CHAPTER 9

Ethics, Conflict, and Environmental Planning

Environmental planning has been characterized as a decision-making process where the planner attempts to achieve a sustainable balance between human needs and environmental protection. This planning specialization places a high priority on environmental matters concerning land use, policy, and design, and as a decision process, encourages decisions that maximize benefits to both people and the environment in which they reside. Yet, any decision-making process is confronted with the larger issues of not simply making decisions, but with the more daunting responsibility of having made the correct decisions. Recognizing that making decisions is often very different from justifying those decisions, there is more looming behind the environmental planning process than a plan or a decision, there is a landscape of beliefs that injects its influence and colors our perceptions and approaches in obvious and subtle ways (Hargrove, 1985; 1989). There are no easy answers to the issues that surround an environmental planning decision, however there may be a set of principles that can be called upon to aid and guide the planner when decisions must be made. In this chapter we will examine the emergence of ethical standards that can direct planning practice and explore the question of ethics in planning and the value of applying these "rules" to help guide our environmental judgment.

Ethics and choices

Whether we realize it or not, each of us possesses a set of values and calls upon those values as we make judgments and decisions in our daily lives. In the practice of planning those values often introduce themselves in ways we may not be aware of, yet their influence can be undeniable. Situations we encounter constantly ask us to make choices, and when we choose we are expressing our values, rating things as better or worse, important or unimportant, good or bad. While some choices are trivial and carry no significant consequence, others can be monumental, affecting conditions in the planning area for years to come. Because choice is inevitable, the question is not whether we shall have preferences, standards, or ideals; the real question is whether our choices will be consistent or inconsistent, life enhancing or life destroying (Percesepe, 1995). Although there is a tendency to pretend that environmental planning is "value-free" and purely objective, we have come to recognize that value judgments exist and play an active role in shaping environmental decisions (Lemons, 1987). Ignoring the role of value judgments in the practice of planning leads to a lack of wholeness and perspective. Therefore, if we are to choose well, we need to acknowledge the personal and social values we bring to the planning problem. Acknowledging the presence of value judgments and considering the choices

we make that draw upon them directs us to the subject of ethics and its influence in the planning process.

Ethics may be defined as the branch of philosophy that seeks to systematically analyze moral concepts and to justify moral principles and theories (Percesepe, 1995; MacKinnon, 1995). Therefore, ethics, or moral philosophy, asks us to consider foundational questions about "good," "bad"; about what is "better" and "worse," about whether there is an objective "right" or "wrong" and how we can know if there is. Through the study of ethics we endeavor to establish principles of right conduct that can serve as a guide to our decisions, and in its search for those values ethics constructs and criticizes arguments that state valid moral principles and the relationship between these principles (Percesepe, 1995). Within this definition, it is assumed that the primary objective is to help us decide what is good or bad, better or worse, either in some general way or with respect to particular ethical issues (MacKinnon, 1995). This focus is referred to as normative ethics, and when it is compared to the natural sciences, which are largely descriptive and concerned with empirical facts, ethics tends to be far more prescriptive and directed toward an understanding of normative values. In this context, we can describe ethics as a normative-based study concerned with the discovery of "what ought to be" rather than "that which is" (Percesepe, 1995).

To the environmental planner ethics becomes something that is practical, action oriented, and seeking to affect change from what is to what should be. Although ethics does ask very general questions about the nature of "good" and "bad," its value to the environmental planner rests in its aim to help us determine the right or better thing to do in particular situations. For example, when faced with the question of saving jobs or saving an environmental amenity, or when confronted with a situation that is known to hold significant environmental risks, ethics serves as the foundation that supports those decisions that have to be made, and provides guidance on what should be done. The central feature of the normative ethic called upon in the situations we confront is the moral principle. Moral principles are general

guidelines for right conduct and possess certain distinguishing characteristics that are worth noting (Pojman, 1990):

1 Prescriptivitiy – a term that refers to the action-guiding nature of morality. Generally, moral principles are posed as injunctions or imperatives.

2 Universalizability – a concept best exemplified in the notion of a "Golden Rule" that prescribes what is right for one person is also right for another in similar situations. Universalizability is the root requirement of impartiality such that when formulated as a principle it functions as a rule that forbids us from treating one person differently from another.

3 Overridingness – suggests that moral principles take precedence over other kinds of considerations including aesthetic, prudential, and legal ones. Thus legal justice and moral justice do not necessarily coincide, since laws themselves may be morally unjust. Legal justice depends not only on whether there is law, but also on the overriding question of whether law recognizes and protects the moral rights of those affected.

4 Publicity – recognizing that we use principles to play an action-guiding role in our lives. For those principles to be maximally effective they must be made public.

5 Practicability – moral systems must be workable and their rules must not lay an excessive burden on moral agents. Overly idealistic principles may produce ineffective action if human limitations are not taken into consideration.

These root characteristics point to the fundamental traits that ethical principles share in common. Equally important is the requirement that one must have reasons to justify one's moral conclusions. This does not suggest that making ethical judgments is a purely rational activity. As MacKinnon (1995) notes, we might be tempted to think that in order to make good moral judgments, we must be objective and not let our emotions enter into our decision-making. At times this position may be valid, particularly when anger, fear, or jealousy bias or prejudice our thinking. Yet emo-

tion need not be divorced from decision-making, provided we can explain why we hold a certain moral position. Simply stating that "*x* is wrong" is generally not sufficient (MacKinnon, 1995). To consider this point in more detail we need to recognize that ethical statements and judgments are evaluative. When voiced they tell us what the individual believes is good or bad and they further express a positive or negative regarding the object of their judgment. Although factual information is relevant to our moral evaluations, we may not "see" that part of the argument until the moral conclusion is justified.

Ethical judgments rely on empirical and experientially based information. When interpreting ethical judgments it is useful to distinguish between those that are empirical or descriptive and those that are evaluative or normative. Descriptive judgments are those in which we state specific factual beliefs. Most moral judgments tend to be evaluative, for they "place a value" on some action or practice. Because these evaluations also rely on beliefs in general about what is good and right based on norms or standards, they are also normative. In making ethical judgments our decisions are often based on the use of terms such as good, bad, right, wrong, obligatory, permissible. When these terms are used our interest is focused on what we should or should not do, making these terms function in a purely evaluative context. However, when we speak of a good land-use policy we are probably not attributing moral goodness to the plan. Therefore, it is equally important to realize that not all evaluations are moral in nature. With respect to our land-use example, our reference may be to practical usefulness and efficiency, even though the policy may have moral implications. Consequently, we can distinguish the various types of normative judgments and the areas where such judgments are made from descriptive judgments about factual matters and areas that are exclusively descriptive (MacKinnon, 1995).

Planning and relativism

Because the planner does not operate in a vacuum, not only is it important to understand the basic constructs of ethics, but also to form an awareness that while ethics may strive to identify universal principles, reality may suggest that the landscape in which planning takes place may be more aptly characterized by a type of ethical relativism. Ethical relativism is rooted in the doctrine that the moral rightness and wrongness of an action will vary from society to society. Based on this idea, relativism suggests that there are no absolute universal moral standards binding all people at all times (Ladd, 1973). Because ethical values and beliefs are considered relative to the various societies that hold them, there is no objective right or wrong. The ethics or standards held by a group are a function of what those societies believe. From an environmental perspective, relativism may provide useful insight into much of the debate surrounding environmental protection, land degradation, and the social basis for planning.

We can better understand ethical relativism by comparing our views of ethics and ethical matters with our beliefs about science and morality (MacKinnon, 1995). Most people envision the natural sciences as objective and governed by a generally accepted method that has produced a common body of knowledge about the natural world. Morality does not appear nearly as objective. Furthermore, there is no general agreement about what is right or wrong and there is constant doubt about what and how we agree. As a result, there is no objective moral truth or reality comparable to that which we seem to find in the natural world. Thus, we tend to consider morality as a matter of subjective opinion that supports the basic conclusion of ethical relativism.

There are two expressions of ethical relativism that have important implications in environmental planning. The first is personal ethical relativism, where judgments and beliefs are simply the moral outlook and attitude of the individual. Using this idea, we can consider the planning area as a landscape comprised of individual beliefs based on personal histories that define why an individual holds certain views or attitudes. Therefore, we can assume that there will always be conflicting perspectives – those who like trees and those who see nothing wrong with cutting them down, those who like growth and those opposed

to any form of development at all. While we may attempt to educate or persuade people to change their beliefs, declaring either position right or wrong is difficult, since we must assume an objective standard against which the correctness of their beliefs may be judged. A second version of ethical relativism has a social or cultural context. This form of ethical relativism holds that ethical values vary from society to society and that the basis for moral judgment lies in those social or cultural views (MacKinnon, 1995). Individual right or wrong is viewed using the lens of social norms.

Arguments supporting the theory of ethical relativism are based on beliefs surrounding the diversity of moral views, the presence of moral uncertainty, and complexities introduced by situational differences. However, relativism if taken to the extreme can introduce several undesirable consequences (Rachels, 1998). First we could no longer say that the customs or practices of other cultures are morally inferior to our own. Secondly, we could decide whether actions are right or wrong simply by consulting the standards of our own society. Lastly, relativism calls the idea of moral progress into doubt.

Obviously, the concept of moral relativism is not easily digested. The purpose of introducing ethics and relativism in environmental planning is to underscore the fact that morality is more complicated than simply a matter of right or wrong. By considering ethics and its variants we can improve our ability to comprehend the ethical judgments we face and the difficulty we encounter when ethics are placed into an environmental context.

Toward an environmental planning ethic

To begin our discussion of environmental ethics we can examine an argument advanced by Regan (1995) dealing with the nature and possibility of an environmental ethic. Regan posed the question as to whether an environmental ethic is, in fact, possible given that to have an environmental ethic presupposes that we agree on the nature of what

this ethic must be like. Since universal agreement on the topic of what ethics apply to the environment has yet to occur, the conditions such ethics must meet can only be suggested. According to Regan (1995), an environmental ethic must be grounded on the basic premises that:

1　Nonhuman beings have moral standing.
2　The class of those beings that have moral standing includes, but is much larger than, the class of conscious beings.

If both conditions are accepted, then a theory that satisfies neither of them is not a false environmental ethic; it is not an environmental ethic at all. Should we continue with this line of reasoning, then any theory that meets our first condition but does not satisfy the second may be considered as a theory on the way to becoming an environmental ethic; but since it fails to satisfy the second condition, it fails to qualify as a genuine environmental ethic.

The significance of these two conditions is that they assist us in distinguishing between an ethic of the environment, and an ethic for the *use* of the environment. In environmental philosophy this distinction is embodied in the contrast between kinship theories and management theories and the standards they impose. Kinship theories have developed out of the idea that beings resembling humans to the extent that they are conscious, have moral standing; whereas management theories direct us to preserve or protect the environment if it is in the interest of human beings. When either theory is applied, the possibility that human and animal interests might conflict with the survival of nonconscious beings becomes possible. As this occurs, it is doubtful whether such conflicts admit to rational adjudication (Regan, 1995).

Reconciling the question of ethics and environment requires conceptual strategies that reduce logical conflict. One general strategy is that of assimilation. Assimilation is the ideal that existing moral categories and conceptions of value are adequate for describing our environmental concerns. While attractive because of its simplicity, assimilation fails when confronted with new cases that do not fit existing concepts. Assimilation ethics, therefore, form out of (1) the application of existing values to a re-describe concern about

human beings and our relation to the environment or (2) the extension of concepts such as good, right, and value to nonhuman beings. A second strategy is one of challenge rather than assimilation. Thus, instead of finding values in rocky desert landscapes, tropical forests, or ecosystems based on anthropocentric rationales, existing values are challenged and the argument between the possession of rights and the possession of interests is replaced with the ethic that natural things, although lacking "interest," remain worthy of respect (Brennan, 1995).

Based on the general positions advanced above, an environmental ethic becomes a working hypothesis that links humans, nature, and values to include:

- A theory about what nature is and what kinds of objects and processes it contains.
- A theory about human beings, providing some overall perspective on human life, the context in which it is lived, and the problems it faces.
- A theory of value and an account of the evaluation of human action with reference to nature.
- A theory of method, indicating by what standards the claims made within the overall theory are to be tested, confirmed, or rejected.

As we consider the types of decisions made in planning and the balance that must be achieved between human need and environmental functioning, it might be helpful to put the concept of an environmental ethic in perspective and ask whether such an ethic is really needed. First, in addressing this question it is important to distinguish between a code of ethics that guides planning practice and the moral foundations that support plans and policy-making. In our discussion, attention is directed at the ethical foundations that guide our thought and decisions. The reason for this focus is based on the view that the social allocation of land to different uses and activities is fundamentally a problem not about codes of conduct, but of moral judgment (Beatley, 1994). Planning decisions have, individually and cumulatively, inescapable social and environmental impacts that range from the destruction of critical

Table 9.1 Entities involved in deciding planning issues.

Landowners and landholders
Builders and land developers
Users of public lands
Community interests groups
Elected and appointed government officials
Planning and environmental professionals
Banks and lending institutions
Homeowners
Environmental and conservation groups

Based on Beatley, 1994.

elements of the natural systems to the initiation of development trajectories that affect factors such as resource use, socialization, and the health and safety of population groups. When looked at in this manner, how we decide affects the condition and quality of the natural and built environment and ultimately the quality of people's lives. Therefore, planning decisions are not trivial. They involve making ethical judgments and choices that raise fundamental questions concerning right and wrong, good and bad. Our general treatment of ethics and their role in policy-making now narrows down to the simple fact that ethical judgments are not optional. Rather, they are inherent to every task undertaken by the planner, and while individuals make these moral judgments, their ramifications can cut across a spectrum of social, governmental, and institutional entities (Table 9.1). Consequently, the scale and importance of the decisions we make will vary depending on factors such as: personal enlightenment, social responsibility, and the professional role we enjoy.

Theories and questions

The subject of ethical planning remains a widely debated topic. While planners and environmental professionals have long recognized the ethical nature and importance of policy decisions, efforts at espousing a set of planning ethics have not been forthcoming. Much of the problem has been the lack of connection between the ethics that have been offered and specific moral theories or concepts that can help to defend of justify them. An ethic may incorporate exhortations and encouragements, but without a strong theoretical under-

pinning such statements will be questioned (Beatley, 1994). Furthermore, environmental ethics are often presented at such a general level that their practical meaning can be extremely vague. As Beatley (1994) observes, what exactly does it mean when a policy dictates that land-use decisions must protect the interests of the least advantaged members of society, or when a decision must protect the integrity of a natural system? Concepts such as least-advantaged and integrity are subject to interpretations whose meanings are inexact.

As with traditional moral philosophy, planning ethics are also concerned with concepts such as obligations, rights, social justice, and virtue with a focus aimed squarely at what ought to be rather than what is. However, planning ethics also assumes that individuals have the capacity to reason, contemplate, engage in moral judgment, and modify our decisions and behaviors according to the outcomes of such judgments. Arriving at an ethic demands consideration of a number of critical moral and ethical questions unique to the environmental planning problem (Beatley, 1994):

Defining the relevant moral community – The moral community defines those individuals that stand to have their well-being or interests affected by our policy decision. There are three important dimensions that influence how the relevant moral community is determined. The first is a geographic dimension that requires us to consider the spatial characteristics of the community and its relative scale. For a given policy decision, is the planner obligated to consider its ramifications with respect to the immediate neighborhood, or should broader interests be included that extend to the regional, state, or national scales? The temporal dimension follows next. Given the realization that policy decisions can have effects that carry into the future, the temporal dimension asks us to consider how far into the future our obligations should extend. Are we obligated to consider only the present population or must we think in cross-generational terms? Since a policy decision may introduce cross-generational impacts, are we obligated to include a much longer time horizon and factor into our moral calculations the effects of an action well beyond the present? If there are in-

tertemporal obligations, how far into the future must we consider? The final dimension to consider when defining the relevant moral community is biological. When making policy decisions, to what extent must we consider the interests and well-being of other forms of life?

Defining ethical obligations – While reaching a definitive conclusion regarding the extent and parameters of the moral community may prove challenging, once a judgment has been made the actual ethical obligations owed to the various members of this community can be examined. Here, ethical principles, standards, and concepts from moral philosophy and environmental ethics can be consulted. Thus, given a policy question, is it our moral obligation to make a decision based on utilitarian and economic concepts, or do we have obligations to prevent actions that impose harm and promote actions that protect the rights of individuals? Do we have an obligation to keep our promises (Beatley, 1994)?

Defining the moral grounds of our ethical standards – Supporting our standards involves the reasoning and methodologies we can employ to arrive at and defend an ethical principle. Defending and justifying ethical concepts is controversial and often contentious; however, those involved in policy-making will be called upon to defend their positions.

Making decisions – Decision-making is about choices and in the process of choosing alternative ethical standards, ethical concepts and their implications must be weighed and evaluated. The questions that arise here typically concern differing ideas of what constitutes participation in decision-making, the role of individuals affected by the process, and issues related to their representation in this process.

These rudimentary questions remind us that environmental planning and the ethical circumstances surrounding the subject are too varied and complex to invite a single, unified approach. Instead, different situations calls into play different subsets of ethical concepts and principles (Beatley, 1994). Categorizing the different ethical principles central to environmental planning can be accomplished by considering the extent to which they fall along the teleological/deontologi-
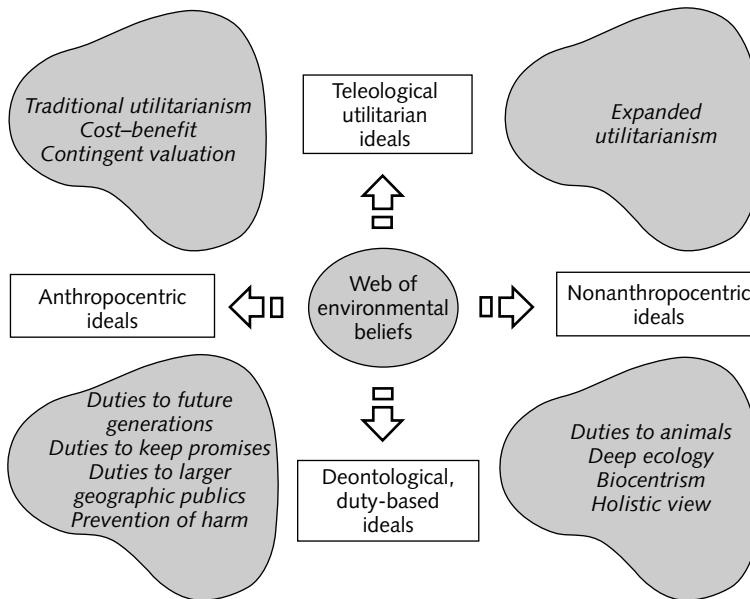
Fig. 9.1 The web of environmental beliefs.

cal–anthropocentric/nonanthropocentric continuum (Fig. 9.1).

A teleological theory states that the basic or ultimate criterion of what is morally right, wrong, or obligatory, is the nonmoral value that is brought into being (Frankena, 1973). With such a theory, concern is given to the comparative amount of good produced or the comparative balance of good over bad. When translated into the language of planning, teleological principles direct judgment regarding matters of policy to encourage actions that generate the greatest degree of good or value over bad. Therefore, the appropriate decision is the one that will maximize what is good. Of course, the issue to resolve is the problem of whose good is to be maximized. If an ethical egoism is applied, then the morally correct action is the one that maximizes value for a specific individual. Alternatively, one could select a utilitarian approach that applied maximization to the collective good. Presently, contemporary policy-making in planning is based on utilitarian principles that can assume several different forms:

- traditional utilitarianism
- cost/benefit analysis
- market failure
- contingent valuation.

At the opposite end of the continuum are those ethical principles that are described as deontological. Deontological principles reject the assumption that the morally correct action is necessarily the one that maximizes good. Rather, deontological ethics assert that there are other considerations that may make an action right or obligatory besides goodness. These other considerations include the requirement that the action or policy keep a promise, be just, or be commanded by an authority. Some examples of deontological ideals in planning include:

- land-use rights
- culpability and prevention of harm
- distributive ethics and social justice
- duties to future generations
- duties to a larger geographic public
- duties to keep promises.

Disagreements over planning policies often result from a conflict between teleological and deontological points of view (Beatley, 1994). We can examine the question of re-zoning land to illustrate how conflict may emerge. Suppose a request was made to re-zone a parcel of land in a residential area to permit the operation of a convenience store. The teleological view would require evaluation of the ethical merits of the proposed zoning

change by examining the net benefits such a change would bring to the community. If the change can be shown to generate more benefits than costs, the change in zoning would be justified. Using this same example, suppose a neighboring homeowner, who would bear a disproportionately large degree of negative consequences from excessive noise and traffic that would be associated with the new land use, recently bought his home with the understanding from the city that no such uses would ever be permitted in area. The homeowner now feels betrayed. Deontological principle would move decision-makers to consider their promise to the homeowner, and view their moral obligation to keep a promise as more important than the benefits that would accrue to the neighborhood from the zoning change.

Another critical dimension into which many ethical positions fall concerns the extent to which moral obligations are human-centered (anthropocentric) or nonanthropocentric. For example, conventional utilitarianism generally assumes a human-centered perspective since the costs and benefits associated with the relevant decision criteria are those that affect or accrue to human beings. There are, however, various nonanthropocentric obligations that have been expressed within the fabric of environmental ethics, including:

- duties to animals and sentient life
- duties to protect species and biodiversity
- biocentrism
- deep ecology.

The question as to whether moral obligations are human-centered or should be extended to include nonanthropocentric considerations carries important environmental policy implications. To illustrate this point, examine a sample of questions that might be raised as a policy-maker reviews plans to accommodate regional growth:

- Do we owe obligations to other forms of life and if so, which ones?
- Do we owe obligations only to sentient lifeforms, or only to lifeforms with relatively high levels of intelligence?
- Do we owe obligations to broader categories of life?
- Do we owe obligations to the broader ecosystem or ecological community irrespective of the value it might hold for human beings?

Answers to these questions are not obvious and typically can be restated in terms of what we identify as "value." Three qualities embedded in environmental policy can be looked at as possible ways to express our preferences: (1) instrumental value, (2) intrinsic value, and (3) inherent value. Instrumental and intrinsic values share an anthropocentric nature since they rely on people to express their attitudes regarding conditions of the environment. For example, a forested area can hold both an instrumental and intrinsic value to humans. The area's instrumental value may be found in the forest's ability to supply trees that satisfy a human need. Its intrinsic value develops from its recreational and aesthic qualities and suggests that the landscape provides us with an important connection to nature. A more complex idea is the concept of inherent value. Inherent value implies that regardless of the value ascribed to the landscape by humans, the landscape may have a value that is not derived from people, but because the forest is a living thing with a "good" entirely of its own. Questions of value, the connection between ethics and planning, and what concepts exist that may be called upon by the environmental planner, invite an exploration of ideals and philosophies that drive environmental thought.

Contemporary environmental thought

The questions raised by the introduction of ethical concerns in environmental planning direct us to adopt an expanded view of the moral community and rethink existing environmental attitudes and behaviors. Replacing existing attitudes with more contemporary environmental views begins by exploring how these views impact our conceptualization of human/environment relationships and how these streams of thought relate to planning theory and planning practice. As Jacobs (1995) observes, contemporary environmental

philosophy partially affirms the position taken by progressive planners that to produce successful plans one needs to articulate and engage a set of deeper questions concerning the root cause of the problems we encounter. In this section a selection of contemporary ideas are examined that might move environmental plans and policies closer to the goal of becoming more effective, equitable, and sustainable.

Deep ecology

The term "deep ecology" was introduced by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess (1973). Naess used the term to contrast with another idea he called "shallow ecology." According to Jacobs (1995), shallow ecology is what would be popularly thought of as the legislative management orientation of mainstream environmental planning and management. Naess maintains that this "shallow" orientation is flawed and asserts that as long as management focuses upon reforms and "at-the-margin" tinkering with an industrial-technological society where people relate to nature in a utilitarian and anthropocentric fashion, society will never realize a truly sustainable way of living with the earth. Deep ecology is a profoundly biocentric worldview that calls for a fundamental shift in our attitudes and behaviors. Biocentric worldviews that have emerged from deep ecology are now crystallized in a set of ideals that have become known as the Earth-wisdom worldview.

The Earth-wisdom perspective is based on the following major principles that stand in sharp contrast to the more traditional views of environmental management:

1   Nature exists for all of the Earth's species not just for humans, and humans are not in charge of the rest of nature.
2   There is not always more, and what there is, is not all for humans.
3   Some forms of economic growth are environmentally beneficial and should be encouraged, while some are environmentally harmful and should be discouraged.
4   Our success depends on learning to cooperate with one another and with the rest of nature, rather than attempting to dominate and manage the Earth's life-support systems primarily for human use.

Therefore, according to the tenets of deep ecology, to achieve an environmentally sustainable world, people have to acknowledge and afford equality to all living creatures. Thus, the richest and most just form of life on Earth is a broad state of species and social organizations, diversity and complexity (Jacobs, 1995). This dual focus on diverse and complex social organization and more nature-based human societies encourages deep ecologists to advocate local autonomy and decentralized forms of social and political organization. Recognizing that all life has value on its own terms, deep ecology sees a natural wisdom to the organization and functioning of ecological systems that have not been disrupted by human activities. This natural wisdom can be learned by observing wild nature, preserving and protecting natural areas, and affording credibility to the knowledge of more nature-based human societies.

Ecofeminism

The term ecofeminism, coined in 1974 by the French writer Françoise d'Eaubonne, includes a wide spectrum of views on the relationships of women to the Earth and to male-dominated societies. In a manner similar in concept to deep ecology, ecofeminism begins with a concern with the ability of the shallow environmental movement to solve environmental problems and asks for a deeper analysis and understanding of Earth-centered environmental worldviews. The fundamental theme of ecofeminism is the belief that a central cause of our environmental problems is not simply human-centeredness, but more specifically male centeredness. Thus, the roots of oppression of animals, plants, and landscapes and the roots of oppression of women are inextricably linked. According to ecofeminist theory, the rise of male-dominated societies and environmental worldviews since the dawn of agriculture is primarily responsible for our violence against nature and for the oppression of women and minorities. Patriarchal cultures validate male-associated val-

ues and denigrate that which is nonmale. Such values brought into question by ecofeminist theory include an excessive reliance on rationalism, dualistic forms of intellectual organization, hierarchy as a mode of conceptualization and organization, and rule-based models of management (Jacobs, 1995).

Based on an ecofeminist perspective, the roots of liberation of women and nature are connected by a common need to reform how we understand, think, and conceptualize the world. Therefore, an internal, conceptual reorganization and reorientation is needed that validates alternative explanations of knowledge and management. According to Jacobs (1995) these include concepts that stress intuition, interconnected and systems forms of organization, nonhierarchical forms of organization, and process and equity forms of management. When placed into the realm of environmental planning, ecofeminist ideals challenge the process of how things are done, from the equity issues surrounding administrative hearings to the manner by which environmental impact statements are produced.

Bioregionalism

Bioregionalism is a concept that originates from a careful observation of the earth, its patterns, and the manner by which people accommodate and become part of those patterns. When compared to deep ecology or ecofeminism, bioregionalism does not arise from questions surrounding the relationship between people and the natural world, and concerns regarding flawed worldviews. Rather, bioregionalism is concerned with how people live in a place, and how people learn from living in that place (Andruss et al., 1990). Working with and planning for the Earth, according to bioregional thinking, is to view the geographic area where we live as part of a unique life territory with its own soils, landforms, watersheds, microclimates, native plants, native animals, and other natural features that make the region distinctive. This view defines the concept of a bioregion that has come to be realized as a geographic terrain and a terrain of consciousness. Within a bioregion, the conditions that influence life are similar and

this in turn influences the form and function of human occupancy (Berg & Dasmann, 1978). The central qualities of a bioregion are: (1) a distinct ecospace, distinguishable from other ecospaces, (2) a distinct form or style of human use that reflects the influence and power of the land on settlement.

The obvious question when exploring the topic of bioregionalism is how a system-ecological definition can give rise to an environmental philosophy. Here, the significance of bioregionalism is not simply that of thinking about the environment or acting to prevent environmentally destructive behavior, but in learning to live in such a way as to gain knowledge and an appreciation of place that profoundly affects how we live there. The underlying assumption of the bioregional perspective is that by being fully alive in and with a place, people will cease to cause environmental damage (Berg & Dasmann, 1978). Thus, by developing sensitivities to the ecosocial carrying capacity of their region, a population will learn how to use land more fully without abusing it. From a planning perspective, perhaps the most important implication of bioregionalism is that people should not live the same everywhere. Instead, development (settlement) should accommodate bioregional variations and urban and rural form should differ in response to bioregional influences.

Most attempts at bioregional living involve reinhabitation: learning to live in an area that has been disrupted by human exploitation. In these instances, reinhabitation focuses on:

- What the region was like before human settlement introduced change.
- Identifying what natural trajectories would have produced natural form in the absence of human intervention.
- Determining strategies to rehabilitate the bioregion, cooperating with and re-establishing the natural processes that shape and sustain it.

Holistic ethics and land duties

Developing from an expanded interpretation of Leopold's land ethic, holistic ethics maintains that obligations are owed to ecosystems solely because

of their complexity, uniqueness, and their intrinsic value. As Rolston (1988) suggests, when humans awaken to their presence in the biosphere, finding themselves to be products of the processes that define it, they owe something to maintaining its integrity and persistence. Of course arguments to protect natural environments are compelling; defending these arguments apart from human self-interest is more challenging. Moving beyond the benefits to humans, a set of land duties can be offered that direct ethical environmental planning regardless of biological level. These ethics introduce requirements that:

- Efforts be made to minimize the extent of damage and destruction to the natural environment.
- Acceptance of impacts be permissible only for important social purposes.
- Efforts be made to promote the recovery and re-establishment of populations, habitats, and damaged ecosystems.
- Serious moral consideration of the interest of other forms of life and the habitats on which they rely be encouraged.
- Consideration be given to minimizing the extent of the human footprint on the natural system.

Environmental justice and equity

In the preceding sections we've examined the concepts of rights and obligations within the context of the broader environment. Contemporary thinking seems focused on reformulating egocentric paradigms of human/environmental relationships and introducing higher levels of environmental awareness, encouraging more biocentric/ecocentric worldviews. While there is great value in developing environmental policies that shed human-centeredness, there is the underlying assumption that all humans share the same level of environmental quality and enjoy concomitant rights to a healthful and productive biosphere. Based on our previous discussion, everyone has a fundamental right to clean air and clean water, and no one has the right to degrade or destroy the places in which we live. However, within the last decade a growing body of evidence suggests that many environmental policies,

directives, and actions differentially affect or disadvantaged individuals, groups, and communities based on race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. For example, in a landmark study undertaken by the Commission for Racial Justice in 1987, it was shown that:

- The greatest number of commercial hazardous facilities were located in communities with the highest composition of racial or ethnic minorities.
- The average minority population in communities with one commercial hazardous waste facility was twice the average minority percentage in communities without such facilities.
- Race was the most significant variable associated with the location of hazardous waste sites.

In a study conducted by the US Environmental Protection Agency (1992), findings showed that socioeconomic conditions and race are the major factors that influence environmental discrimination and that communities inhabited by poor whites are also vulnerable. These observations have propelled the environmental justice movement into the forefront of environmental policy-making, and have introduced a new set of considerations that must be understood by the environmental planner.

In general, environmental justice has been defined as the pursuit of equal justice and equal protection under the law for all environmental statutes and regulations without discrimination based on race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. As a compelling interest, environmental justice seeks to dismantle exclusionary zoning ordinances, discriminatory land-use practices, differential enforcement of environmental regulations, and the disparate siting of risky technologies. In their place, environmental justice endeavors to encourage greater equity in policy-making (Bullard, 1995).

As a force for change, environmental justice embodies five central and interrelated themes:

1 Environmental Equity – an ideal of equal treatment and protection for various racial, ethnic, and income groups under environment statutes, regulations, and practices ap-

plied in a manner that yields no substantial differential impacts relative to the dominant group. Although environmental equity implies elements of "fairness" and "rights," it does not necessarily address past inequities or view the environment broadly.

2 Environmental Justice – the fundamental right to a safe, healthy, productive, and sustainable environment for all, where the environment is considered in its totality to include the ecological, physical, social, political, aesthetic, and economic environments, Environmental justice refers to the conditions in which such a right can be freely exercised, whereby individual and group identities, needs, and dignities are preserved, fulfilled, and respected in a way that provides for self-actualization and personal and community empowerment.

3 Environmental Racism – racial discrimination in environmental policy-making, enforcement of regulations, and laws, and targeting communities of color for toxic waste disposal and hazardous industry siting.

4 Environmental Classism – the results of and the process by which implementation of environmental policy creates intended or unintended consequences that have disproportionate impacts (adverse or beneficial) on lower-income persons, populations, or communities. These disparate effects occur through various decision-making processes.

5 Environmental Justice Community of Concern – a neighborhood or community composed predominantly of persons of color or a substantial proportion of persons below the poverty line that is subjected to a disproportionate burden of environmental hazards or experiences a significantly reduced quality of life relative to surrounding or comparative communities.

The emergence of environmental justice concerns stems from the perception that environmental policy-makers have ignored the effects of pollution and environmental hazards on people of color, the poor, and the working class. This is seen largely as a consequence of the lack of political power in those communities and their inability to mount a serious protest against such hazardous activities. Studies conducted to examine racial and demographic variables and environmental quality supply compelling evidence of this claim, and the ethical questions they raise carry important implications for how policy and plans are made. Given the observed pattern that poor people lack the economic means to leave their neighborhoods for resettlement elsewhere, and that housing discrimination often makes it difficult to find alternative, affordable housing, coupled with the realities that hazardous industries are attracted or relegated to areas of low land value where the poor tend to reside, a cycle of inequity is established that become easy to replicate elsewhere. This pattern is further strengthened by the structural barriers that characterize poor areas and their lack or community resources to prevent or control the entry of risky industries into their community (Mohai & Bryant, 1992).

Dealing more equitably with minority groups and the poor in environmental planning requires sustained efforts to:

- Increase the priority given to issues of environmental equity.
- Improve the risk assessment procedures to ensure better characterization of risk across population, communities, and geographical areas.
- Increase efforts to communicate with minority and low-income communities and involve these groups in the policy-making process.
- Establish mechanisms to include equity considerations in long-term planning.

Realizing these objectives places emphasis on purposefully connecting ethical principles regarding the total environment with the planning process.

Linking thought to planning practice

The environmental philosophies examined in this chapter carry important implications for planning and the general process followed in the formulation and implementation of environmental plans.

Perhaps the most significant realization suggested by these ideals is their insistence on the need to broaden the scope of planning and extend considerations beyond the typical motivations that have traditionally guided the planning process. In practical terms, the message is simple: it is not useful to make little plans or to view planning as an incremental process. Piecemeal approaches may be counterproductive and delay examination of the underlying and fundamental causes of problems (Jacobs, 1995). Only by broader, deeper examination will long-lasting and sustainable solutions emerge.

The philosophical and ethical issues reviewed in this chapter can also lend validity to both rational and progressive planning by raising important questions that expose the structural origins of the conditions that underlay the world, how we view the world, and how we respond to its challenges. Such questioning should facilitate deliberation and understanding in a long-term, systemic context. By thinking about the questions posed and responding to them and the conditions they define, more comprehensive strategies can emerge that can encompass a wider description of the problem. Simply by becoming aware of these philosophical perspectives and how they provide for alternative worldviews, the planner will become more accustomed to thinking with these concepts and incorporating some of their ideals toward real solutions.

Complementing these direct influences are a series of indirect effects that stand to challenge existing planning theory. These include challenges relating to (after Jacobs, 1995):

- The legitimacy of an abstract or contextless planning theory.
- The general anthropocentric orientation of planning theory and practice.
- The relationship of means and ends.
- The loss of "place" as a specific basis for planning.

With minor exception, planning theory is primarily concerned with how to plan. This focus need not be connected to the actual practice of planning; therefore, much of planning theory is abstract and generalized. The ethical questions born out of the environment, while expressed in theoretical terms, originate from actual environmental problems. Thus, the contrast between planning theory and environmental philosophy is simply the difference between the question of how to plan, versus knowing what to plan for (Jacobs, 1995). For example, looking at planning through the lens of deep ecology it would seem entirely utilitarian and anthropocentric in its orientation. To those influenced by deep ecological thinking, planning would need to stress the rights of nonhumans and restructure the planning process to include nonhuman considerations. From an ecofeminist perspective, the relationship between means versus ends would be called into question; incorporating this view would challenge the entire planning process, how communication in that process evolves, the forums provided to facilitate communication, and the individuals who are empowered to act as representatives in this process. If an ecofeminist view is adopted, then planning would follow a more democratic conception of knowledge and expertise and the planner would be asked to acknowledge a broader basis for understanding the nature of a given problem.

Bioregionalism, with its focus on learning to live in and to know "place," and to be affected by its uniqueness, would direct planning to consider the evolution of life patterns and their fit within the ecological conditions of the landscape. By stressing the importance of local knowledge of place and its use in all aspects of design, planning would become grounded in "place" and less abstract. Bioregional thinking would stress the incorporation a specific spatial element (the region) into all planning analysis and use the region as a framework to support planning theory.

Equity and the distribution of risk and benefit are the primary concerns brought to planning theory from the environmental justice arena. From this perspective, planning speaks to the values exercised by the planner and the biases inherent to the planning process that discount equal protection and equal access. By giving greater emphasis to cultural diversity, social and environmental issues that differentially separate people across ethnic, racial, and economic lines, environmental justice considerations would realign planning,

placing equity at the center and giving greater priority to the mix of social and environmental issues and the patterns of risk and benefit they represent. Through this heightened sense of balance access to the policy-making process can be improved, particularly for those communities with limited political and economic resources.

The direct and indirect influences contemporary environmental thinking has on the practice of environmental planning point to a number of challenges that will continue to shape and reshape how we plan, why we plan, and who we plan for. If these ideals do nothing else, they force us to look at the world differently, ask questions, and seek alternatives. For this reason alone, contemporary environmental thought may offer opportunities to develop a new body of environmental planning theory, one that is more inclusive and responsive to the environment in total. Above all, however, the ethical ideas introduced here will influence how we look at and make decisions, and how well our decisions move us toward an effective, log-term, sustainable, and equitable solution to the problems surrounding human/environmental needs and responsibilities.

Summary

As a type of decision-making, environmental planning requires a sensitivity to the issues that underlie any given planning problem and the decisions that must be made that concern them. In this chapter the concept of ethics and the role of ethics in environmental planning were discussed. The ethical principles planners may call upon to provide insight and guidance centered around fundamental questions of right and wrong and the ability to understand good versus bad decisions. The treatment of root ethical principles led to a discussion of contemporary environmental thought and introduced new directions that are challenging traditional point of views. Here, ideas concerning deep ecology, bioregionalism, and environmental equity were examined and their influence in reshaping human/environmental relationships was explored. Using these ideals as a backdrop, the connection between planning practice and ethics was evaluated.

Focusing questions

What are ethics and how do ethical principles help us decide?

What is the value of ethics to the environmental planner?

Identify the ethical challenges that confront contemporary environmental planning and suggest how they may be approached.

Who are the relevant moral communities in your region and what characteristics identify their worldview?