

their future given the existence of democracy and locally-based planning efforts in these communities. Unfortunately, no butler exists at the end of this "who-done-it." Instead we are presented a case study analysis of Halifax, Nova Scotia, in which a cast of characters loosely categorized as citizens, developers, public officials, and planners are all guilty in some manner. I am no Perry Mason, but I believe the pages of this book contain evidence that allows reconstruction of the 'crime.'

Grant divides her book into four sections. The first examines the function of planning in a democracy and establishes a context for analysis. The second portrays planning in Halifax by specifically focusing on two land use dispute case studies. The third examines the governmental, cultural, and ethical variables that manifest themselves in the case studies. The fourth asks how this greater understanding informs our theories of democracy and planning, particularly as the two interrelate.

Grant has written her book as dramaturgical metaphor complete with descriptions of stages, actors, and scripts. The stages are assembled with respect to political structure, culture, ideology, public policy, economy, and communication networks of the geographic area of interest. Actors, who must perform on these stages, enter with roles defined by personal interests and values, but constrained in their image by societal expectations. The actors "improvise [their scripts] within a narrow range of possibilities" and these scripts reveal "the ways in which participants in community planning portray themselves and how they see others" (p. 36). Just as an audience at most plays is treated to visually informative staging, impassioned acting, and characterization presented through monologue and dialogue, Grant uses the same methods to bring us to Halifax for the viewing of two land use disputes.

The Maritimes region of Canada has been economically disadvantaged since the 1890s when new investment began to move westward. During the 1950s and 1960s the Canadian government began regional planning programs based on the growth pole strategy to provide mechanisms for infrastructure investment and transfer payments. Not only did these programs fail to turn the economy around, but they conflicted with the Nova Scotians fierce independence and suspicion of politicians promising salvation. Grant shows how this began to change the conception of planning in Halifax from the domain of the technocratic planner and the apathetic citizen, to the domain of the participating citizen and the distrusted planner.

This new domain is examined through case studies of two development disputes in Halifax: Market Place Plaza and the Mitchell Property. Both case studies are primarily told through the participants own words and documents, with Grant providing background, commentary, and transition. This is a highly effective style that lends dramatic realism to the story and allows the reader to interpret the

### **The Drama of Democracy: Contention and Dispute in Community Planning**

Jill Grant

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"Everyone loves a mystery" is the subtitle of the introduction to Jill Grant's *The Drama of Democracy*. The mystery is why communities feel that they have so little control over

actor's words in their own framework. Listen to these comments about planners from a citizen and a former City Council member:

Citizen: I find that planners are like anybody: once they get there and stay there too long, they become pretty entrenched. They take the path of least resistance: 'This is how we do it, and this is always how we will do it'... (p. 79).

Council member: Well, the planners kept pretty well...to themselves. They didn't speak out to the public, they spoke only to Council or staff at staff meetings. There was a lot of animosity towards them. They weren't accepted as having any realistic view of life (p. 69).

Students should find this style a refreshing change from the standard thirdperson voice of most case studies. Moreover, they will have an unobscured view of the complexity of issues and contention of participants in planning disputes.

The role of the planning document in making land use decisions is an interesting subplot that runs through both case studies. Grant documents the initial enthusiasm over the creation of the Halifax Master Development Plan (MDP) through a consensus of the various actors. It was imagined that the MDP would provide a clear set of policies to guide the Council's land use decisions. The case studies show, however, that this consensus quickly fell apart. "As it came to pass, the plan simply offered a new language and context in which to continue old battles" (p. 88).

With the plot developed through these case studies, Grant provides the denouement through careful analysis of the actors interactions. First, she creates a matrix showing how each of the actors—citizens, planners, and Council members—view themselves and each other in terms of their role in the planning process. These views reflect reasoning style, interest articulated, and claim to legitimacy. "In each case, actors themselves laid claim to the positive trait, while describing other actors in terms that implied negative traits. Their own performance takes on a moral tone in relation to the performances of others. They neither understand nor appreciate each other's motivations and perceptions" (p. 169). Certainly these conclusions suggest why community planning has had limited success in Halifax, and elsewhere.

Second, Grant diagrams each actor's view of the context in which decisions are made. Politicians believe that they have "ultimate responsibility for making decision" which is informed by a balance of input from planners, citizens, and developers. Citizens believe that politicians and planners must implement the will of the public, consistent with democratic norms. They see developers as representing narrow interests which lie outside of the decision context. Planners believe that politicians must "operate within the

policy environment of the plan." The plan is represented by the planner; citizens and developers attempt to influence the politician's interpretations of the plan.

Although Grant effectively shows the various actors involved in the planning process, planners are discussed as if they represented one voice, when in fact they do not. I think this represents a weakness in the analysis, but perhaps it is an artifact of the planners Grant found working in Halifax. Planners have a variety of political and ethical values that affect how they perceive their role. These roles are well known—technician, advocate, radical, advisor, facilitator, etc.—but not integrated into this work.

Early in the book, Grant asks: How does community planning solve the problems of contention and dispute in a democratic society? It does not. Instead, planning provides a socially acceptable forum to engage these disputes. The competing conceptions of democracy—the process objective of participation in self-government vs. the substantive objective of protecting individual rights—serve to ensure this outcome. This outcome, then, sheds light on our mystery. As Grant states: "Democratic government does not give people the power to decide the fate of their communities: neither does planning" (p. 206). Citizens, who often approach planning with the objective of achieving self-government, therefore become frustrated.

Grant's book can be read as an excellent companion to Forester's (1989) *Planning in the Face of Power*, especially Chapter 6. Whereas Grant crafts an intricate story of planning interactions and their implications, Forester structures these types of interactions and works them into our traditional notions of planning. Forester believes planners must recognize that they serve "...two complementary but distinct mandates: (a) to press professionally, and thus negotiate, for particular substantive goals...and (b) to bring about a participatory process that gives voice to affected parties..." Unfortunately, it would appear that the planners in Halifax do not understand or are unable to achieve this complementarity. They continually express frustration over having to suffer the contention of political debate when they are attempting to lend rationality to the process. This lesson will not be lost on seasoned planners and will give student planners valuable insight for their future practice.

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#### ■ REFERENCES

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