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Edited by Heather Campbell, John Forester, Bishwapriya Sanyal, Khairul Anwar, Carlos Brando, Iwan J Azis, Matteo Robiglio, Ezio Micelli, Riccardo Delli Santi & Dave Vanderhoven

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Can We Learn From Our Mistakes?

Edited by Heather Campbell[a], John Forester[b] and Bishwapriya Sanyal[c]

[a]Department of Urban Studies and Planning, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK; [b]Department of City and Regional Planning, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, USA; [c]Department of Urban Studies and Planning, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA, USA

Introduction

Mistakes are inevitable, even necessary, but who dares mention that they've made a mistake? The focus for this *Interface* follows on from a discussion during one of the Journal's regular Editorial Board meetings. In response to the editors' request for themes that the Journal should explore, Bish Sanyal suggested the idea of "learning from mistakes." Hall (1980) explored *Great Planning Disasters* and Schön (in his *Reflective Practitioner*, 1983) urged planners to review, learn and then re-consider again the nature of their endeavors, but in the intervening years what more have we learnt about learning? How far can we avoid policy-making that endlessly re-invents the wheel? This *Interface* aims to start a conversation about how we might learn better… and in so doing how we might converse a little more about our errors, follies, slips, mis-readings, omissions, blunders, gaffes, misconceptions, oversights, *faux pas*… our mistakes.

Before we go any further, we as editors and academics would wish to acknowledge that we do not separate ourselves and our trade from needing to learn from our mistakes. As academics we may have the privilege of distance and independence from planning practice, but that does not mean we are exempt from folly, nor does it give us the right to reflect on the endeavors of others (what we call 'research'!) without also scrutinizing our own practices. The conversation we are seeking to initiate must be shared and open, following in the spirit of the *Interface* section of this Journal. However, our starting point in this *Interface* is learning from practice.

Our purpose in focusing on learning from mistakes is absolutely not about finger-pointing, navel-gazing or providing the opportunity for individual catharsis through *mea culpa* moments. It is in many ways much more mundane and everyday. Planning involves making judgments where knowledge is partial, and yet also greater than anyone can assimilate, in circumstances which are uncertain, about a future which is unknown and unknowable, and always where resources are fewer than ideal or, more tellingly, less than necessary. Knowledge of the wickedness of the problems we confront (after Rittel & Webber, 1973) should come as no surprise. Mistakes are therefore inevitable; what matters is what is learned, and the connection this learning has to future actions. This task is urgent, for the better outcomes so needed by communities around the world require and deserve us to learn… and learn better. As Samuel Beckett put it so succinctly: "Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. *Fail better*" (1983, p. 7, emphasis added). This is not to suggest recklessness or a lack of seriousness about the potential consequences of actions, but that the contemporary language of individual and institutional risk aversion leads to a reticence to experiment and in turn tackle the pressing issues confronting societies.

Mistakes come in many forms and for many reasons. There are simple mistakes of adding salt rather than sugar to a cake mixture, of getting someone's name wrong or adding two numbers together incorrectly. We all make these mistakes, but our interest lies more in the judgments inherent to the planning task, an activity involving the application of knowledge to a unique situation. Mistakes may arise due to ignorance (willful or unknowable), ineptitude or inevitable fallibility. Willful ignorance and ineptitude are a different order of mistake from ignorance resulting from knowledge not yet discovered, or the necessary fallibility that arises from dilemmas of practical judgment. It is important to avoid confusing these different forms of mistakes, yet it has become the habit of many organizations and institutions to do so. The elision of willful ignorance with necessary fallibility has seen the imposition of procedural and performance regimes which purport to offer protection to the public, but often are more about protecting institutional interests, reducing practice to its lowest common denominator. Crucially, these institutional structures tend to prevent the very experimentation, innovation… and mistakes… necessary to effect the changes required to improve planning outcomes. Our quest, therefore, is to make talk of mistakes professionally and academically respectable, even desirable.

In the accounts that follow, we have sought reflections on "learning from mistakes" from practitioners on several continents in several fields of planning. We hear from planners based in Singapore, Indonesia, Brazil, Italy and the United Kingdom. These practitioners have worked on community and economic development at both local and national levels. Their reflections share instructive examples of how mistakes are made in interactions with political or corporate leaders, with planning colleagues or local bureaucratic officials. The reflections also suggest why some practitioners learn from mistakes while others do not.

In our individual planning practice what is a mistake? Is it any intentional action whose outcome differs from what was intended? And how do we know whether we have learnt from a mistake? These are legitimate questions we need to ponder. One way to think about "learning from mistakes" is to focus attention on action, reflection and understanding, questions of both practice and theory. Practically speaking, we might worry why our action has not yielded the outcome we wanted to achieve. Not everyone attributes such discrepancy between intention and outcomes as if they had made a mistake. On the contrary, it is common to blame others' actions and hidden motives for ruining our well thought out plans. Yet, some practitioners do reflect on their action before blaming others. They may ponder: "What practically could I have done, or now must do, differently?" It is this latter group of practitioners whose unconventional wisdom we sought out to begin a conversation about a human act which should be a source of learning, not a reason for embarrassment.

Why do some learn from mistakes while others do not? There are no clear cut answers, but a few plausible hypotheses to be tested in future research, we hope. For example, when we've made mistakes, some are able to comprehend that they had either misunderstood or ignored something in prescribing policies. In other words, these 'reflective practitioners' are able to acknowledge with an open mind that their operating theory-in-use has failed them. They may then revise their theory of action based on empirical evidence from past action. We acknowledge that such reflective practice does not result from individual decision only, even if individual resolve is essential; some organizational cultures and certain historical moments may encourage reflection while others may interpret reflection as a sign of weakness.

Assuming that one has recognized a mistake, how might one learn from it to act better in similar situations in the future? The answer is not obvious. For acknowledging that one had made a mistake would require that one evaluated a host of interconnected causes which collectively provided a sense of meaning – a view of the world – which one constructed from past experiences. Such reconstruction

of meaning is not an easy task, particularly when one has to act immediately as is often the case in bureaucratic organizations. What allows some practitioners to scrutinize their long-held beliefs – the source of past meaning – while others repeat that same mistake, again blaming others for the mismatch between intentions and outcomes? There is no one single correct answer to that important question. As the contributors to this Interface describe, there could be multiple factors, ranging from individual personalities to organizational cultures and structures which influence how one might go about rethinking and reframing the problem one wanted to address to avoid past mistakes.

In fields of city planning and public policy, it is worth repeating again that 'mistakes' are inevitable and, in fact, necessary for good practice. No actors have full or perfect information; neither can anyone fully comprehend every facet of intractable and 'wicked problems'. With 100 years of hindsight of city planning and city building efforts, we know that practical situations are not only complex but also fluid and rapidly changing because of a host of factors beyond the control of the planner. All situations are value-riddled and increasingly contested precisely because of multiple interpretations of the same reality held by varied interest groups. Amidst this scenario of contestation and political maneuvering by different interest groups, how likely is it that a practitioner will never make a mistake? And when that mistake is made should planners become defensive and arrogant in the face of criticism, or would it be wiser to learn from the mistake, reconstruct a new meaning of the situation and co-create with others a new approach to problem solving? Good practice cannot be mistake free; it should think of mistakes as a source of learning on the journey towards better planning outcomes, not as a sign of human failing.

Notes on contributors

Heather Campbell is Professor of Town and Regional Planning at the University of Sheffield and is seconded (part-time) to the Office of the Vice Chancellor. [From September 2018 she will take up the position of Director of the School of Community and Regional Planning at the University of British Columbia.] She is Senior Editor of *Planning Theory and Practice*. Her research interests focus on how public policy interventions concerned with cities and regions can produce better, more socially just, outcomes, and how research can better support transformational change. Email: h.j. campbell@sheffield.ac.uk.

John Forester's best known publications include *The Deliberative Practitioner* (MIT, 1999) and *Planning in the Face of Power* (1989). His recent studies of planning practices include *Planning in the Face of Conflict* (APA Pr. 2013), *Conflict, Improvisation, Governance* (Routledge, 2015 with David Laws) and *Reimagining Planning: How Italian Urban Planners Are Changing Planning Practices* (INU, 2018 with Daniela De Leo). Email: Jff1@cornell.edu.

Bishwapriya Sanyal is the Ford International Professor of Urban Development and Planning in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at MIT and also leads the Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program at MIT. Email: sanyal@mit.edu.

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Lessons Learned From Implementing Two Programs to Develop More Infrastructure Projects in Asia

Khairul Anwar

Enterprise Singapore, Singapore

I work in economic development for the national government, and from 2011 to 2015 I was part of a team that collaborated with public, private and non-governmental organizations to de-bottleneck the delivery of infrastructure projects across Asia. Asian economies were recovering well from the 2008 financial crises but their economic potential was being stymied by inadequate transport, utilities and social infrastructure. Much of this was because local governments lacked the funding and capacity to deliver such improvements in a timely and cost-efficient way, and the prevailing consensus then was that the private sector could plug some of these gaps through public-private partnerships (PPP).

For a number of years my team worked, in collaboration with local governments and development organizations, on facilitating private involvement in individual projects. Progress was patchy and by 2011, the increased pace of development in Asia created the appetite to consider more ambitious strategies and programs. This article shares the lessons we learned in rolling out two such programs in partnership with two development organizations. As the collaborations are ongoing, I refer to these efforts as Global-Infra and Infra-Works. In addition, as Global-Infra was launched 2 years before Infra-Works, we drew lessons from the earlier effort to inform the setup of Infra-Works.

Before sharing these lessons, I would like to set out what both programs sought to do. A PPP is an arrangement for channeling private sector expertise and finance to deliver public goods such as an airport or power plant. PPPs are challenging because public goods can cost a lot to develop, while the price of and access to the services they provide are often governed by political rather than market considerations. To entice private companies to invest in such projects requires watertight legal, financial and performance agreements between the government and private developer for the project to be considered commercially viable. Governments in the US and Europe are more familiar with such arrangements; in Asia, such complexity is beyond many municipal governments. Given this, both programs sought to achieve the same intervention: provide seed funding and expertise to local governments to structure more commercially viable infrastructure PPPs that the private sector could invest in. As the investment gap in infrastructure was large, we could launch both programs with different partners without crowding each other out.

Lesson 1: Know Where Your New Initiative Sits in the Hierarchy of Your Partner's Organization and its Priorities

Infra-Works made an impact much more quickly than Global-Infra, because we learned from the first 18 months of Global-Infra that getting the right backing matters, however novel and technically sound our solutions were. Our partner for Global-Infra was a department within a large development organization (henceforth Global-Dev). Our sponsor was the department's Director, who was two rungs below the organization's head, and in our discussions with him

we both regarded Global-Infra as a pilot – a small tranche of funds and staff hours to test this model's ability to yield more PPPs. What this meant in practice was that Global-Infra had minimal political capital within the organization ('no strategic fit'). It didn't have top management's attention and was only a small percentage of the large funding operations conducted within that department. Given this, Global-Infra struggled to get sufficient dedicated staff time from Global-Dev and had only limited buy-in from Global-Dev's network of country teams across Asia. Taken together, Global-Infra struggled to identify and assess our initial batch of prospective PPP projects – the whole point of its creation.

By the time Infra-Works was being set up with our other partner, DevWorks, we were much wiser in assessing (and where needed, correcting) its strategic fit: it had the buy-in of key leaders from the top two rungs of management in DevWorks, and the lead for Infra-Works had worked multiple international roles with DevWorks and used these networks and influence to cajole the country offices to support Infra-Works with a healthy pipeline of projects barely 6 months after its launch.

Lesson 2: Anticipate and Actively Manage the Contrasting Organizational Cultures and Priorities

One of the challenges in PPPs is that public and private priorities do not often align well, and this was ironically the challenge we faced with our partners in setting up both programs. As economic development specialists, my team worked on facilitating private investments and, despite having a wider development agenda at heart, we had acquired private sector sensibilities when assessing projects. In comparison, our partners were development organizations whose stakeholders were national and municipal governments. This created some tension in the initial phase of each program. While our partners had a quasi-public mandate to show quick progress in launching more PPP projects, we were being very stringent in assessing projects so as to avoid 'lemons'. As such, we found it hard to agree on which projects to proceed with, and frustrations mounted at the lack of progress.

We were only able to advance after some very candid conversations with our partners. We laid our organizations' priorities on the table, were given the liberty to question the rationale and assumptions inherent in them, and tried to find some common ground that we could work with. As a result of these difficult conversations, we eventually shifted how we saw these projects: they were marginal projects which could not proceed without some form of public intervention. This gave us the policy space to loosen our assessment criteria slightly because these projects could not otherwise come to market. Our partners also conceded to include a market-testing component, so each prospective PPP project was tested with potential investors as to their attractiveness to investors.

From this, we learned the importance of creating a safe space to understand and unpack each other's priorities and concerns, especially during periods of frustration when they were least likely to happen.

Lesson: In the excitement of focussing on the new solutions, we had underappreciated the importance of organizational 'personalities' – these often unspoken values and practices that eventually began to shape our work.

Lesson 3: Manage 'Key Man' Risk by Building the Right Systems and Processes into a Partnership Agreement

Like many business startups, new programs like ours emerge from a meeting of minds – an alignment of personalities, priorities and problem diagnoses, and a shared excitement (and haste)

to get the proposed solution rolled out quickly. Personal and organizational chemistry were key to launching Global-Infra and Infra-Works, though insufficient to ensure success. Within a year of operating Global-Infra, the sponsoring director from Global-Dev had been rotated to a new role and the incoming director did not regard this pilot as a priority. Progress slowed but neither the contract nor organizational structure of Global-Infra had 'pressure valves' to release and resolve our frustrations or allow an honorable exit, which allowed these grouses to snowball and sour the working relations around Global-Infra.

By contrast, we had advocated for more robust provisions in Infra-Works to manage partner expectations and grievances. It was structured as a 3-year pilot (allowing a clean exit should the pilot not achieve its outcomes), had clear performance indicators, and quarterly Board meetings for partners to discuss challenges and guide performance of the working team.

While strong human relationships and mission alignment between working teams are important, we learned that they are no substitute for setting up the right processes, especially in a field like infrastructure development where long project cycles outlast the average tenure of individual staff members.

A Concluding Lesson: Learning to Learn from Mistakes

The lessons above notwithstanding, one more factor helped the team reap important lessons from this experience. Over a four-year period, nine people had worked on Programs A and B though the team typically had four members at any time. The rest either rotated into or out of the team, some to other departments and others leaving the organization entirely. What helped bring these 'learnings' together was an effort by our Knowledge Management team to interview, capture and triangulate these personal reflections by everyone who had been involved in this effort over the years, creating a case study (of which my reflections above constitute only a small part) for later generations on the team to benefit from.

Notes on contributor

Khairul Anwar trained as an urban planner and has worked in economic development for the Singapore government for the last 8 years. Half of this was spent working on projects and initiatives promoting infrastructure development across Asia. For the last two years, he was involved in master planning a new mixed-use commercial district around Singapore's first high-speed rail station, and now finds himself in a new role in Jakarta, leading a team that is growing Singapore's business and trade linkages with Indonesia. Email: khairul22@gmail.com.

Who Does the Agent of Change Represent? Stardom vs. Ownership

Carlos Brando

Praça Rio Branco, São Paulo, Brazil

In the late 1970s I was a fellow at MIT's Special Program on Urban and Regional Studies (SPURS) and then joined the PhD Program at the Department of Urban Studies and Planning. Besides my

planning related courses, I took literally all of the MBA courses that the Sloan School offered, passed the general examination, and then returned to Brazil as a non-resident student to write my dissertation, which I never did.

Upon returning to Brazil I took the best job opportunity I had. That was outside the planning field, and in the 10 years thereafter I worked for a family enterprise that manufactured coffee processing machinery for growers, traders and exporters and whose management was being handed over to the second generation. With a typical engineering and MBA approach I moved from being a consultant on exports, to exports manager and then on to become commercial director. In this process I helped to increase exports four-fold, market outreach from 12 to 50 countries, and total sales by a factor of three.

At the end of this period, though, I was perceived as a threat to the owning families' control of the company, and I was dismissed. Only then did I realize that I had failed to rely on all the planning background – sociology, anthropology, human relations, negotiation, etc. – that I had acquired but did not use. I not only failed to develop shared ownership for the achievements above, but I had also transmitted an image of seeking power and control.

One month later I had created a consulting company and, seasoned by these mistakes, I started to take a different view of doing business. I reframed the typical planner's dilemma of who he or she represents into the question of "Who does the agent of change represent in a business environment?" Obviously, the shareholders have to benefit from change, but change may not happen or the agent of change may not survive if he or she does not convince the stakeholders or defy the existing power structure or both.

With this new ammunition, I signed a contract with the same manufacturing company to manage their exports, and started to consult in the coffee field. Two important jobs gave us the opportunity to design strategies for the largest coffee grower in Brazil and a new producing region soon to become known for the high quality of its coffees. This, along with a contract to promote Brazilian specialty coffees abroad, led to the creation of the concept that I discuss below – a concept that was to mark the rest of my professional life.

Do not try to be the 'owner' of change, the 'owner' of ideas. I learned the hard way in Brazil, first, and then in many other countries as well, that change is about to occur when someone, some group, comes to you and tells you about the great idea that they have, that may in fact be your own idea – one that you floated earlier. You know, of course, that it is your idea, the idea you are trying to promote. But be quiet, humble, and say, "What a great idea you have, let's use it!" Do not claim ownership – and then your idea will start to move forward. In short, implementation will only start when your proposal is acquired, owned by those who will be affected by it.

My application of this concept led to the growth of the coffee company's exports another three times, and the number of importing countries grew from 50 to 93. We challenged important paradigms with our consulting work. Coffee producing countries are so interested in exports and hard currency generation instead of developing domestic markets that the latter are usually forgotten. When we created a manual to promote coffee consumption in coffee producing countries, the key approach was to address how to bring about change and to create the environment for coffee to remain and to be consumed where it is produced.

Today we coordinate a program to increase the sustainability of the coffee business in Brazil for a host of foreign agencies and coffee companies. Our goal is to reach roughly 60 thousand growers initially and then 100 thousand growers with a limited budget. How are we doing it? We are literally marketing ideas and programs to existing institutions and creating ownership for

sustainability issues. We convince leaders and followers to embrace an idea, a concept: that sustainability has to be grower-centric, i.e. sustainability has to benefit the grower and not only the consumer at the other end of the supply chain. The success of this Brazilian program led to my being invited recently to take over the chairmanship of the board of the world-wide program.

Why did I learn from mistakes while others did not? Maybe because the initial mistake was especially traumatic. Perhaps because I had different backgrounds – engineering, *planning* and business – to rely on and blend. Or because the learning process was continuous and not only based upon mistakes but also on positive outcomes that could, however, still be improved. But, over and above, there was the will to look back, the ability to analyze and the determination to change.

The key failure that led me to lose the 10-year job was ignoring the environment, the organizational setting, and how stakeholders evaluated my success from their own perspective. This made me very sensitive to the environment, first organizational and then political, as I moved into much more complex environments that involved associations, governments and politics. Sensitivity to stakeholders' perceptions and to the human environment where our companies operated, prevented us from making mistakes, but it also helped us to learn from partial failures and partial successes during projects and to realign and reposition to reach successful outcomes. This is where a planning background made a substantial contribution.

Looking at the ability to learn from mistakes from a different perspective and with the help of hindsight, I conclude by saying that an urban and regional planning background is an important asset to learn from mistakes in any field or business. Planning skills, like negotiation and policy analysis, familiarity with multi-stakeholder environments and power struggles at several levels, and the founding pillars of sociology, anthropology, applied economics and planning itself have professional implications and develop unique abilities that go far beyond the realm of urban and regional planning and empower professionals in many other fields – just as it has been in my case.

Notes on contributor

Carlos Brando, a former SPURS Fellow at MIT, is a partner at P&A International Marketing that has consulted or consults for the Global Coffee Platform, the Sustainable Trade Initiative, the International Coffee Organization (ICO), the World Bank and companies and institutions on marketing, technology, sustainability, strategy and quality. A frequent speaker at leading international coffee events, Carlos has coordinated coffee projects in over 50 countries and contributed chapters to several coffee books, including Nespresso's recent *The Craft and Science of Coffee*. He is a former member of the board of UTZ Certified and Ipanema Coffees and a current member of the Coffee Quality Institute Board of Trustees, the Coffee Chamber of [B][3] (former BM&FBovespa), chairman of the board of the Global Coffee Platform and a member of SPURS International Advisory Board. Email: peamarketing@peamarketing.com.br.

Learning from Mistakes

Iwan J. Azis

Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, USA; Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia

Episode 1: What would you do when a Head of State wanted to consult with you about several of the currently most pressing economic challenges?

I believe the best way is to focus on one and only one issue. Of course, we have to study the country's situation first before selecting the central issue and we have to be ready and able to explain the relationships between that focus and other issues. That was exactly what I did: I focused only on the country's growing inequality, and I explained its relationship to other development issues. After all, who does not know the nexus between economic growth, equality, and democracy? Or so I thought.

But the outcome turned out quite differently from what I expected. Firmly believing in his own opinion, the Head of State pre-empted me by making a fifteen-minute presentation about something else: How to raise exports and stimulate manufacturing activities?

I immediately felt confused. Did he simply want my support for his idea, or did he really expect my honest opinion about the current and pressing economic challenges? Was this conversation just for show?

To avoid feeling 'trapped,' I tried to stick to my plan: I focused only on income inequality! To make a long story short, the Head of State did not seem too happy with that. Even after I highlighted the risks of ignoring inequality – by stressing that growing income inequality could weaken not only the economy, including his manufacturing exports, but also the country's democracy, he did not think that growing inequality was the pressing issue.

Two years later, his plan encountered problems, and the country's inequality had grown worse. Everything else was now overshadowed by it. Friends and colleagues accused me of not being strategic in my advising; I had not been diplomatic enough in conveying my message. They suggested that had I been more 'friendly' to his idea or plan, the country's conditions would not have become so bad.

In retrospect, I believe, my mistake was probably that I did not take his point about stimulating manufacturing export more seriously. I might have done so – and then used that engagement as an entry point to explain more fully the repercussions on income inequality. Only in that way, probably, could I have shifted our discussion towards the dangers I foresaw.

Episode 2. What would you do when an international organization that you have worked for has asked your opinion about delivering a report with a policy message that seems based on an overly optimistic economic forecast?

My advice: postpone the delivery, review the background studies that led to such a forecast, assess their assumptions more carefully, and discuss the matter by comparing the results with the past and other forecasts. The organization could then consider altering its forecast and changing the tone of the report.

The fact of the matter was that, given great uncertainties in the world economy, I clearly disagreed with the organization's forecast. Such an over-optimistic forecast could create an ill-advised complacency, and if the corresponding policy messages were to be followed through, that could be harmful to member countries.

But I thought that I should not express my disagreements too strongly, since I had not been responsible for generating the forecast. Moreover, it was almost the tradition of this international organization to be upbeat to please the member countries who after all 'owned' the organization. At any rate, my cautionary advice was refused. Not surprisingly, misplaced policies emerged, causing instability and vulnerability.

Colleagues blamed me for not being more forceful with my criticism and disagreement. Had that been the case, they argued, a more realistic prognosis might have been produced and communicated such that member countries would have been more prepared and less vulnerable to crisis.

In hindsight, I believe I should have understood better the position of the organization being 'owned' by member countries. Perhaps I might have let it keep the optimistic forecast while I worked to emphasize the risks and dangers of taking policy measures based on such optimistic forecasts. That might have led to a more balanced report – with greater emphasis on the downside risks of the forecast. In turn, that might have, perhaps, deterred member countries from taking policy measures based on an overly rosy economic picture.

Notes on contributor

Iwan J. Azis is professor (adjunct) at the Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management, Cornell University, USA, and the Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia. He has conducted research and consulting work for governments, various international organizations and universities. He addressed and published topics of economics and regional science, the most recent being: 'Coping with the Dangerous Component of Capital Flows' in J Pixley & H Flam (ed) *Critical Junctures in Mobile Capital*, Cambridge University Press, 2018, and 'ASEAN Economic Integration: Quo Vadis?' in *Journal of Southeast Asian Economies*, vol 35-1, 2018. His interviews appeared in numerous media including Financial Times, New York Times, Bloomberg, Japan Times, China Daily, CNBC, BBC, MSNBC, NHK, and RTV, Herald Tribune, and Wall Street Journal. His latest interview (25 April 2018) with a German Magazine is https://www.dandc. eu/en/article/indonesian-economist-explains-why-unpredictable-policymaking-hurts-global-trade. Email: ija1@cornell.edu.

Mistakes, Errors and Possible Failures

Matteo Robiglio

School of Architecture, Politecnico of Torino, Torino, Italy

The most difficult thing is to meet future co-housers and frustrate their hopes with the ritualistic language of planning bureaucracy: "*The meeting has been postponed…*" "*The Environment Protection Agency requires more samples…*" "*The Council will probably not schedule planning decisions before the city budget is approved*" and so on.

What makes sense among colleagues within the community of practice of professionals and public officers interested in 'getting things done', in a friendly conversation with ordinary women and men of good will, clearly and fully shows its distance from real life's urgencies and contingencies: falling in love, planning a baby, aging, leaving your parents' nest, divorcing, working at home….

I started 'Homers' – a word that does not exist in English, but which very well could, as co-housing expert John Davis suggested when we discussed the idea and its name – in 2014. Homers is a social innovation non-profit company for the direct production of affordable housing – autonomously, without real estate brokers. I had had enough of the resistance of my clients'

promoters of innovation – call it green building, the sharing economy, low-cost production – and of seeing them fail without attempting to change.

I felt also that the participatory planning I had practiced for two decades needed a refreshing bath in direct action. As many architects-builders in the past and today have done, I decided to dare to cross the line and become a kind of 'community promoter'. Early steps were rich in rewards: recognition from my university as a spin-off allowed me to integrate teaching and practice. Prizes in contests among start-ups and seed grants and loans made things easier. The basic assumptions were proving right.

The 2008 real estate crisis had left distressed assets with an undeniable potential – under or unpriced abandoned factories with charming structures and good locations abounded in a post-industrial city like Torino, Italy.

Early adopters – the kind of people that dare and love to explore new lifestyles and spaces preferred them to average market products. Joining the two meant offering unconventional housing at prices 25% below current market rates, with higher construction and environmental standards.

In spite of this, turning Homers into an effective business model proved harder than expected. We made many mistakes. We assumed that distressed assets would have been easy to acquire, underestimating the internal complexities of financial institutes and the resistance of private owners to market evidence: they had to sell, but they simply didn't. We assumed a welcoming attitude from ethical banks: it remained confined to words, and the resulting financing scheme implemented practically shows no trace of innovation. We assumed that designing your own house was an exciting task, but some possible co-housers dropped out because they were stressed by the excess of choices to be taken – ordinary standard products were more comfortable for them. We assumed a benevolent eye from City Hall – after all, we were promoting a public policy with private means! But this also went no further than verbal appreciation. We had no control over the approval process and its timing: marginal assets are complex cases, have outdated planning prescriptions, are subject to complex environmental assessment procedures derived from indus-trial hazard management; in spite of all the words committed in literature and public debate to promote brownfield reuse, no fast lane has yet been designed to make their regeneration easier than, or at least as easy as, ordinary greenfield development.

We praised transparency and informed our co-housers of rare advancements and frequent stalemates – producing anxiety rather than awareness. Usually the approval process is run behind the curtains: inhabitants meet their possible future houses after they are produced, and then they fit into them, rather than *making them fit to their needs by participating in their design – and therefore approval – process*. Production timing, therefore, usually matters only to the developer and maybe his bank. Here we had brought the process to light, made it public: we were working 'open book.' We experienced the clash between the procedural rationality of administration and the reasonable idea of a sound process that people have in mind: we have the site, we are reusing and cleaning-up a brownfield, we are reviving industrial heritage, we are building green, we are a community of end-users, we do not ask for public money, *why the hell do they keep us waiting for months for approving seven flats?!*

With retrospective detachment, I can see these mistakes as the inherent errors of innovation. If you leave the usual paths, it is not surprising that you find yourself on the wrong tracks – the latin *errare* means exactly this. But the day-by-day experience is more painful: there is no pleasure in being wrong, especially in public. And errors might always lead to failure, a risk that Homers still faces.

Celebrating failure is part of the mainstream start-up rhetoric forged in the Silicon Valley, but real estate has a heaviness that the immaterial world of ICT never knew, and it is inherently resistant to experiments – property is made to last. Moreover, the ethos and rules of professional practice, in architecture, planning and real estate, punish mistakes, making no distinction between the inevitable, and even necessary, errors in the explorative early phases of creative processes – relatively harmless, as they mostly remain on paper – and legal liability for bad practice.

Learning from our mistakes, we redesigned the business model of Homers to incorporate and anticipate the critical issues we experienced. It lost some of its pristine radicality, and it came to incorporate more standard market procedures than we wanted. Time will tell if it gained in solidity, strengthening the resilience that co-housers' communities showed during the process, keeping their trust in the values of making your own home by yourself – in spite of all our mistakes and errors – up to now saving our experiment from failure.

Notes on contributor

Matteo Robiglio studied architecture at Politecnico di Torino where he is currently Full Professor in Architectural and Urban Design and Head of the School of Architecture. He is founder and director of FULL – the Future Urban Legacy Lab of Polito, an interdisciplinary center joining researchers from seven departments to explore emerging urban issues and challenges (urbanlega cylab.net). His spin-off Homers (www.homers.co) promotes bottom-up reuse and co-housing projects. He recently authored for Berlin Editor Jovis RE_USA. 20 American stories of adaptive reuse (2017). Email: matteo.robiglio@polito.it.

Discerning Demography and Economy

Ezio Micelli

Dipartimento Architettura Costruzione Conservazione, Università IUAV di Venezia, Venice, Italy

At the beginning of the last decade the values of the real estate market underwent a vigorous surge. This impetuous growth of market values throughout Italy, however, was not reflected in an equally important increase in income.

A large part of the middle class, therefore, no longer had the resources to access the real estate market, to buy or rent a house. In particular, young families, the least capable of devoting income to real estate investment, did not have access either to mortgages or to acceptable leases.

After years in which housing policies had ceased to address the middle class, in favor almost exclusively on the weaker segments of society, new subjects were calling for interventions for their own benefit. The label of *social housing* came to be attributed to the policies focusing on this new middle-class band, too rich to access previous housing welfare policies and yet too poor to access the market.

Such a focus upon a middle class in difficulty could not be the object of public intervention: the resources of local authorities, in particular, were in no way able to financially support this new demand.

In those years I was president of a public real estate company, owned by the City of Venice. The task that was entrusted to me was to devise and promote interventions in favor of young families unable to access the market and excluded from public support, without requiring any financial resources from the Municipality that owned the company.

I tackled the task with a strategy based on the conversion of land value into homes for deserving families. The administration had to enhance the areas owned by the company through specific zoning decisions. At that point, the company would then sell the areas to private developers not to get money, but to acquire the maximum number of housing units to be leased to young middle-class families in need.

The program conceived in this way was not successful. Just one project, among many hoped for, has been completed and only because other public administrations have financed the initiative with significant additional financial resources.

The reasons for the failure are easily explained in hindsight. Since the early years of the decade, the values of the real estate market began to decline. A dramatic downsizing of values followed the boom. Market values and lease values greatly decreased with two consequences. The first was to put the planned implementation mechanism out of the game: the reduction in land values made the number of accommodations acquired by private developers laughable. The second, however, was the most important: the values of the real estate market were again consistent with the income of middle-class families, and social housing policies no longer made sense, except in the larger metropolitan areas of the country.

Since the failure of the operation I have drawn a very clear lesson: the city and the real estate market should always be considered in the medium and long-term perspective, and always in light of the fundamentals of demography and economy. Any interpretation that favors the short term is at risk of mistaking episodic phenomena for urgent needs, a passing crisis for epochal change – with the effect of incorrect policies because they refer to momentary phenomena, contingencies and temporary adjustments of collective life. The consequences include a waste of financial and intellectual energies, better used in other actions able to deal effectively with the long-term horizon of our cities.

Notes on contributor

Ezio Micelli is currently associate professor of real-estate valuation at the University IUAV of Venice. His research activity focused on the economics and on the management of plans and projects with particular concern to innovative tools in land policies.

He is currently working on the effects on real-estate markets of the great economic change affecting Italian and European cities after the downturn occurred at the end of last decade.

He has been involved in administrative roles and in particular he has been city zoning deputy Mayor of the City of Venice (2010–2013), and member of a national working group of the Ministry of Infrastructures for the city planning national reform (2014). In 2017 he co-ordinated the research promoted by the Ministry of Culture on the role of culture in the regeneration of the Italian peripheries. Email: ezio.micelli@iuav.it.

Can a Planning and Land Use Lawyer Learn From Past Mistakes?

Riccardo Delli Santi

Delli Santi and Partners, Rome, Italy

Looking back I may say that my learning curve has been very different from field to field. Evolving from student, scholar to finally lawyer – over the years I've kept studying in order to be able to present to teachers, students, clients and judges the concepts and arguments I have brought before them. I have always believed that constant learning is a requirement to be the best in one's field.

Although I've had a proactive approach towards learning, I've never looked back with the mindset of "I must analyze my mistakes to do it better". I believe that learning from mistakes is an unconscious process. Most of the times I have just been able to avoid repeating my mistakes.

This is the reason, I suspect, why the elders were so long considered as the most valuable assets of the tribe. They have made more mistakes than the others and, hopefully, their experience, properly transferred to the youth, could have made the tribe safer and more powerful.

But the globalization of our knowledge has somehow changed the rules of the game: the new generations have global experience to hand at any time. Nevertheless mistakes are important and unavoidable.

In 1992 I was a professor in a US university and a partner in a US law firm. I made the mistake of believing that Italy was going to change dramatically due to its entry into the European Union. The corruption known as 'Tangentopoli' finally had come out, and I truly believed that everything was going to change. Eager to become part of this new world, I left my positions in California to return to my homeland. If I had better analyzed Italian society I would have known that nothing was very likely to change, and I could have been more productive staying where I was. Italy entered the Eurozone some years later but the Country did not develop new values. It will take generations to change. It is and will be the land of creativity (design, art and food) but it will go on abusing its resources.

Later on, I became a successful land use lawyer in Italy where I founded a boutique law firm, highly specialized in real estate law.

I made and learned from two further, consecutive mistakes.

The first is that I had entered into a joint venture with an architect and his firm believing that creating a 'one stop shop' would be seen as a strength by my existing clients and would improve the chances of retaining new clients. Unfortunately, a few months later I discovered that many of my clients were very uncomfortable with this decision, and that a significant flow of referrals stopped arriving at our door. I later became aware that a substantial percentage of my clients had been referred to me by other architects and planners – who obviously did not like the idea of my new partnership. This was a terrible mistake that forced me to break up the joint venture.

Did I learn from this mistake? Apparently not.

Several years later I merged my law firm with a full service 300+ lawyer firm. Again I thought that a one stop shop was going to increase my competitiveness in the market. But while other major law firms in Italy were happy to share their clients with specialized boutique law firms – especially if they had no in-house town planning department – they would not share their clients with a direct competitor! That put me and my team on their 'black list,' and they subsequently put

pressure on their clients to use other experts in my field. A few years later I left the firm and re-created a boutique firm specialized in Real Estate law. This time I have learned my lesson.

Fortunately, other than the two examples listed above, I don't have many professional mistakes of such magnitude to share. That may be because I have removed them from my memory or because I have not made them. Of course there are small technical episodes in which I could have done better. I once challenged a City General Plan for a client but our lawyer in charge of the case did not deposit all the documents which proved the vested interest of the client to take action. The documents deposited should have been sufficient, but the matter would have been made more uncertain if I had brought it to the attention of the court. I won the case anyhow. Fortunately, the opposing counsel had not noticed the possible mistake and had not brought the fault to the Judge's attention. The client never knew about the issue. Since then, we have developed a questionnaire requiring completion by any lawyer of the firm before depositing papers and/or filing an action in Court.

Another time, I learned from another person's mistake. I was called to fix a problem caused by a faulty Due Diligence on a property. A major consulting firm had made a serious mistake in interpreting the Planning Rules of a Metropolitan City General Plan. We managed to fix the problem through a variance to the Town Plan of Rome, with considerable but bearable amount of Building Permit Urbanization and Administrative Costs. Since then, our firm uses a sophisticated but simple questionnaire – now developed into a Smart Phone/Tablet app to rate the status of the documents on a real estate property and the related property risk.

Our team now focuses on using AI (artificial intelligence) to avoid future mistakes for ourselves and for our clients. In doing so, I have learned that our professional field depends on helping the clients avoid mistakes. For that reason I may be defined as a 'Mistakes Collector'. It is always better to collect somebody else's faults and not mine!

Notes on contributor

Riccardo Delli Santi is Founding Partner of Studio Legale Delli Santi (Delli Santi Law Firm) and expert in real estate law with a focus on town planning and management of RE portfolios: due diligence, establishment and management of real estate funds, establishment of real estate companies, securitization, project financing. He is the President and founder of AGIDI (Italian Association of Real Estate Lawyers). Email: studio@dellisanti.it.

On Subjective Processes and the Limiting of Enquiry

Dave Vanderhoeven

Independent Scholar

As a Masters student I was attracted by the module description of *Reflective Practitioner I*, but like all the other students in the group, had no idea what it would entail.

Following some initial conversation, 8 students were poised to reflect on a black and white image that was about to appear via overhead projector. It was of a small black child crawling on rough stony terrain. As an intimate, newly formed and clueless group operating outside the

standard lecture format we were used to, we shared some impressions; conversation was stifled and 'polite', no one seemed sure of the 'right answers'.

To my surprise the module leader presented a second image, which zoomed out from the original. The rough terrain could now be clearly seen and the child's body looked weak and undernourished. I identified it as a piece of photojournalism, I felt smugly satisfied, despite avoiding its meaning. The final slide zoomed out further to reveal the crux of the piece, a nearby waiting vulture. The photographer had clearly intended to take this image, rather I assumed, than help the child.

I recall being indignant and clear cut – "the picture should never had been taken, there's no excuse…" The module leader, equally upset by my response, indignantly told the story of how the photographer had first won the Pulitzer Prize, then committed suicide following an onslaught of criticism. Contrary to the module leader's earlier directive, wrong answers now seemed possible.

Twenty-One Years Later – Yorkshire Sculpture Park

I took myself off to Yorkshire Sculpture Park on a cold, bright winter day to reflect and be quiet. I wandered around the grounds, a couple of galleries and caught sight of some sculptures before heading back to a warm building.

Alfredo Jarr's exhibition included an 8 minute film. Unusually, staff insisted on people waiting for the beginning of the film before going into the darkened room, this created a small cohort or audience.

The film is minimal, consisting of a procession of single words or short sentences that fade in and out. In typewriter style font the white text seers through the black background and focuses on Kevin. Kevin Carter. Kevin Carter was born in the same year as the Sharpeville Massacre. He later served in the security forces in South Africa, went AWOL and sometime after became a photo-journalist. Escaping the last days of apartheid only to witness the atrocities of the Sudanese war, he wandered off into the bush, alone and exhausted. He took a photograph, which is announced by four flashguns firing, of a child crawling toward the refugee camp. The film tells how Kevin had positioned himself to capture the moment when a vulture's wings opened–they never did. Twenty minutes later, photos taken, he chased off the bird, lit a cigarette, sat under a tree, and cried.

Later, one commentator suggested that Kevin Carter had simply been another vulture on the scene. I recognised the response. Jarr describes Carter sitting in his car, with a green hose connected to its exhaust.

Reflections

For many years my initial arrogance disturbed my peace. Later I attributed the arrogance to the experience of not knowing what was expected in this weirdly powerful (and exposing) module; my internal argument being that I grabbed some certainty, one of Schön's "grassy knolls", to navigate the uncertain and emotionally deep swamp of the room.

I have pondered this moment many times, almost always focussing on being wrong, only occasionally recognising how much I have changed since. It seems easier to condemn oneself for past failings than to acknowledge learning.

After watching Jarr's film I had the opportunity to discuss the piece with some of the 'audience'. I heard other's reflections, particularly from a photographer and heard similar concerns over the

morality of the actions that produced the image; some agreed the photographer could have done better, others that either the war or famine was the metaphorical vulture.

Some of my learning had clearly permeated without leaving a trace. Akin to the first encounter with the picture, where right and wrong preoccupied the group, "vulture-hood" was now our collective focal point; our collective energy focused on identifying who and what was the 'real' vulture in this situation.

Reflection can and does enable us to look behind, beneath or beside the predominant perspective and ask why. The search for 'the answer' is often where the mistake is made. The mistake is not in being wrong, but in being caught up in the superficial debate about being right or wrong; that 'question' simply disguises and obscures other dynamics in debate.

The clarity that accompanied my condemnation for taking the shot mirrored the experience in the room of students looking for right answers. Enquiry was stifled by a sense of moral indignation and ended abruptly when the verdict was finally passed. Kevin, perhaps as many of us do, internalised the accusation and assumed it was just?

So What?

The ability to recognise explicitly subjective processes when engaging with people and/or materials are critical skills for effective learning; to recognise the influence of the subjective in our analyses and (in/formal) theory building.

One of the first forms of defence against the exposure of 'unwanted' details is for the group to collude in diverting attention away from enquiry – people may feel exposed or vulnerable about what might be revealed about themselves or others – the collaborative construction of binaries is an effective way of limiting enquiry. We all do it.

Individual reflection can expose embarrassing or unwanted details, but more detail can be revealed through collective reflection, potentially exposing the work done by individuals on behalf of the collective, moving the group beyond the initial binaries; *if you are wrong, I must be right; you are guilty, we are not…* the greatest power of reflection is its potential to reveal the work done by group members on behalf of the group itself; there is always someone 'nominated' to '*take out the waste*'. Witnessing the process can afford us a new lens and new materials to explore.

Notes on contributor

Dave Vanderhoeven started his studies in social science by completing a Masters Degree in Community Development at University of Westminster in 2001 and completed a PhD at the University of Sheffield in 2010 in the Department of Town and Regional Planning. Dave conducted ten years in academic research with policymakers, academics and community-members. He now works independently in a number of community based Action Research projects on a pro bono basis, supporting survivors of Traumatic Brain Injuries to conduct their research, and developing a Roma-led community development project. Dave has been an active member of the editorial board of the Community Development Journal since 2014. Email: davevanderhoven@hotmail.com.

Afterword: Abiding Challenges of Deliberative Practice

John Forester

Department of City and Regional Planning Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, USA

The topic of "learning from mistakes" calls our attention immediately to parallel questions of doing and understanding, questions of both practice and theory. Practically speaking, we might worry when and how something's gone wrong. We might realize that "We've made a mistake" when we thought *A* would be the result of our actions, but instead we've found that *B* has resulted after all. We might then wonder, "What practically could we have done, or now do, differently?"

But when we've made mistakes, we often realize too that we've mis-understood something that had seemed clear to us: our operating theory-in-use has failed us. Now we might want to know, once we've recognized a mistake, how we might better understand such situations in the future. Unless we want to repeat our mistake, we realize, we need to figure out how better to anticipate consequences – how we might improve our theory-in-use to refine our expectations and 'frames' – so we can act better in the future.

In fields of city planning and public policy, we can expect that 'mistakes' are inevitable and necessary in practice. We can assume that no actors have full or perfect or information. We can assume that practical situations are complex and fluid, value ridden and contested. We can assume that many actors, with many differing visions and interests, are continually trying to do better, despite limited resources. Yesterday's solutions will often seem inappropriate to today's and tomorrow's problems, but nevertheless, we'll most likely have no innovation without mistakes.

Learning from mistakes is an old problem, of course, one at the heart of our traditional understanding of what it means to 'experiment' and to engage in the disciplined inquiry we call 'science.' Even, or especially, in the laboratory, hypothesis testing and refutation play central roles as they formalize the more ordinary 'trial and error' learning of everyday social and moral life. But this is a deep and contemporary problem in the creative arts, too, as we see from telling comments by jazz musicians: "If you're not making mistakes," Miles Davis remarked, "you're making a mistake!" – and asked after a performance how he'd done, Thelonius Monk remarked once, "I made the wrong mistakes!" (Barrett, 2012; Klemp et al., 2008).

Exploring these themes in organizational and management studies, Frank Barrett has published striking reflections capturing "surprising leadership lessons from jazz" (Barrett, 2012). In a brilliant, earlier seminal essay Barrett had asked how complex, risk taking cooperative activities could be informed by the experiential struggles and lessons of jazz trios, quartets or larger ensembles. He suggested four tacit principles that constituted, he argued, "the aesthetics of cooperation," principles guiding the exemplary practice of jazz musicians: appreciation, surrender, forgiveness, and wonder.

Now, in city planning and public policy analysis settings, these four principles suggest more than aspirational goals. They also point to ways that planners or managers or organizers – and improvising actors more generally – might practically 'go wrong'. Cooperation doesn't happen by itself. If our work in planning and public policy contexts is so rarely only technical, that means that much more often a town planner's – or, for that matter, an international development planner's – success can depend upon effectively improvised creative cooperation with others. So Barrett's principles point to four kinds of mistakes that practicing planners might make – and consider anticipating in the future. Consider each briefly as the rich cases presented by our contributors

might illuminate each of them, even as the cases deserve far more attention in their own right (thus this Interface).

If we fail, first, to appreciate or recognize the contributions of others, we're likely to ignore value that others have created. Furthermore, we're unlikely to build strong ties to those others whose good work we've missed. Dave Vanderhoven's story warns us of ways that group pressures can lead us to stifle inquiry and invention that feels risky, going against the grain. Ezio Micelli, too, learns that he has perceived a problem of market fluctuation as one of market failure, making his strategic 'solution' (happily and unhappily both) less effective than he had hoped it would be.

If we fail, second, to surrender or adapt at times to the leads of others or even to accept the initiatives of others, we're likely to be shunned as leaders, concerned with our own rather than others' control. If we cannot go along at times and work with the initiatives of others, we're likely to be poorer, not more robust, problem-solving actors. Carlos Brando's poignant story of ceding ownership of ideas so that others can thrive provides a vivid example here. Matteo Robiglio's account of developing co-housing initiatives in Torino illustrates the challenges of surrender and subsequent negotiation, too: with such good ideas, "why the hell do they keep us waiting for seven months for approving seven units?"

If we fail, third, to forgive – and so, to some degree tolerate – the imperfections of others, perhaps their lack of attention and investment, we may be consumed by our own insistence that 'they' change, and our own abilities to adapt and improvise may suffer. Others may be surprised by our inflexibility. Khairul Anwar suggests an evolution from frustration with, if not blaming, the partner's lack of buy-in to re-negotiating stronger partner relationships. Similarly, Iwan Azis wonders in two cases of high level advising if he let arguing with a problematic position distract him from a more indirect strategy of counsel that might have been more effective.

If we fail, fourth and lastly, to wonder about what's possible really to do and to create new strategies, we may be so reactive, even responsive, that we will fail to invent new options for what to do now or next time. We will fail to 'think outside of the box' of what we have always done. We will take refuge in custom, tradition, habit at exactly the times we know that yesterday's routines will be inept, un-responsive, ill-fitting the particulars of the real situations. Here we see Riccardo Delli Santi's deceptively simple learning from mistakes in his planning law firm. By creating practical questionnaires to anticipate future complexity and time pressures, the firm creates both a material 'tool' and what Bruno Latour might call an institutional innovation, a process design element acting to prevent future shortsightedness and improve action in the future (Latour, 1992).

In planning and public policy settings, Barrett's work asks us to consider how, when we are considering what might be 'mistakes,' we confront settings in which scripts and prescriptive rules are not given like musical scores to follow. Improvisation matters. Planning settings are fluid and changing, institutionally complex and contested. These settings are structured by relationships of inequality and plurality, by power plays and conflicting visions. That complexity itself deserves a kind of recognition – a commitment that we do not too quickly oversimplify, that we do not too quickly 'reduce' the problem at hand to the one we think we can most conveniently or technically solve.

But still more : Barrett asks us to see how – and not just that – planning problems are socially and politically interactive problems. It's not just that planning problems involve many people interacting. That's true, but avenues of solution and responses to planning problems very often have to be socially generated and debated, assessed and refashioned, explored and tested –

essentially deliberated upon – by affected stakeholders or their representatives. This abiding, interactive – if not 'contingently cooperative' – complexity leads us back to a central problem in the history and theory of planning: should we understand problem-solving in planning as the work of a rational, comprehensive mind or as that of a more socialized, distributed, collective intelligence system?

In a quietly revolutionary essay in the mid-90s, Judith Innes argued that Alan Altshuler and earlier critics of the rational, comprehensive problem-solving mind (or agency) had been correct, but that we could nevertheless seek goals of comprehensiveness, rational argument, creative invention, even legitimation through a more social and political, essentially deliberative process of mediated negotiations amongst an inclusive range of stakeholders (Innes, 1996; cf. Innes and Booher, 2010). Here Innes moved beyond not only the critics of the comprehensively rational mind (cf. Herbert Simon on bounded rationality or Charles Lindblom (1959) on disjointed incrementalism), but also, more profoundly, beyond Donald Schön's notion of "reflective practice" to anticipate a more robust, multi-party, politically nuanced "deliberative practice," one sketched only in part later in Forester's *Deliberative Practitioner* (1999).

In a multi-party planning world, Innes implied for our exploration of 'learning from mistakes,' that planners had to worry not only about their proposals going wrong technically, not only about their ideas leading to unforeseen consequences, but also about going wrong by being illegitimately exclusive rather than being more inclusive; going wrong by disrespecting or dismissing stakeholders rather than acknowledging their concerns; going wrong by rushing to judgment rather than seeking to learn about matters of value (Coles, 1989; Forester, 2018; Nussbaum, 1990; Schwartz & Sharpe, 2011, Vickers, 1975).

In more social-psychological studies of planning, of course, Donald Schön's Reflective Practitioner (1983) had articulated a Deweyan pragmatism of learning from mistakes. Schön argued that so-called 'reflective practitioners' made moves and then found themselves surprised by the talk-back from their settings. Practitioners "re-framed" to do better – depending on the results at hand – whether the surprises were happy and welcome ones that they would want to replicate, or unhappy ones, mistakes that they hoped to avoid in the future. Schön's lucid analysis showed us how practitioners who were not omniscient – that is, how we all – could find ourselves surprised in ways that were practically instructive.

The experience – or as Whittemore (2014) recently put it, the phenomenology – of surprise could lead us, Schön argued, in effect, to ask the questions, "What were we thinking?" What, in effect, did we miss, and what do we need to take into account in the future to achieve the consequences we wish – or to avoid the consequences that we might produce if we're not careful?

As editors, we wish to extend this analysis, to explore if Schön (1983) in the early 1980s was right, but perhaps not right enough, not yet taking into account the multi-stakeholder, deliberative complexity that Innes (1996) and Forester (1999) were exploring 15 years later. In part, we wish to consider our own errors of mistaking the socially interactive and deliberative aspects of planners' work for a narrower, agent-based 'reflection-in-action.'

What we might miss, we suspect, are relational, networked qualities connecting practitioners to colleagues and co-workers, as Anwar, Azis, Brando, Delli Santi, Robiglio and Vanderhoven above all suggest. We certainly do reframe our practical hunches in practice, as Schön suggested, but we may as we come to these new ideas and views. We may be so transfixed on our new strategies or moves that we treat others dismissively, condescendingly, disrespectfully, too lightly, all with the very best of intentions, fueled of course by our conviction and self-assurance that we are being

both reflectively responsive and correct, 'technically sound.' There may be a good deal more to planning action, and to learning from mistakes, than reflection-in-action involves.

An old joke about leadership illustrates the point. A new executive assumes leadership of a complex operation, and the outgoing executive offers some advice. The parting exec says, "This is tough work, and you'll have crises that will come up, no doubt. So I've left you three envelopes in the desk drawer. As you hit a crisis, open the first envelope, and go from there."

Six months go by, a crisis looms, and our new executive opens the first envelope. Its message reads, "Blame the past administration!" That advice followed, the first crisis passes, and work proceeds.

Six more months go by until a new and different crisis looms. The second envelope offers help, and it says, "Re-organize!"

With that advice followed, this crisis too passes, and work now looks better again. But another 6 months go by, and a third crisis then threatens the organization. Hopeful and prepared, our executive opens the drawer and turns to the third envelope.

It says simply, "Make out three envelopes."

There can be many readings of this parable, to be sure, but at least one lesson involves the ultimate accountability of leadership to others. The first two envelopes allow the leader to 'buy time,' to put others off, but they offer ready excuses or gimmicks that do not seriously engage the others with whom the executive must work. Practitioners can have a strategy, some momentary confidence; they can make a move or two to assert control, but if they have lacked a strategy to create new relationships with others to deal with the circumstances at hand, they will soon have burned through their three envelopes.

In planning, ends and means interact. Practical processes without vision guiding them can be chaotic, contradictory, inefficient, pointless; visions without processes to reach them can be empty slogans, mere rhetoric. So while practicing planners have to worry both about goals (Argyris and Schön's double loop learning, 1978) and means (incorporating technique, expertise, research, tools at hand), those considerations always exist in interactions with others. *Practitioners reflect and, together with others, they must deliberate too* (Forester 1999, De Leo and Forester 2017).

Ignoring reflection, practicing planners will fail to reframe. Ignoring deliberation, planners will undermine their always precarious cooperation with others. The planners can find themselves right but ignored, expertly right but unwittingly arrogant and rejected. They might be right but find themselves fueling the resentment and resistance of others who may feel condescended to, dismissed rather than recognized, dismissed rather than involved, included or respected.

The striking contributions in this Interface reveal complexity and thoughtfulness, practicality, politics and lessons for the future. Just one among those lessons, I suggest, is that in order to learn from our mistakes, we will have to act not only reflectively, but to engage deliberatively with others too – or suffer the consequences.

Notes on contributor

John Forester's best known publications include *The Deliberative Practitioner* (MIT, 1999) and *Planning in the Face of Power* (1989). His recent studies of planning practices include *Planning in the Face of Conflict* (APA Pr. 2013), *Conflict, Improvisation, Governance* (Routledge, 2015 with David Laws) and *Reimagining Planning: How Italian Urban Planners Are Changing Planning Practices* (INU, 2018 with Daniela De Leo). Email: Jff1@cornell.edu.
Join in the debate on Twitter #PTPinterface.

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