

Discussion questions on Wildavsky

1. What's your reaction to Wildavsky's rant against (national) planning? If he's right about national planning, does his argument necessarily apply to planning of all kinds at all levels in all places?
2. Can planning that is not focused on taking action be the basis for a profession?
3. Wildavsky argues that planning requires (1) specification of future objectives; and (2) a series of related activities over time designed to achieve them. There is no "who" in the story.
4. Wildavsky says that "national planning requires good theory about how the economy works." When national planning fails, is that because the theory of planning is inadequate or the theory of economics is inadequate?
5. "Planning requires causal knowledge." Do you agree?
6. "To plan is to make decisions that affect others," says Wildavsky. Who are the others? Why are they not involved in decisions that affect them?
7. Planning is not, according to Wildavsky, ad hoc decision-making. If you change the objectives of the planning effort along the way (in light of new knowledge, shifting circumstances, etc.), you are not planning. Do you agree?
8. When the outcomes of planning are not realized, is planning a failure? How would you decide?
9. Wildavsky writes: "The success of planning depends entirely on whose plans one has in mind." That is why, in my view, the advocacy model is so problematic. It makes Wildavsky's argument for him. The consensus building model, on the other hand, undercuts his argument.
10. Does coordination equal efficiency?
11. Wildavsky says: "Planning is not so much a subject for the social scientist as for the theologian." Do you agree?