of muddling through
- C. Working from the values of the group in question to make an alternative plan
- D. Participation, dialogue, consensus building, storytelling
- E. Tools for effective decision-making, tools for future thinking: SWOT-analysis, scenario-building
- F. Combination of centralised state power and rules, and local autonomy, working with the business community and developers
- G. Working with people, communicating in diverse ways, learning from stories, less focus on creating documents
- H. Participation, dialogue, storytelling, but not necessarily consensus.

How would you describe the planning process and its purpose?

- A. Planning is plan production, the planning process ends with the plan, focus on producing (physical) results
- B. A process of push and tug – aimed at reaching agreements
- C. The production of rival plans for different interest groups, democratic process where everyone can question rival plans, the 'best plan wins'
- D. Planning is about learning about others' everyday lives
- E. Planning is about effective decision-making and implementation of political goals
- F. Driven by economic interests, 'efficiency' is key
- G. Open, communicative and democratic
- H. Planning is an agonistic process, which has a potential to embrace different views and perspectives in a non-consensual way

Which do you think best describes the role of the planner?

- A. The planner should take a non-ideological and objective stance as an expert
- B. Coordinator: bureaucrat working towards viable solutions, getting things done
- C. Subjective, working for disadvantaged groups outside local government; a critic of mainstream plans; troublemaker; educator
- D. Providing information, engaging in deliberation (i.e. facilitating, mediating, moderating debates,

synthesing, etc.)

- E. The planner works towards realising political goals and acts as political advisor
- F. The planner as an 'enabler', working with economic interests to meet their needs
- G. Change agent: the planner should work with people, especially the weakest groups, to empower them
- H. The planner should be aware of that some views are being suppressed in a planning process

How would you describe the goals of planning?

- A. Planning is related to the power of experts and their technical, objective abilities, physical goals
- B. Focus on short term goals and only a few alternatives
- C. Planning should improve urban democracy and the lives of disadvantaged groups
- D. Communication, building trust and relationships for further collaboration
- E. Planning is related to the power of politics
- F. To help economic development and to alleviate its externalities
- G. Helping people live together in a multicultural society, alleviating fear of the 'other', and transforming society
- H. Democratic decisions that are partly consensual, and partly, accept unresolvable disagreements (agonistic pluralism)

Which do you think best describes values in planning?

- A. Are decided by politicians
- B. Are decided by politicians (important stakeholders), defined along the way
- C. Planning should work with disadvantaged communities and change society, working from personal values
- D. The ideal speech situation, openness to the better argument, communicative rationality
- E. Are decided by politicians
- F. Belief in the market and its freedom
- G. Democracy and openness; plurality, diversity, difference
- H. Conflict/ strife (agonism) as a productive thing for planning and democracy. Critical of neoliberalism as a hegemonic discourse.

How would you describe your philosophical outlook in relation to planning?

- A. Planners should act much in the same way as research scientists in search for the best methodology.
- B. Planners should assess the truth of meaning of theories or beliefs in terms of the success of their practical application.
- C. Planners should try to understand the lives and values of others and work from this understanding.
- D. Planning is managing co-existence (shaping places in fragmented societies).
- E. Analyses are used to support (legitimise) political goals and visions.
- F. Planning should consist of rules and consistent rational methods, which are understandable to outsiders.
- G. Learning from people's stories, no single 'right' solution.
- H. Scientific philosophy: Social constructivism, post-positivism. Political philosophy: radical left, neo-marxism

## Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

### University of Hawai'i Consent to Participate in a Research Project

Scott F. Allen, Principal Investigator

*Project title: The Socialization of Planners.*

Aloha! My name is Scott Allen and you are invited to take part in a research study. I am a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning. As part of the requirements for earning my graduate degree, I am doing a thesis research project.

#### ***What am I being asked to do?***

If you participate in this project, you will be asked to fill out an online survey which may contain any of the following: likert scale questions; multiple choice questions; and/or short answer. This survey should take between 10-15 minutes to complete. At the end of the survey, you will have the opportunity to indicate if you wish to participate in future phases of this study. This could consist of any or all of the following: 1) submitting a copy of your resume/CV; 2) responding to online writing prompts related to your experiences as a planner; and 3) an informal telephone interview. Between the resume/CV submission, writing prompt, and informal telephone interview, this phase of the study should take an additional 2-2.5 hours to complete.

#### Example likert scale question:

<i>I take pride in being a member of this profession.</i>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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#### Example writing prompt:

*In your own words, describe how you see yourself as a planner.*

#### Example telephone interview question:

*How would you describe the goals of planning?*

#### Example follow-up survey question:

*How would you describe the role of the planner?*

#### ***Taking part in this study is your choice.***

Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. You may stop participating at any time. If you stop being in the study, there will be no penalty or loss to you.

***Why is this study being done?***

The purpose of my project is to explore how the lived experiences of planners informs their professional identity so we can better understand how planners are socialized into the profession. I am asking you to participate because you have indicated that you identify as a planner.

***Confidentiality and Privacy:***

I will keep all study data, including your resume/cv, encrypted on a password protected computer. Only my University of Hawai'i advisor and I will have access to the information. Other agencies that have legal permission have the right to review research records. The University of Hawai'i Human Studies Program has the right to review research records for this study.

***Future Research Studies:***

Identifiers will be removed from your identifiable private information and after removal of identifiers, the data may be used for future research studies or distributed to another investigator for future research studies and we will not seek further approval from you for these future studies.

**Questions:** If you have any questions about this study, email me at [sfalle2@hawaii.edu](mailto:sfalle2@hawaii.edu). You may also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Priyam Das, at 808.956.2780 & [priyam@hawaii.edu](mailto:priyam@hawaii.edu). You may contact the UH Human Studies Program at 808.956.5007 or [uhirb@hawaii.edu](mailto:uhirb@hawaii.edu) to discuss problems, concerns and questions, obtain information, or offer input with an informed individual who is unaffiliated with the specific research protocol. Please visit <http://go.hawaii.edu/jRd> for more information on your rights as a research participant.

**To Access the Survey:** Please go to the following web page: <https://bit.ly/3aXVKeg>. You should find instructions for completing the survey. Going to the first page of the survey implies your consent to participate in this study.

Please print or save a copy of this page for your reference.

Mahalo!



## **Appendix D: Qualitative Survey Questions**

For this writing prompt, look at your résumé and think of it as the table of contents for a book about your career. From professional and educational experiences to the specific skills and knowledges you have acquired, each section could represent a chapter in this book. Look over each section and think of stories that you feel have shaped how you see yourself as a planner or, if you are a student, how you view professional planners. Pick a story that stands out as being vivid and tell that story in the space below. If you prefer, you can type out your story in a word document offline, then paste your responses in the fields below. There are only three questions during this phase.

There is no word or character requirement so you can write as much or little as necessary to tell the story as completely as you can. However, I would suggest writing at least half of a page to a page and at most three or four.

### **FOR YOUR STORY:**

- Include as many details as possible--all of the who, what, when, and where.
- Avoid causal explanations, generalizations, or abstract interpretations--the how and why.
- Describe the feelings, the mood, the emotions, etc.
- Try to focus on a story that stands out for its vividness.
- Avoid trying to beautify your account with fancy phrases or flowery terminology.

Write your story here:

Indicate which section(s) of your resume you associate with this story.

Given the story you chose, describe how you see yourself as a planner. If you are a current student, describe the planner you hope to be.

## Appendix E1: Planner's Roles Survey Results

Survey Response	Theory	(n = 164)
<b>Role of the Planner</b>		
<i>Providing information, engaging in deliberation (i.e. facilitating, mediating, moderating debates, synthesizing, etc.).</i>	Communicative	77%
<i>Change agent: the planner should work with people, especially the weakest groups, to empower them.</i>	Transformative	61%
<i>Coordinator: bureaucrat working towards viable solutions, getting things done.</i>	Incremental	52%
<i>The planner should be aware that some views are being suppressed in a planning process.</i>	Agonistic	46%
<i>The planner should take a non-ideological and objective stance as an expert.</i>	Rational	32%
<i>Subjective, working for disadvantaged groups outside local government; a critic of mainstream plans; troublemaker; educator.</i>	Advocacy	20%
<i>The planner works towards realizing political goals and acts as political advisor.</i>	Strategic	12%
<i>The planner as an 'enabler', working with economic interests to meet their needs.</i>	Neoliberal	11%
<i>I'm not sure.</i>	N/A	5%
<i>Other</i>	N/A	4%

## Appendix F2: Planner's Approach Survey Results

Survey Response	Theory	(n = 164)
<b>Methods and Techniques</b>		
<i>Participation, dialogue, consensus building, storytelling</i>	Communicative	52%
<i>Tools for effective decision-making, tools for future thinking: SWOT-analysis, scenario-building</i>	Strategic	50%
<i>Participation, dialogue, storytelling, but not necessarily consensus.</i>	Agonistic	47%
<i>Traditional methods for plan-making, surveys, spatial analyses (theories in planning).</i>	Rational	44%
<i>Working from the values of the group in question to make an alternative plan.</i>	Advocacy	40%
<i>Analysis of the current (political) situation, bargaining, negotiating, the science of muddling through.</i>	Incremental	38%
<i>Working with people, communicating in diverse ways, learning from stories, less focus on creating documents.</i>	Transformative	34%
<i>Combination of centralized state power and rules, and local autonomy; working with the business community and developers.</i>	Neoliberal	23%
<i>Other</i>	N/A	10%
<i>I'm not sure.</i>	N/A	2%
<b>Planning Process</b>		
<i>The planning process has the potential to embrace different views and perspectives in a non-consensual way.</i>	Agonistic	46%
<i>Planning is about effective decision-making and implementation of political goals.</i>	Strategic	46%
<i>Planning is about learning about others' everyday lives.</i>	Communicative	44%
<i>Open, communicative and democratic.</i>	Transformative	43%
<i>A process of push and tug – aimed at reaching agreements.</i>	Incremental	26%
<i>Planning is plan production, the planning process ends with the plan, focus on producing (physical) results.</i>	Rational	20%
<i>Other</i>	N/A	13%
<i>Driven by economic interests, 'efficiency' is key.</i>	Neoliberal	12%
<i>Production of rival plans for different interest groups, democratic process where everyone can question rival plans, the 'best plan wins'</i>	Advocacy	6%
<i>I'm not sure.</i>	N/A	2%

### Appendix G3: Planner's Philosophy Survey Results

Survey Response	Theory	(n = 164)
<b>Philosophical Outlook</b>		
<i>Planners should try to understand the lives and values of others and work from this understanding.</i>	Advocacy	71%
<i>Planning is managing co-existence (shaping places in fragmented societies).</i>	Communicative	60%
<i>Learning from people's stories, no single 'right' solution.</i>	Transformative	50%
<i>Planners should act much in the same way as research scientists in search for the best methodology.</i>	Rational	30%
<i>Planning should consist of rules and consistent rational methods, which are understandable to outsiders.</i>	Neoliberal	29%
<i>Planners should assess the truth of meaning of theories or beliefs in terms of the success of their practical application.</i>	Incremental	28%
<i>Analyses are used to support (legitimise) political goals and visions.</i>	Strategic	15%
<i>Scientific philosophy aligned with social constructivism and/or post-positivism; political philosophy aligned with the radical left and/or neo-marxism.</i>	Agonistic	9%
<i>Other</i>	N/A	7%
<i>I'm not sure.</i>	N/A	4%
<b>Goals</b>		
<i>Communication, building trust and relationships for further collaboration.</i>	Communicative	70%
<i>Helping people live together in a multicultural society, alleviating fear of the 'other', and transforming society.</i>	Transformative	63%
<i>Planning should improve urban democracy and the lives of disadvantaged groups.</i>	Advocacy	59%
<i>Democratic decisions that are partly consensual, and partly, accept unresolvable disagreements.</i>	Agonistic	45%
<i>To help economic development and to alleviate its externalities.</i>	Neoliberal	31%
<i>Planning is related to the power of politics.</i>	Strategic	27%
<i>Planning is related to the power of experts and their technical, objective abilities, physical goals.</i>	Rational	16%
<i>Other</i>	N/A	9%
<i>Focus on short term goals and only a few alternatives.</i>	Incremental	4%
<i>I'm not sure.</i>	N/A	1%
<b>Values</b>		
<i>Democracy and openness; plurality, diversity, and difference.</i>	Transformative	68%

<i>Planning should work with disadvantaged communities and change society, working from personal values</i>	Advocacy	52%
<i>The ideal speech situation, openness to the better argument, communicative rationality.</i>	Communicative	25%
<i>Conflict/strife as a productive thing for planning and democracy. Critical of neoliberalism as a hegemonic discourse.</i>	Agonistic	20%
<i>Other</i>	N/A	10%
<i>I'm not sure.</i>	N/A	7%
<i>Values are decided by politicians (important stakeholders), and defined along the way.</i>	Incremental	6%
<i>Belief in the market and its freedom.</i>	Neoliberal	5%
<i>Values are decided by politicians.</i>	Rational / Strategic <sup>1</sup>	5%

#### **Ideals**

<i>Planning is a social (communicative) process.</i>	Communicative	65%
<i>Planning is an expression of values.</i>	Advocacy	51%
<i>Planning is partly implementation of politics and partly policy-formulation.</i>	Strategic	51%
<i>Planning sees conflict as inevitable and seeks to show how people may accept and channel it positively.</i>	Agonistic	41%
<i>Planning is normative, empowering and therapeutic; pluralistic (culturally sensitive).</i>	Transformative	38%
<i>Planning as the implementation of politics (separation of policy-making and planning – ends and means).</i>	Rational	20%
<i>Planning is something you do as you go along (disjointed incrementalism).</i>	Incremental	11%
<i>Other</i>	N/A	10%
<i>Planning is a constraint on the freedom of the market, only necessary to deal with externalities.</i>	Neoliberal	5%
<i>I'm not sure.</i>	N/A	4%

<sup>1</sup>. Olesen's matrix has the same description for values associated with both rational and strategic planning.

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