



The Democratic Plan: Analysis and Diagnosis

Alan March

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Despite ongoing technical and professional advances, urban and regional planning is often far less effective than we might hope. Conflicting approaches and variable governmental settings have undermined planning's legitimacy and allowed its goals to be eroded and co-opted in the face of mounting challenges. Deeper organising principles for self-understanding, action and productive critique are lacking. This book takes steps toward resolving these problems by providing a clear theoretical position to practically examine urban planning systems within democratic governance settings: the basis of planning's legitimacy and action. Joining practical planning with political science perspectives and the work of critical theorists such as Jürgen Habermas, it directly examines urban planning as a process of governance. The dilemmas inherent to democracy are used as key organising principles and challenges for planning. Collective knowledge development and steering processes are examined as the core purposes of urban planning. Communicative planning's grounding in the work of Habermas is revisited to develop practical ways of examining overall planning systems. This theoretical approach can be adapted to a range of planning systems and settings beyond those examined in the book, such as corporate or political realms. It is one of only a few analyses that bring together theoretical understandings and grounded and practical analyses of an Australian planning system. Conceptual and highly practical explanations of how and why the Victorian system does and doesn't 'work' are revealed. The book demonstrates how specific place-based understandings, and meaningful comparison between planning systems, can be made using critical theory to suggest positive change.

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