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Planning Styles in Conflict

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission

Judith E. Innes and Judith Gruber

In a 5-year study of the San Francisco Bay Area Metropolitan Transportation Commission, we found four planning styles at work: technical/bureaucratic, political influence, social movement, and collaborative. Each involved differing assumptions about knowledge, participation, and the nature of a good plan. Players using one style were often mistrustful or contemptuous of those working in others. Regional actions—as opposed to packages of projects for parochial interests—were rare. The few regional initiatives emerged from collaborative planning and social movements. We argue that where diversity and interdependence of interests are high, collaboration is the most effective approach. Key barriers to collaboration included state and federal funding formulas, earmarking, and the substantial documentation required by state and federal regulations.

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After a 5-year study of transportation planning in the San Francisco Bay Area, we have concluded that the contentiousness we observed in the process was due in great part to differences in participants' styles of planning and not solely to disagreements over desired outcomes. Each style involved different assumptions about information, public participation, and what a good plan is like, as well as about the process of planning. Practitioners of each tended to believe deeply in their approach and to regard with suspicion, if not hostility, those practicing different styles. We identified four coexisting styles, which we label *technical/bureaucratic, political influence, social movement,* and *collaborative.* Each style tended to be associated with different types of outcomes, though this was not explicit in discussion. The political planners divided resources among players, whereas the collaborative and the social movement planners were associated with strategies designed to benefit the region as a whole.

These findings emerged from an in-depth interpretive study of the San Francisco Bay Area's Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) from late 1995 to early 2000 (Innes & Gruber, 2001).[1] The study had two original purposes. The first was to see how this agency, widely regarded as one of the leading Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs)[2] in the country, was implementing the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), the path-breaking federal legislation designed to provide intermodal funding flexibility, increase participation in decisions, and allow more regional discretion to solve problems. Our second purpose was to find the degree to which the collaborative planning group MTC had set up, the Bay Area Partnership, was producing decisions that were regional rather than parochial in perspective.[3] We anticipated, based on findings from our earlier research (Innes et al., 1994), that genuine regionalism would require collaborative dialogue among the key players. It turned out, however, that there was not enough collaboration going on for this to be a central focus. Accordingly, we shifted to looking at the whole set of public decision processes, and we began to see the players as operating in different styles. This insight helped us to make sense of the story, the conflicts, and the agreements or lack thereof. The full story has been told in a 550-page monograph (Innes & Gruber, 2001).

The purpose of this article is to explore these styles and show how they played out in the MTC process. We begin with a brief summary of MTC's way

of making planning decisions, highlighting some of the moments where conflicts arose. We then describe and contrast the planning styles in the story and look at how they came into conflict. Finally we propose a conceptual model for understanding these in relation to one another and to the nature of the planning task.

MTC and the Bay Area Partnership: The Story

MTC[4] is responsible for preparing the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and allocating hundreds of millions of dollars in state and federal funding each year. Like other MPOs, it has some discretion in how it does this, though some of its funding must be allocated to certain purposes or to jurisdictions according to a formula. MTC gained powers for its process from the state well before these were assigned by ISTEA, so in 1991 it already had considerable experience. MTC's political challenges are substantial, as its jurisdiction covers more than 6 million people in 9 counties and 101 cities, and it includes 28 transit systems. The agency has about 100 professional staff, who report to a 19-member commission of mostly elected officials appointed by cities and counties. Figure 1 is a simplified diagram of the communication system among various groups that MTC staff and the commission set up to play a part in decisions, with the staff acting as the primary node. While the executive director plays the major role in this system, he works primarily with staff, who manage this network, and with the commission.[5]

MTC staff set up the 37-member Bay Area Partnership to help them implement ISTEA. The Partnership included directors of the county Congestion Management Agencies (CMAs)[6]; the major transit agencies; and the relevant federal, state, and regional agencies and port authorities. Staff set up working committees on topics ranging from fund programming and preparing the RTP, to systems operation and management (SOM), and modeling coordination. The Partnership began with high hopes, engaging participants in largely collaborative ways with a broad and ambitious agenda. An early regional success, according to respondents, was the collaborative creation of a multimodal scoring system for screening, rating, and ranking proposed projects, using regional criteria (Innes & Gruber, 2001; Younger & Murray, 1992). Over time this system, along with the social capital partners built in the first year or two, allowed MTC to obligate most or all funds available to the region each year (Innes & Gruber, 2001, p. 121). They could divert funds as needed from projects in one county to another because the

partners trusted they would be repaid. This allowed the partners to present a united front to commissioners and state legislators, and gave them the political capital to push successfully for state and federal legislation and project funding. Collaboration also helped them agree on how to coordinate transportation models around the region.

Some Partnership initiatives that were less collaborative did not work as well. The SOM Committee depended heavily on staff and consultants rather than engaging in their own dialogue. Members did not develop a shared understanding of what system management meant, nor a commitment to it. They complained the committee "got into a lot of planning theory" (Innes & Gruber, 2001, p. 151) and that "the stuff SOM was working on was boring" (p. 247). Most stopped attending. The focus on project funding in the Plans and Programs committee (3PC) ensured high attendance from players protecting their interests, but discussion never got beyond projects to regional issues. These 3PC meetings were dominated by long agendas and staff reports, and there was little collaborative dialogue, problem solving, or creativity. By 1995, agency directors began to send staff rather than attend these meetings themselves.

In 1996 a group of partners who were interested in collaborative planning proposed a new way of preparing the RTP, which would focus on strategies and regional priorities rather than on fund allocation. This RTP Task Force proposed a qualitative assessment of proposals, where questions would be asked and a narrative written to show how each would implement regional priorities. These were to be the basis of in-depth discussion among partners, but the more technically oriented staff resisted, contending they could not understand this. A hostile and mutually contemptuous set of interactions ensued. Ultimately staff prevailed by rewriting questions and not following through on using them. One partner said "[We] came to the brink and stepped back" (Innes & Gruber, 2001, p. 207). While some collaboration continued, this conflict marked a turning point after which key partners began to disengage and trust deteriorated.

At the insistence of one of the commissioners and the Advisory Council, staff wrote a limited land use policy for MTC in 1996 (Innes & Gruber, 2001, pp. 158–160, 524–525). Land use had been a taboo topic among partners, and staff had insisted that it was not MTC's bailiwick. This issue masked the deeper conflict between suburban partners who feared any land use policy because it could mean less investment in roads and urban partners who supported it because it could mean more investment in transit. Opening this discussion could damage what political and social capital they had achieved among themselves. As one CMA
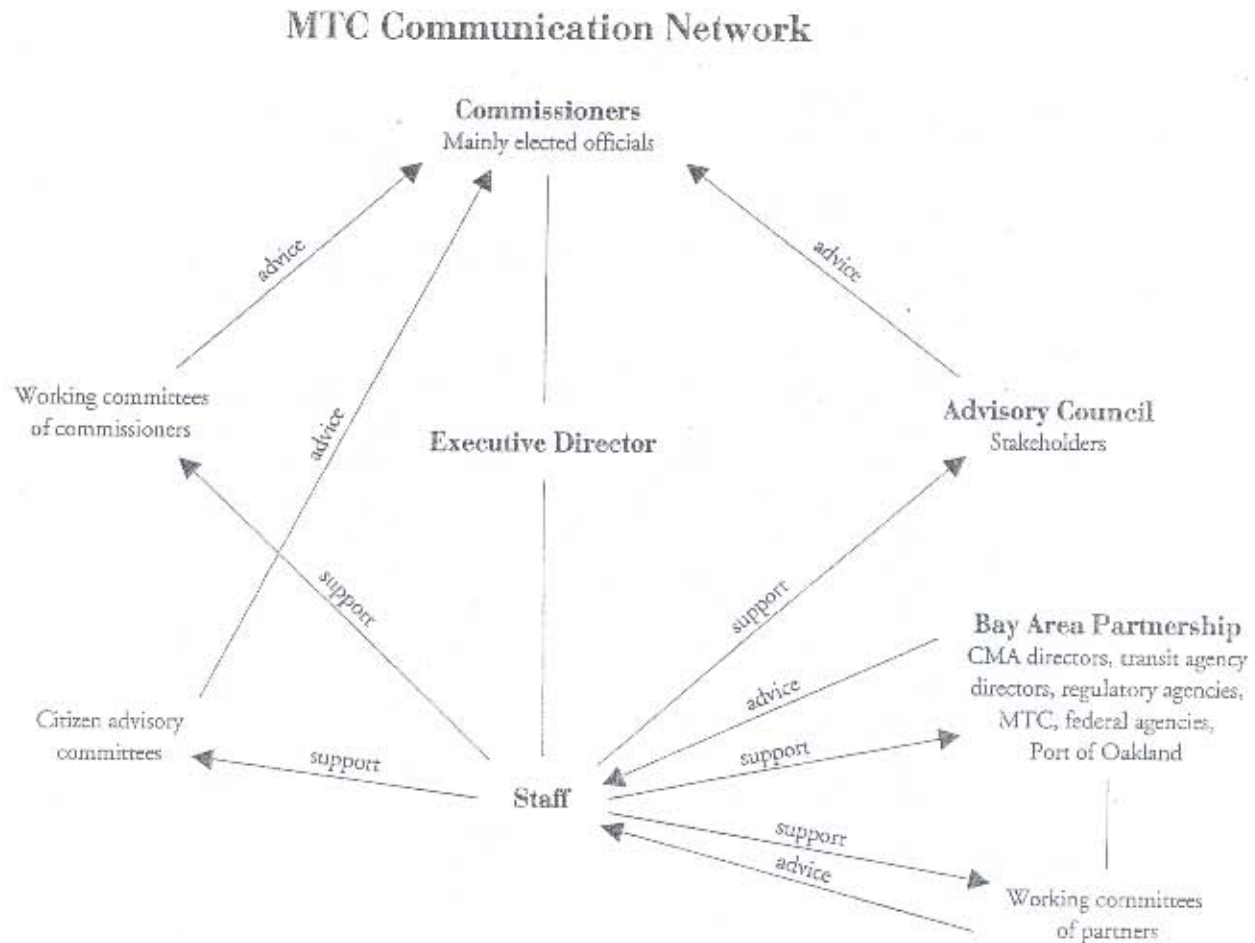
MTC Communication Network

Figure 1. Simplified diagram of MTC's communication network supporting its decision-making process.

director said, thinking in political terms, "I would not want to participate in a process that could pit one group of political interests against another. . . . In effect you are pitting local governments against others. . . . You're reopening a huge set of issues that were settled over the years" (Innes & Gruber, 2001, p. 99).

The stakeholder-based Advisory Council, however, freely discussed land use. Its chairs, who were both leaders of large nonprofits, controlled the agendas (rather than staff) and focused on collective problem solving. They became proactive on the transportation/land use connection, working with staff to develop the Transportation for Livable Communities (TLC) program. This offered planning and project funds to local communities and nonprofits on a competitive basis to create transit- and pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods. This program quickly became popular with communities, though some partners were unhappy that what they regarded as their funds were diverted.

The taboo on discussing land use partly accounts for why many partners never appeared to understand how the region worked, nor how jurisdictions and economies were interdependent. Not surprisingly, the RTP (MTC, 1999) was little more than a package of projects, offering no rationale for how these would solve such problems as congestion or air quality, much less meet other goals. As a League of Women Voters spokesperson told federal planning certification reviewers from the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT),

The citizens of the . . . Bay Area look to MTC to develop a long-range regional transportation plan from the perspective of the region as a whole and to allocate funding to implement that perspective. However the RTP is simply a list of projects submitted by the . . . CMAs, with allocation of funds dictated by return-to-source. (Innes & Gruber, 2001, p. 328)

By 1997, transportation policy initiatives were underway at both the state and federal levels, including legislation that consolidated individual programs into a block grant to be returned to the counties. The partnership process proved unable to respond to this new policy environment in a collaborative fashion. MTC staff fought partners unsuccessfully to have monies set aside for the regional transportation management projects they ran. Transit operators feared they would be hurt by the loss of dedicated funds, and CMA directors fought hard to maintain their control of projects. The acrimony among these players was fierce and almost tore the Partnership apart. After the reauthorization of ISTEA in 1998,[7] staff suddenly and without explanation stopped using the scoring process, to the dismay of the partners. They felt ownership of this process because they had developed it and had continued to improve it collaboratively through the years. By the end of our study, the partners had not developed much mutual understanding, much less empathy, for each other's needs and had lost some of the social capital they had in 1995. Transit agencies were as mistrustful of the CMAs as ever. The City of San Francisco and some transit agencies had begun openly opposing MTC policies. Environmental and social equity interests had become increasingly angry, forming a social movement that held up the recertification of MTC's planning process and brought two lawsuits against the agency.

A Typology of Planning Styles

Why did the initial collaborative culture of the Partnership dissipate? We believe that a major reason is that the collaborative style was introduced into MTC as an addition to, but not a substitute for, other styles of planning. These three other styles—technical/bureaucratic, political influence, and social movement—each reflected differing views about the rules and goals of the game. Each had a long history, and the first two were deeply institutionalized in the organization. When participants who favored different styles were brought together, their conflicting assumptions undermined their ability to collaborate. Federal and state laws and regulations, moreover, tended to support the technical/bureaucratic and political influence approaches, as they required extensive technical documentation and gave out funding in political style by formula or earmarked projects. Some players used different styles at different times, though they usually favored one. This was hard to change as they were constrained by role expectations, training, and experience. What we present here is a typology designed to help us see and understand patterns

of behavior and attitudes. Although we developed this typology out of our observations in this study, literature provides evidence of the existence of each style in other settings and suggests what the ideal version should be like.[8]

The Technical/Bureaucratic Style

This is a version of the rational/technical model of planning, which underlies much of the education of practitioners (Allison, 1971, pp. 10–38; Flyvbjerg, 1998; Hoch, 1994, pp. 45–74; Howe, 1994; Peattie, 1987, pp. 23–39; Robinson, 1972). In the ideal version, planners operate as analysts whose job it is to explore a range of alternatives and evaluate each in light of agreed-upon goals to see which will work best (Braybrooke & Lindblom, 1963). Planners are neutral advisors who provide objective information, typically in quantitative form, to inform and convince decision makers about the best choices.

An ample literature suggests that this model seldom works according to the ideal (Allison, 1971; Friedmann, 1987; Hoch, 1994; Lindblom, 1990; Peattie, 1987; Yankelovich, 1991). Information all too often fails to influence or misses the point that decision makers care about (Innes, 1998). In other cases, decision makers cannot agree on goals. As a result, analysis may be divorced from decision making, and technical planners may find themselves attached to bureaucracies providing documentation for proposals that are all but decided already on the basis of criteria other than the capacity of the policy to advance public goals. A project may already be in the pipeline and simply need justification, or it may be selected for its political acceptability. Thus, in practice, rational/technical planners often become what we term technical/bureaucratic planners.

A substantial proportion of the planning at MTC can be categorized as following this style. Transportation is a complex arena with myriad technical regulations. Funding pots have different eligibility rules and requirements, and just during the period of our study, laws changed several times. Many MTC staff spent much of their time interpreting and applying these regulations, doing quantitative analyses, making projections, analyzing projects to see how they fit funding criteria, and preparing materials to meet reporting requirements. What they seldom did was generate and compare alternatives in terms of tradeoffs in relation to objectives. Indeed, they explicitly refused to do so when some partners requested it (Innes & Gruber, 2001, p. 205). In meetings they typically began by discussing rules and projects, bypassing substantive policy issues.[9]

A good regional plan from the technical/bureaucratic perspective is one that meets all the requirements of legis-

lation, is consistent with official agency goals, and has all needed backup information. At MTC the information these planners used was mostly from models and forecasts, cost analyses, scientific polling, and focus groups. Technical/bureaucratic planners seldom cited qualitative information or told stories about the issues. They rejected what they called "anecdotal" information. They mistrusted data from sources other than official statistics or their own or consultants' analyses. For example, when trying to study transportation corridors, they did not have sufficiently fine-grained data, so a partner suggested, "Why not ask [transit] operators to bring information to the table? You bring some, they bring some." The staff response was, "We don't think we can trust the operators to give us accurate information" (Innes & Gruber, 2001, p. 227).

Public participation had a circumscribed role for these planners, who saw a strict division of labor segregating the public from much of the planning process. The job of commissioners and citizens was only to develop goals, establish values, and comment on alternatives. When these planners met with the public, they usually structured the meeting around a list of projects and asked for "feedback." If the members of the public, or even partners, wanted to discuss something not on the list, planners reminded them what the goals and responsibilities of MTC were and declared some topics off limits. For example, when some wanted to discuss access to transportation for disadvantaged groups, planners pointed out that it was not one of MTC's goals. They approached public participation largely as a one-way educational effort, though they might modify a project based on local feedback.

Like most MPOs, MTC found itself caught between the high expectations accorded to it as the regionwide planning body, the contentious nature of transportation issues, and their limited formal authority. In this context, the insistence of MTC's technical/bureaucratic planners on using information that they controlled and could claim as objective was part of an effort to maintain legitimacy. The segregation of public participation into a limited realm served similar purposes.

The Political Influence Style

Unlike the technical/bureaucratic style, the political influence approach is rarely taught to professional planners or policy analysts. It is not even considered "planning" as those two professions see it. In transportation, however, as in many policy arenas, the political influence style is typically dominant. In this style, a leader works with players on a one-on-one basis, keeping them personally attached

by offering them specific benefits to co-opt them into supporting the leader's agenda. The system depends on personal loyalty and is cemented by reciprocity between the leader and those who are benefitting. It depends on promises being kept and the existence of a system of rewards (in transportation, typically projects) that can be distributed to key players to induce them to support the overall package. Versions of this model have been described in ample literature (Bachrach & Baratz, 1970; Banfield, 1961; Banfield & Wilson, 1961; Benveniste, 1977, 1989; Dahl, 1961).

At MTC the political influence approach was the dominant way of making funding decisions. Most senior staff and CMA directors subscribed to this approach as normal and appropriate. In discussing our draft case, one senior staff member contended this should be called "the government model." When we asked another senior staff person what had been the best aspect of ISTEA, he said it had allowed MTC to do more and smaller projects for a wider range of players. MTC's executive director often cited a regional agreement on rail projects that the commission had put together in 1988 as the model for the Partnership and the promises that had to be kept. Staff accordingly resisted efforts to challenge projects in the pipeline to consider others that might be of higher priority by other criteria.

ISTEA was designed to avoid these sorts of outcomes. It pooled many funds formerly allocated by formula or segregated into pots for different modes and purposes. Regions were not supposed to allocate the funds according to a formula. At MTC, however, a hybrid of behind-the-scenes deals and formula-based funding persisted. In early 1992, MTC staff won permission from DOT to allocate much of their ISTEA funding by formula. Staff believed that the practice of allocating something to everyone was so ingrained that they could not fight it. In a memo introducing the idea of formulas to the partners, a senior staff member said, *"MTC wants to get out of this alive"* (italics in memo; Innes & Gruber, 2001, p. 75). Contrary to the assumption of some observers, it was staff rather than commissioners who drove this approach of dividing the pie. Some commissioners pushed for regional land use policy, often in the face of staff resistance and often in spite of the fact that their constituencies would not have directly benefited from it.[10]

This hybrid allocation model assured that all key players received benefits, but made it difficult for regionwide solutions to emerge. It worked because formula-based funding seemed transparent and fair, while behind-the-scenes deals allowed MTC to maintain its discretion and thus its political power. The political influence model grew

stronger during the study period because of new legislation allocating state funds by formula and because both the governor and the president earmarked massive funding for specific projects prior to and separate from any planning process. One reason the Transportation for Livable Communities program prospered, though it encroached on the dangerous topic of land use, was that it created projects with new constituencies for MTC. One explanation, by the same token, for the failure of the Systems Operation and Management Committee was that it was not about projects, but about some elusive regional benefit.

In the political influence style, a good regional plan is one that has the support of all powerful players. It is the sum of the individual interests of these players rather than a vision for the region. In our observation, the senior staff and agency directors who operated in this style rarely spoke of substantive policy. Their vision was a process that would work politically. Money would flow into the region, funding would be fully obligated each year, visible projects would be built, and all key players would receive funding. A state transportation agency official captured this perspective when he said about the 1998 RTP "I commend MTC for a good, balanced report with something for everyone." A commissioner similarly commented, "If you read it you can see if you are helped or not" (Innes & Gruber, 2001, p. 320).

Information is important to political planners, but they do not need information about what will solve regional problems best, nor about what is cost effective. Instead they need information to assure that funding proposals cannot be legally challenged and to demonstrate the value of what they propose. As a result, political planners had a mutually beneficial, if uneasy, partnership with the technical/bureaucratic planners. High-quality technical work provided legitimacy for the RTP and impressed funding agencies with MTC's expertise. This partnership gave technical planners clear marching orders about what to analyze, but also prevented them from examining alternatives in terms of goals. Political planners also needed information to help in selling the program to the public, raising funds, and getting support for the agency. They commissioned marketing studies to determine what projects would get most votes if they were part of a ballot measure. The most central information for political planners was about who was powerful, who wanted what, who was loyal, and who had done his or her share. When we reviewed our case study with one senior staff member, his major critique was that we had failed to assign credit and blame properly. He gave us his version of the history, which focused on who did what and who failed to live up to obligations.

Broad public involvement is not compatible with political influence planning, where much is done quietly with individual beneficiaries. Were the negotiations to be open, some might perceive others as getting special favors and want the same. In the political influence style, participation is limited and specialized. Senior staff at MTC and CMA directors argued that citizens should participate in the local jurisdictions. The one example of a political model of citizen involvement was a short-lived Blue Ribbon Advisory Committee composed of hand-picked elites who were supposed to provide advice on technology and "broaden the Partnership base" rather than to provide input on policy. One observer said the "reasonable people" stopped attending. Frustrated environmental advocates turned it into a platform to criticize MTC, which then abolished it.

Discomfort with public participation among political planners was evident at many points in our study. Although Partnership and Commission meetings were public, few citizens attended. When a militant group of bus riders came to a Commission meeting and vocally protested, staff blamed the transit agency's director. She told us,

> Our citizenry is really up in arms over the [budget cuts] and they have been screaming and doing exactly what they do to us at MTC and that has bothered the commissioners and the staff. . . . I don't think MTC is accustomed to hearing from citizen groups. . . . When they showed up at MTC meetings I think that really angered MTC. (Innes & Gruber, 2001, pp. 252–253)

MTC scheduled hearings on the 1998 RTP in locations with little transit and far from the central cities, where their most vocal opponents were. Groups supporting public transit and the interests of disabled persons believed this was an effort to prevent their participation.

The Social Movement Style

Social movement planning arises outside of public agencies, among groups who feel excluded. In this style, individuals and organizations join together around a vision, in opposition to mainstream policy. Their goal is to convert people to support this vision and to make their collective voice powerful enough to force a response. Typical tactics include public demonstrations, creating and publicizing a simple oppositional message, speaking out at public meetings, seeking media attention, and instigating litigation. A wide-ranging literature on social movements and mobilization of disaffected and politically excluded groups outlines the kinds of strategies such movements employ (e.g., Alinsky, 1989; Castells, 1985; Davidoff, 1965; Friedmann, 1987, ch. 6; Harvey, 2000; Schlosberg, 1999). This style is effec-

tive when enough interests can be joined together to create a new source of power.

The dominance of technical and political planning at MTC left out many interests, particularly those with little power such as public transit riders, environmental justice groups, and air quality advocates. It also left out the unorganized public, who, according to polls, wanted shorter and more reliable commutes and improvements in public transit. Participation was difficult because meetings involved technical jargon and focused on fund programming rather than on the policy questions that interested the public. One disgusted partner told us, "The partnership of the technical and the political has produced an abortion" (Innes & Gruber, 2001, p. 424).

In 1997 a social movement emerged, led by the Transportation and Land Use Coalition (TALC), which formed to change MTC policies. Made up of dozens of advocacy groups ranging across the interests of environmental justice, the disabled, bus riders, and environmental protection, TALC did outreach, mobilization, and networking. They attracted media attention. Some were appointed to the Advisory Council. Collectively they represented hundreds of people and could turn out high attendance at hearings. Some partners, especially those representing urban and transit interests, were sympathetic to the movement. Commissioners were at times swayed as when, in a rare move, they overrode staff and agreed to fully fund a public transit shortfall. They also agreed to develop a smart growth proposal based on a concept paper by TALC's director.

In the social movement style, a good plan is one that implements the group's vision, which in TALC's case was of a region with compact growth, transit- and pedestrian-friendly development, and high-quality transit. Poor, inner-city residents would have good access to work, health care, and shopping. Investments would be more "balanced," with transit getting a larger share at the expense of highways (Lewis, 1998). This utopian regional vision provided a rallying point for the movement.

The information these planners most needed was data and stories to dramatize issues. They used data in public primarily to convert others to their cause rather than to test their own vision or analyze alternatives. The Regional Alliance for Transit (RAFT), a precursor of TALC, persuaded MTC to model their regional vision and show its effect on transit trips and road travel. MTC agreed, expecting this to be a discussion tool, though they pointed out that it had unrealistic assumptions. RAFT used the results, however, to critique MTC's policies.

As for public participation, any social movement is about participation. The organizations were open to anyone, and they had active outreach. They represented people who

were not listened to in standard participation processes. However, they could not accommodate widely ranging viewpoints, since this would require dilution of the vision. Business representatives, suburban developers, and construction unions, accordingly, were not members of TALC.

The Collaborative Style

In the ideal model of collaborative planning, stakeholders representing the differing interests meet for face-to-face dialogue and collectively work out a strategy to address a shared problem. Participants work through joint fact finding and agree on a problem, mission, and actions. The players learn and co-evolve. Under the right conditions, this dialogue can produce results that are more than the sum of the parts (Connick & Innes, 2003). For this to happen, the dialogue must be self-organizing and authentic in the sense that what people say is sincere, comprehensible, accurate, and a legitimate representation of the stakeholders' interests. The stakeholders must represent diverse interests, and decisions must be made only when all, or most, agree. Under these conditions, collaborative planning can produce a shared vision, innovative solutions, and motivations for collective action (Innes, 2004; Innes & Booher, 1999a, 2003; Johnson & Johnson, 1997; Susskind et al., 1999).

We had assumed a substantial part of the work of the Partnership would involve collaborative planning, but in meetings there was seldom an effort to help partners understand each others' underlying interests, develop a common understanding of a problem, or agree on information, much less agree on action. Facilitators were rarely used. Collaborative dialogue was used for developing the scoring system and for discussions of transferring funding from one county to another. It was used in Partnership retreats. It was the norm in small groups, where participants listened to each other, explored issues thoroughly, and sought consensus. When participants knew each other well, they could determine the sincerity of others, assess whether their claims were legitimate, decide on facts, and assure all understood what was being said. The most collaborative dialogue in a larger group took place in the Advisory Council.

In the collaborative style, a good plan is one that responds to the interests of all stakeholders and creates joint benefit. A good plan produces learning and positive relationships. The RTP Task Force was a case in point, where partners from different parts of the region and with different interests jointly crafted questions. Collaborative dialogue typically led to a focus on the welfare of the region.

Accommodating the range of interests required participants to step back from parochial views to see how the actions of each affected others and consider how they all were part of a region.

The information that counts in collaborative planning is what stakeholders agree is true. Expert findings are subject to challenge, and experts must recalculate models or change assumptions in response (Connick, 2003). Stakeholder knowledge about the problem, each others' interests, and likely reactions to proposals is also essential. Collaborative planners paid attention not only to quantitative analyses, but also to stories and anecdotes. For example, the Advisory Council brought in developers to tell their stories to help the Council understand why transit-based development was so difficult. The RTP Task Force deliberated through scenario building (Innes & Booher, 1999b; Yankelovich, 1999) and hoped that narratives about proposals would inform a meaningful dialogue. Some partners and Advisory Council members tried to arrive at jointly agreed on performance measures for the region. Partners shared stories about the status of projects for making funding decisions.

Conventional participation methods are counterproductive in collaborative planning (Innes & Booher, 2004). Methods such as open hearings with public testimony bring in people who may be unrepresentative of interests and unfamiliar with the issues, and who argue from positions rather than interests. At MTC the collaborative processes, other than in the Advisory Council, included Partnership agencies but not citizens or other stakeholders.

Conflicts Among Styles

The four styles came into conflict not just because of differences in tacit views of plans, information, and participation, but also because planners in each style usually believed their methods were both practically and morally correct. The technical/bureaucratic approach reflected a belief in the possibility and importance of providing objective information to those who make decisions (Howe, 1994). The political influence approach reflected a faith in the legitimacy of political processes and of elected officials. Social movement planners believed in their vision and the justice of their cause. Collaborative planners believed that what was right was what an informed, inclusive, and empowered set of stakeholders could work out through dialogue.

Conflicts showed up in a variety of ways. Political influence planners did not view the world as one where there were technically "right" answers—only politically feasible ones. Executive staff operating in this style often controlled the language of reports and sent them back for rewrite or recalculation. They sometimes regarded technical staff as politically naive. The paradigm of technical planners required them to take direction from the political leadership, but in practice they could not do the cost-benefit analysis or other evaluation of alternatives that many were trained to do.[11] They had to work with the projects that "bubbled up," as one partner called it, from the counties.

Technical planners criticized the information used by social movement planners as biased, but social movement planners were equally skeptical of the information staff provided. For example, environmental justice advocates became angry about a survey staff proposed, saying everyone knew surveys could be biased. They demanded community input. Conflicts over performance measurement were another case in point (Innes & Gruber, 2001, pp. 339–369). In meetings of the Advisory Council and RTP Task Force, environmental advocates asked MTC to measure vehicle miles traveled because they believed a goal of the region should be to reduce this. Staff contended it was a technically bad indicator, did not represent a goal of MTC, and was not in any case under their control.

Because social movement planners were not interested in projects but in policies, they conflicted with the political planners who had already struck deals. Social movement planners wanted to revisit decisions about projects agreed to, but not yet built. They brought lawsuits against MTC during our study, angering key officials who thereafter would not work with them.[12] They did not play by the political rules of respecting promises and keeping conflict behind the scenes.

All three other styles were obstacles to collaborative planning. Social movement planners were more comfortable with those who shared their values and sometimes confrontational with those who did not—though at times they did collaborate. The desire of technical planners to control data often stymied collaborative efforts. When partners wanted to participate in the design of performance measures, technical staff made clear they had already decided what to use. When partners asked staff to convene a group of CMA directors to help them develop a common set of performance measures, they would not do it. In the RTP Task Force, technical staff not only resisted using qualitative questions to assess proposals, they seemed genuinely not to understand how they could work. At one point a staff member wrote on the board during a heated discussion, "Questions are mushy" (Innes & Gruber, 2001, pp. 342–358).

Staff also resisted the questions because they implied values, whereas the partners felt that incorporating values was the whole point. In collaborative planning, values are on the table, while they are not in technical planning. Staff changed questions to remove what they saw as normative content and make them narrow, neutral, and designed to reflect legislative mandates. For example, they changed the partners' question, "What is the impact on low income communities?" to "How will this provide assistance to the welfare-to-work program?" In turn, collaborative partners pointed out that staff themselves were using value judgments. One said, "What you have got here is a set of strategies out of which you will get projects. We want the questions to be intermediate. You asked questions in your head to get to these strategies." Staff did not seem to follow this. A partner clarified, "I take the point of view I do because it is my job to protect my county. Why do you take the view you do?" Others chimed in, "We are going to have to somehow make these decisions." The staff member's reply came from a technical perspective. "Yes, I don't have my magic computer (now) but we do have to deal with this. We don't have enough staff" (these dialogues and the story of this Task Force conflict with staff are in chapter 13 of Innes & Gruber, 2001, pp. 204–241).

Finally, the collaborative style was in constant conflict with the political one because a collective decision could undermine the legitimacy of political deal making. Senior political planners resisted the RTP Task Force questions, which could threaten their established way of doing business. Collaborative planners pushed for a land use policy, while political planners resisted it. Their efforts at regional problem solving repeatedly foundered on desires by political players to get their piece of the pie.

A Conceptual Matrix of Styles

To place these styles in relation to one another and to frame a normative approach to determining which style works best under what conditions, we developed a matrix (see Figure 2). We see this as a tool for understanding and assessing a variety of planning processes beyond this one. The theoretical bases for the matrix are several. Grounded theory emerging from this research gives us the content. Complexity theory gives us the framework. We also drew conceptually on the rational planning model, elements of political theory, theory and practice of social movements, the communicative rationality of Habermas, and our own and others' findings on collaborative policymaking.

The basic concept of the matrix is that the appropriateness of a planning style to a particular situation is con-

tingent on the degree to which it involves diverse interests and the degree to which these interests are interdependent. Diversity is high when there are many stakeholders with different needs, and interdependence is high when no actor can meet his/her interests without the cooperation of many others. Each style implies a different theory of change, through convincing, co-opting, converting, or co-evolving. The technical/bureaucratic approach works where there is a unitary decision maker because it depends on applying known goals and has no way of sorting through conflicting interests. The political influence approach is best suited to policy situations characterized by a diversity of interests, divisible benefits, and few interdependencies. The social movement style involves high interdependence among its members, but it cannot accommodate a wide diversity of interests because this would require watering down the vision and weakening core support. When there is wide diversity of interests that are also highly interdependent, the collaborative model is needed. Face-to-face dialogue allows players to discover these interdependencies and work together for a solution that will provide mutual gain and enlarge rather than simply divide the pie.[13]

Much of the regional transportation problem in the Bay Area fits in the lower right-hand corner of the matrix. There is a high diversity of interests, and they are interdependent. Environmental concerns cannot be addressed without dealing with highway interests. The success of transit depends on land use policies of local governments. No decision maker, even MTC, has the capacity, authority, or knowledge to impose a solution. It is not surprising in this context that most of the regional and innovative ideas emerged from the groups that were comparatively collaborative.[14] The multimodal scoring system, for example, recognized that the region could maximize its total funding only with the cooperation of all players. All too often, other planning styles dominated and interfered with solving regional problems. For example, more effective system management would benefit all partners, but it would require collaboration. Partners were focused on their projects, so little improvement was made in system management. The focus on projects in the political style worked to keep diverse players happy, but it was suboptimal because synergies between projects could not be established, and large-scale regional projects could not be seriously considered. The technical style was effective when there was agreement on goals and technical support was needed. The social movement style worked to equalize the power of stakeholders and bring regional proposals to the table to be considered by the other types of processes.

MTC is an organization facing a turbulent environment, just as planning does today. The older styles of

Four Styles of Planning

Diversity of Interests

	Low	High

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Interdependence of Interests</td><td>Low</td><td>Technical/Bureaucratic

<i>Convincing</i></td><td>Political Influence

<i>Co-opting</i></td></tr>
<tr><td>High</td><td>Social Movement

<i>Converting</i></td><td>Collaborative

<i>Co-evolving</i></td></tr>
</table>

Figure 2. Four styles of planning—the conditions for their use and their theories of change.
Source: Adapted from Innes and Booher (2000).

practice are less accepted than they once were, as there is less agreement on values and more conflict among interests. At the same time, the problems have become more complex and interdependencies greater. We believe that MTC, like many planning agencies, has not sufficiently recognized the potential of collaborative approaches. It has not worked out how to combine the strengths of these styles into an overall planning strategy.

There are, however, many obstacles to adopting a collaborative style even when it is appropriate to the task. Some have to do with conflicts with other planning styles, but the problem lies also in the practices and culture of transportation planning. Laws that fund by formula, elected officials who earmark funds, and the understanding that reelection depends on "bringing home the bacon" all reinforce the political model. The complexity of funding requirements reinforces technical planning. The lack of inclusiveness instigates oppositional movements. Collaborative planning is unfamiliar and risky because it could upset long-established arrangements with unknown consequences.

Several actions could help transportation planning move toward collaboration when the conditions demand it. Formula-based funding and earmarking could be gradually replaced by merit-based funding, which can serve substantive goals, as well as a wider array of players. Funding doc-

umentation can be simplified to reduce the dominance of technical/bureaucratic planning. Performance measures can be developed to provide criteria for success that are linked to regional welfare. The inclusion of stakeholders who are not seeking funding can encourage regional problem solving. Collaborative methods can become more integral to transportation planning education. Finally, incentives and support for collaborative methods can provide the impetus for agencies to experiment with these in the future.

Notes

1. This study relied on observation, open-ended interviewing, and review of documents.

Our goal was not to generalize, but to understand in-depth the decision-making dynamics of one of the nation's leading Metropolitan Planning Organizations. Researchers attended over 100 committee, commission, and partnership meetings and interviewed at least 60 participants and staff for as long as 2 hours each and many others informally. Standard protocols for different types of respondents guided interviewers to assure key points were covered. Careful, nearly verbatim, notes were taken at meetings, and interviews taped. We reviewed hundreds of documents, analyzed media reports, and completed an extensive literature review on the history of transportation planning in the Bay Area and on ISTEA. We used the analytic approach of thick description (Geertz, 1973), developing a rich story complete with verbatim details of discussions, along with context and background of the events. Our approach was to make sense of all the details through a grounded theorizing process (Glaser, 1967) after lengthy discussions among the research team. The case was reviewed for accuracy by MTC staff.

2. Federal highway and transit statutes require, as a condition for spending these federal funds in urbanized areas, the designation of a Metropolitan Planning Organization to be responsible for the planning, programming, and coordination of federal highway and transit investments. Lewis and Sprague (1997) provide a descriptive overview of MPOs in the U.S. and what they do. The web site for the organization of MPOs (http://www.ampo.org) provides some history of the activities and evolution of MPOs and their responsibilities. A descriptive overview of California MPOs, including MTC, has come out of the Public Policy Institute of California (Lewis & Sprague, 1997).

3. We did not assess the decisions by whether they actually were good for the region, which is a separate normative and analytic exercise. We simply looked for whether decisions were focused on the region as a whole rather than on individual interests separately.

4. The MTC *Citizens Guide* provides an introduction to the structure, organization, and activities of the agency (MTC, 1995). More information about MTC can be found on its web site (http://www.mtc.dst .ca.us). Very little has been written on MTC and its internal workings other than some unpublished work and a book on their informal coordination activities with other agencies (Banks, 1977; Chisholm, 1989; Perelman, 1985). Unlike many MPOs, it is not a Council of Government.

5. For further understanding of how this system works, see Innes and Gruber (2001), especially chapters 1, 2, 4, 5, and 11.

6. These agencies were set up by the legislature in 1989 to allocate a half-cent sales tax to transportation. They were set up in different ways in each county, with some autonomous and reporting to special countywide boards, and others more integrated into county transportation agencies. They are typically managed by a public works–oriented director.

7. This was known as TEA-21, the Transportation Equity for the 21st Century Act.

8. Many of our findings dovetail with what Howe (1994) found in extensive interviews with planners. Some of them are more comfortable in technical roles, others in political roles. Most care deeply about these roles and see the choice as an ethical one.

9. We use the term *substantive policy issues* to refer to questions about, for example, allocation principles, relative support for highways versus public transit, or solutions for problems of congestion or air quality.

10. When we asked about this, staff responded that commissioners did not realize that they would not like the consequences of a land use policy. Staff may have been more comfortable with dividing the pie according to a formula, as this principle had worked for a long time. Some senior staff may have felt they would lose power if this procedure did not continue. We were unable to shed light on this puzzling observation.

11. An exception we identified was a comparison of transit projects by cost per rider (MTC, 2000).

12. This contrasts with some of our other research on collaborative processes, where litigants ultimately sat at the table with those they had been suing.

13. Innes and Booher (2003) and Booher and Innes (2002) provide in-depth discussion of the role of complexity theory, communicative rationality, and authentic dialogue. See also Christensen (1985) for a parallel matrix focusing on uncertainty.

14. A large-scale comparative assessment of the transportation planning process in several MPOs found similarly that "the ability of the MPO to facilitate regional planning depends in large part on the technical competence of its staff, the ability of its leadership to build consensus among diverse participants and the leadership of local officials and the business community" (Dempsey et al., 2000, p. 2). The study also found that consensus building was a critical component of successful regional planning because MPOs had no land use authority.

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