

Reading Tips and Study Questions: Session 14

Planning ethics and the public interest—October 31st

Required reading

1. **Harper, Thomas L. and Stanley Stein.** "The Centrality of Normative Ethical Theory to Contemporary Planning Theory." *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 11: 105-116 (1992).
2. **Annette Kim,** "Primer on Ethical Theories," Unpublished outline, MIT-DUSP (2007).
3. *RPT* (Chapter 22), **William H. Lucy,** "APA's Ethical Principles include Simplistic Planning Theories," pp.413-417.

Plan for the session

In the last session, we discussed some of the similarities and differences in the current controversies surrounding local government land takings for economic development in the U.S. and places like China and Vietnam.

During this class, you will be assigned to a small group to assume one of the following four ethical stances as described in the Harper and Stein article and the brief primer provided in today's assigned reading:

- a) utilitarian
- b) Marxist, structuralist
- c) libertarian
- d) pluralist

In your group, you will discuss the following and select a spokesperson to convey the insights of your group's discussion: (a) Outline how your assigned ethical framework applies in the land takings controversies we discussed last class (i.e., take a position on the controversies); (b) Identify some of the likely criticisms of your position; and (c) Rebut those criticisms with the best arguments that you can think of.

Tips and questions

Think of a planning controversy with which you have intimate knowledge or personal experience. Try applying at least two of the ethical frameworks to the controversy. What action implications or stakeholder views become clearer through this exercise?