

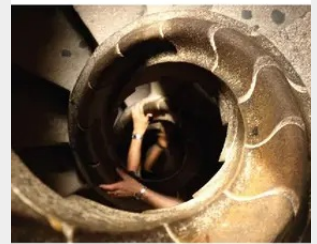
Planning for the Common Good

Appeals to the 'common good' or 'public interest' have long been used to justify planning as an activity. While often criticised, such appeals endure in spirit if not in name as practitioners and theorists seek ways to ensure that planning operates as an ethically attuned pursuit. Yet, this leaves us with the unavoidable question as to how an ethically sensitive common good should be understood. In response, this book proposes that the common good should not be conceived as something pre-existing and 'out there' to be identified and applied or something simply produced through the correct configuration of democracy. Instead, it is contended that the common good must be perceived as something 'in here,' which is known by engagement with the complexities of a context through employing the interpretive tools supplied to one by the moral dimensions of the life in which one is inevitably embedded. This book brings into conversation a series of thinkers not normally mobilised in planning theory, including Paul Ricoeur, Alasdair MacIntyre and Charles Taylor. These shine light on how the values carried by the planner are shaped through both their relationships with others and their relationship with the 'tradition of planning' – a tradition it is argued that extends as a form of reflective deliberation across time and space. It is contended that the mutually constitutive relationship that gives planning its *raison d'être* and the common good its meaning are conceived through a narrative understanding extending through time that contours the moral subject of planning as it simultaneously profiles the ethical orientation of the discipline. This book provides a new perspective on how we can come to better understand what planning entails and how this dialectically relates to the concept of the common good. In both its aim and approach, this book provides an original contribution to planning theory that reconceives why it is we do what we do, and how we envisage what should be done differently. It will be of interest to scholars, students and practitioners in planning, urban studies, sociology and geography.

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