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**A COMPARISON OF A HABERMAS-INSPIRED APPROACH AND
ECONOMISTS' APPROACHES TO SOCIAL CAPITAL**

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ABSTRACT

I seek to shed light on social capital by comparing two approaches to it that seem, at first, to be sharply opposed. The comparison reveals the two approaches are complementary in some ways, and it suggests regional planning principles that draw on both of them. One approach is inspired by the philosopher Jürgen Habermas's concepts of communicative action, normative action, and the lifeworld. Many scholars, including planning theorists, find those ideas attractive but do not develop the possible connections with social capital. The other cluster is economists' typical modeling of social capital as something created and maintained by clearly defined investment behavior by individuals. I explain how I think Habermas's concepts are related to social capital, then describe a sample of economists' theories of social capital, and finally describe how regional planning can draw on both Habermas and economists.

INTRODUCTION*

I explore a relationship between two clusters of theoretical ideas, a connection that I think is important for regional development and regional planning, but has not been discussed adequately. One cluster is found in the work of Jürgen Habermas, a contemporary German philosopher whose social theories are admired by many social scientists, including planning academics. "Planning academics" is my term of convenience for scholars who teach planning in universities. I prefer it to "planning

theorists,” because many scholars I have in mind engage in planning practice as well as in theory. The second cluster comes from the literature on social capital, namely economists’ theoretical models of investment in social capital. Habermas does not mention social capital as such in his main theoretical writings, but I argue some of his ideas help us understand it better.

Several previous writers have referred to such connections, which I take as evidence that my own efforts are not pointless. But with the exception of Tore Sager, those writers made their observations briefly, or obliquely, or only hint at a connection. I try to be more detailed in describing the connections, even more detailed than Sager, and I draw on some parts of Habermas’s work that previous writers have slighted. I describe what I call a “Habermas-inspired view of social capital”—a phrase meant to avoid any attribution to Habermas himself. I then compare the Habermas-inspired views of social capital with typical economists’ views.

The previous scholarship on Habermas is vast, multidisciplinary, and complex, and by now the same is true of research on social capital. I must limit my exploration in this paper to selected aspects of both subjects. On Habermas, I concentrate on communicative action, normative action, and the lifeworld; on social capital I concentrate on a small sample of economists’ models of investment, a small sample but one comprising what one might call A-List economists.

In the first section of the paper I give basic information about Habermas, then in the second section I explain how his concepts of communicative action and the lifeworld have appealed to planning academics. In section 3 I develop the “Habermas-inspired view of social capital,” based on an interpretation of communicative action, the lifeworld,

and normative action. In section 4 I recognize criticisms of Habermas—from philosophers and geographers as well as planning academics—to the extent they are relevant to my concern with social capital. In the next two sections I turn to economists' models (section 5) and compare them to Habermas's approaches (section 6), noting strengths and weaknesses and claiming they complement each other. I end with a brief conclusion (section 7).

My understanding of “social capital” depends in large part on the work of the eminent pioneer James Coleman, a sociologist much appreciated by economists. For Coleman, “social capital inheres in the structure of relations between actors and among actors” (1988, p. S98). Some of the features of social structure are *resources* that individuals can use in their own interest, and “the conception of social capital as a resource for action is one way of introducing social structure into the rational actor paradigm” (p. S95). He elaborates the nature of the resource under these headings: obligations, expectations, and trustworthiness of structures; information channels; norms and effective sanctions.

These resources also serve larger society. Coleman believes that individuals' uses of the resources produce system-level behavior and that most social capital has a public goods quality. Individual efforts are necessary to produce the social structures, but the resulting norms and sanctions “benefit all those who are part of such a structure” (p. S116). The failure to provide social capital is a missed opportunity for favorable externalities, and the impairment of existing social capital, which for example might happen when a family moves out of a community, imposes a loss on other persons (pp. S116-S117; see the idea of a “tragedy of exit” in Bolton 1995, 2003). However,

Coleman recognized that social capital in a group might have *negative* effects; he mentioned that it can inhibit innovativeness, and later scholars have elaborated that problem.

Some economists are dissatisfied with their colleagues' work on social capital, because it's so hard to measure social capital satisfactorily. It's interesting that some of those critics embrace *human* capital readily even though the proxies for it also have problems. Nevertheless, the critics have a point, and perhaps we should see social capital not as a thing but a process, a network of human relationships, that is attractive to social scientists because it makes it possible to answer questions in ways not available before (I borrow a trope that Christian Thorne (2009, p. 6) used in a different context).

Note on Citations and Quotations. Habermas's most important work for my project is *The Theory of Communicative Action*, first published in German in two volumes in 1981 and in English translation by Thomas McCarthy in 1984 (first volume) and 1987 (second volume). I cite the 1984 and 1987 translations as *TCA1* and *TCA2*, respectively, with page numbers (since there are so many citations to *TCA1* and *TCA2*, I omit the "p." label). German words in brackets are Habermas's originals that McCarthy felt important to retain. *In quotations of Habermas, all italics are in the original unless I note that I added them.*

I. INTRODUCTION TO HABERMAS¹

Jürgen Habermas, born in 1929, is one of the most renowned philosophers and social theorists of our time. His "critical theory," "communicative action," "lifeworld," and the "public sphere" are known to intellectuals in many disciplines. In an oft-cited

collection of essays on planning theory, Seymour Mandelbaum refers to “the strong presence of Michel Foucault and Jürgen Habermas in this volume” (Mandelbaum 1996, p. 94). Two British legal scholars, Ruth Dukes and Emiliios Christodoulidis, say he is “widely regarded today as the most influential theorist of democracy of our time” (2011, p. 1), and philosopher James Marsh, one of Habermas’s sharpest critics, says, “He is comparable to Hegel [in] his enormous, positive, intellectual achievement” (Marsh 2000, 565). The revered American philosopher Richard Rorty named Habermas as one of the “few persons [in philosophy] in each generation glimpsing a possibility that had not previously been grasped” (1998, p. 8), and also “the most socially useful” contemporary philosopher (ibid., p. 307).

Authors of a multitude of books and essays exposit, interpret, and criticize Habermas, and they apply his theories to politics, law, philosophy of science, education, theology, literary studies, even accounting and the performing arts. One reason Habermas is discussed so widely is that he has commingled the exoteric and the esoteric, sometimes writing for general readers oriented to practical affairs, sometimes advancing technical arguments best understood by readers with interests and specialized knowledge in philosophy and intellectual history.

He studied at the Universities of Göttingen, Zurich, and Bonn, and at 40 he was already recognized as a leading scholar in Germany. He taught at Heidelberg and Frankfurt; from 1973 to 1984 he was Director of the Max Planck Institute in Starnberg, and from 1984 on Professor of Philosophy at the University of Frankfurt (now emeritus). He has visited and lectured in the United States frequently.

For my purposes, Habermas's most important work is *The Theory of Communicative Action*, a two-volume work first published in German in 1981 and in English translation in 1984 (first volume) and in 1987 (second volume). The two volumes are subtitled *Reason and the Rationalization of Society* and *Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, respectively (titles in German are given in the references). They are the works of Habermas that planning academics refer to most, and other philosophers assign them a fundamental place in Habermas's thought (e.g., White 1988, Taylor 2009).

No ivory tower philosopher, Habermas is a highly visible public intellectual, especially in Europe. For example, about the time I wrote an earlier draft of this paper, Habermas had opinion pieces in both *Le Monde* and *The Guardian* saying the financial crisis in Europe was a threat to democracy and could increase the appeal of extreme right reactionary forces (Habermas 2011a, 2011b; both are based on extracts from Habermas 2012). About that time a German journalist, George Diez, described Habermas as "the last European...[and] on a philosopher's mission to save the EU" (Diez 2011). When Habermas lectured in China in 2001, a Chinese philosopher observed that translations of Habermas were available in China far more readily than ones of Heidegger or Derrida, and said, "Almost everyone knows Habermas as the last great social critic" (Jin Xiping, quoted in Callaway 2001). Philosopher James Marsh, one of Habermas's sharpest critics, says, "He is comparable to Hegel [in] his enormous, positive, intellectual achievement" (Marsh 2000, p. 565). When Habermas turned 80, another prominent philosopher, Charles Taylor, called him "a shining example of the

philosopher-citizen, two roles indissolubly linked in a figure of great depth and integrity” (Taylor, 2009).²

Starting in the 1950s Habermas became a prominent member of the Frankfurt School, a group of German philosophers who advanced a social theory of capitalist societies—eventually known as “critical theory.” It was inspired by some of Marx’s theories but also incorporated sociology, psychoanalysis, and existential philosophy. After World War II Habermas, like some other members of the Frankfurt School, abandoned much of Marxism, and after a while he avoided identifying himself as a member of the School (Anderson 2011), but he remained a critic of contemporary capitalism, and also of modern socialist systems. Habermas departs from Marx in fundamental ways: his critical theory has no need for Marxist value theory, and he sees alienation as more pervasive in society than in the workplace. In *The Theory of Communicative Action* he says that in late capitalism there is still class conflict, but inequality “can no longer be traced back to class positions in any unqualified way...problems come to the fore that do not *directly* violate interest positions ascribable on a class-specific basis” (Habermas, 1987, 348-349).

Critics of Habermas are legion, as we expect from his stature and his great range. For the right, the strident criticism of modern capitalism is inherently objectionable. For many on the left, Habermas doesn’t criticize fundamental structures of capitalism enough (Marsh 2000), and even his criticism of contemporary mixed economies and welfare states is not strong enough and he actually provides a justification of them (and a “long-winded” one at that (Finlayson 2005, p. 57)). For many feminists, he slights power relations rooted in the division of labor and in families. Some

critics accuse him of being Eurocentric and too preoccupied with “redemption of the project of modernity” in the wake of Nazism (Gregory 1998, p. 45; see also Gregory 1994). I don’t think these sweeping criticisms impair the case I’m making here, which rests on specific parts of his philosophy rather than on the entire body of his work. In section 4 I discuss some narrowly focused complaints that do seem relevant to my argument for a Habermas-inspired view of social capital.

II. PLANNING ACADEMICS’ INTEREST IN HABERMAS

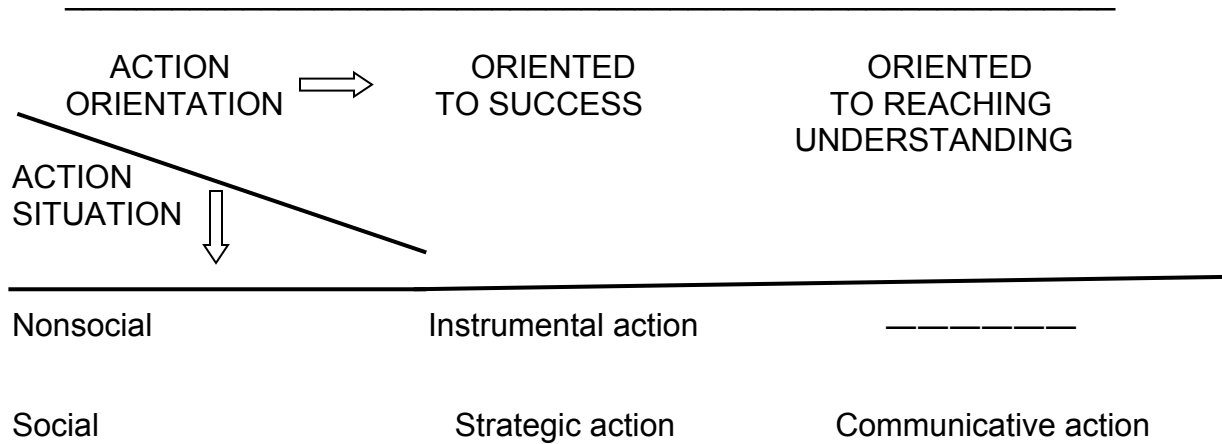
What is it about Habermas that appeals to planning academics? The two most important ideas are communicative action and the lifeworld.

A. COMMUNICATIVE ACTION

By this term Habermas means social action in which the actors seek to reach common understanding and to coordinate group actions by reasoned argument, consensus, and cooperation rather than action strictly in pursuit of their own goals (*TCA1*, 85-101, 284-337).³ It is a “model,” a word he uses often. He opposes communicative action to two other models, *instrumental action* and *strategic action*, which are action in one’s self-interest; “instrumental” refers to nonsocial situations, “strategic” to social situations—as when one tries to change the decisions of other actors. Habermas sometimes uses “teleological action” (*TCA1*, 85) to encompass both instrumental and strategic action.

The following figure is one of the most quoted bits of Habermas (*TCA1*, figure 14, 285):

TYPES OF ACTION



It's essential to understand that Habermas is advancing ideal models. From very early, he readily accepted that communicative action is an ideal model, its usefulness being to identify deviations from the model that are normatively significant. In 1970 he writes that social action is partly controlled by “motives excluded from public communication,” and the more there are such concealed motives, “the greater the deviance from the model of pure communicative action” (Habermas 1970b, pp. 373-374). Furthermore, he proposes that empirically those deviations increase with the extent of repression in society, which in turn depends on the institutionalization of power (ibid., p. 374).

Therefore, it's not surprising that in the very first paragraph of *The Theory of Communicative Action* Habermas is cautious about the general validity of his theory, saying it is “not a metatheory but the beginning of a social theory concerned to validate its own critical standards” (*TCA1*, xli). Thomas McCarthy believes Habermas is saying

the significance of communicative rationality as a concept will depend on the research programs that build on it (McCarthy 1984, p. xiv), and Habermas's models "advance proposals that, however universal their claims, retain the hypothetical character of conjectures open to empirical refutation" (ibid., p. xviii). Stephen White also refers to a research program, and he says that once the concepts are seen as tentative, "they can no longer be advanced with the self-confidence of orthodox Marxism or German idealism" (White 1988, p. 5). To be successful, the program "must generate cogent interpretations and explanations," but it "may also depend partially on the practical, normative insight it generates" (ibid., p. 6).

Given my audience here, I focus attention on urban and regional planning as the practical example of what communicative action may mean in public life. Habermas does not discuss urban or regional planning, but it is no stretch to relate his categories of action to that endeavor. In describing communicative action, he says its "interpretive accomplishments... represent the mechanism for *coordinating* action" (TCA1, 101). Planning academics inspired by Habermas use the phrase "communicative planning." There is a large literature, with John Forester, Tore Sager, Judith Gruber, Judith Innes, and Patsy Healey being major figures (Forester 1980, 1982, 1985, 1989, 1992, 1993; Sager 1994, 2013; Gruber 1994; Innes 1994, 1995, 1996; Innes and Booher 1999, 2010; Healey 1996a, 1996b, 1999, 2006), but others are also prominent (Hoch 1996, 2007; Miller 1992; Huxley and Yiftachel 2000; Innes 1995 and Hillier 2002 are helpful general treatments). These scholars add other theoretical perspectives to Habermas's; for example, Healey relies greatly on Anthony Giddens's structuration theory and Innes on John Dewey's interpretative community.

Of course urban and regional planning cannot consist entirely of communicative action; naturally it must also rely on instrumental and strategic action. The point is that the ideals of communicative action can inform the use of instrumental and strategic action, and the use of power, in a desirable way. Proponents of communicative planning conceive communicative action very broadly: communicative action implies a lot more than talk, and a lot more than listening, for that matter. This broader view is something planning academics have added to Habermas's ideal model, and their work is strong evidence of a research program inspired by the model. Communicative action implies a distinct model of citizen *and professional* behavior, going well beyond "public participation," indeed even beyond the somewhat broader term "civic engagement." Forester (1980), for example, very early on identified communicative action with "attention-shaping." Communicative action requires sharing information with citizens so they can argue effectively, and ensuring that the settings for deliberation—public meetings, hearings, information sessions, charettes—encourage and respect all citizens' arguments, and it requires working actively to build citizens' *capacity* for effective argument.

Communicative action does not equate simply to public participation. The term "inclusion" partially captures what it should mean. Kathryn Quick and Martha Feldman distinguish participation and inclusion: participation is public input on the content of programs and policies, while inclusion means "continuously creating a community involved in coproducing processes, policies, and programs for defining and addressing public issues" (Quick and Feldman 2011, p. 272).

In its ideal form, communicative action goes even farther than inclusion. Patsy

Healey recognizes that “cultural differences in styles of ‘conversing’” (2006, p. 54) are missing in Habermas’s argument. Consider a citizen who ponders whether to speak up in a planning meeting. He worries that any remarks will display his vulnerabilities, due to his accent, nonstandard grammar and syntax, and other markers of income, education, and status. I interpret communicative action as requiring planners and citizens alike to work to avoid, or at least reduce, such intimidation. It’s a fact of life that some actors are more articulate than others in social situations, and that includes planning meetings. I’ve come to appreciate that fact of life in my experience as a citizen planner (and I thank Michael Sonis for reminding me of the fact). Planning is often a minefield strewn with metaphors and stories. Think of “job-killer,” “our way of life,” “multiplier” (maybe battle flags is a better metaphor than mines). Planners need to interpret them and prevent others from misinterpreting them.

In principle, communicative action also requires planners to work to increase citizens’ capacity to deal with technologies of planning: maps, plans, and other visualization tools; GIS; technical legal language; statistical inference; benefit-cost analysis; fiscal impact analysis. Patsy Healey says Habermas is “searching for ways of resisting the distortions of the one-sided conversation, and the ready made languages of abstract systems” (Healey 2006, p. 53). Planners should also help people to avoid the cognitive biases that psychologists and behavioral economists have exposed, such as we see when people deal with probabilities or very small or very large numbers.

These observations point to an incompleteness in Habermas’s theory, but they also show how it suggests an ideal to be strived for, which is after all what normative theory is about. That said, it’s clear that communicative action “can’t be installed like a

telephone system,” to use Tibor Fischer’s colorful phrase about democracy (2006, p. 5). It’s a general theory, yet any application must be highly context-specific. Putting it into practice is like putting together a jigsaw puzzle without a picture on the box.

Advocates of communicative planning often say it means not privileging experts and bureaucrats, rather reaching consensus through public dialogue rather than exercise of power and replacing the model of technical expert with the model of reflective planner (Argyris and Schön 1974, Schön 1983, 1987, Innes 1995, Lauria and Soll 1996, Wilson 1997). And while I’m concentrating on planning in this essay, planning is just one example of a specific context for communicative action. Political theorists also find Habermas relevant for a deliberative democracy (Eriksen and Weigård 2008). Michael Walzer says, “deliberative democracy is the American version of German theories of communicative action and ideal speech” (2005, 90). Nancy Love makes a bold statement that helps us appreciate how broad communicative action is: “Habermas questions Marx’s Hegelian-inspired concept of labor as human’s self-creative activity...[rather] it is social interaction that is our *distinctively human capacity*” (Love 1995, p. 49, italics in original). John Dryzek credits Habermas with prompting the *policy analyst* to work on conditions of political interaction and design of institutions rather than merely the content of policy proposals, and he says Habermasian ideal institutions rule out “authority based on anything other than a good argument” (1995, pp. 108-110). Dryzek’s remark could well be applied to planners.

At one point Habermas makes a remark that implies communicative action puts burdens on theorists, too, as well as on practicing planners and policy analysts. In discussing “understanding meaning in the social sciences,” he refers to a “social-

scientific interpreter" (*TCA1*, 102). In communicative action, such an interpreter (read: planning theorist) cannot grasp the meaning of what he observes unless he "judges the agreement and disagreement, the validity claims and potential reasons with which he is confronted, on a common basis *shared* in principle by him and those immediately involved" (*TCA1*, 116-117). McCarthy interprets this as meaning social-scientific interpreters are not actually better interpreters than the social actors themselves; they are by necessity "virtual participants whose only plausible claim to objectivity derives from the reflective quality of their participation, but this reflexivity is in principle *open to the actual participants as well*" (McCarthy 1984, p. xv, italics added). Quite a radical expectation.

B. THE LIFEWORLD

The lifeworld is a prime example of what I would call Habermas's grand theory. The word is the main one in the subtitle of volume II of *The Theory of Communicative Action*. It is a concept of interest to many planning academics, though to fewer than is communicative action. The lifeworld and communicative action are very closely related.

The lifeworld goes back to philosophers Edmund Husserl and Alfred Schutz (see Schutz and Luckmann 1973, 1983). It comprises people's background assumptions, their definitions of their situations in society, and their interpretations of history. But it is more than culture, for it also comprises "socially customary practices" and "individual skills ... the intuitive knowledge of *how* one deals with situations" (*TCA2*, 135). Healey refers to "the lifeworld of personal existence; the daily, weekly and yearly going about and getting on in the life of personal experience" (2006, p. 50).

Habermas explains how it is related to social action:

Subjects acting communicatively always come to an understanding in the horizon of a lifeworld...formed from more or less diffuse, always unproblematic, background convictions....It serves as a source of situation definitions that are presupposed by participants as unproblematic. (*TCA1*, 70)

The metaphor of a horizon, common in philosophy, implies a limited view, which connoted by “presupposed” and “unproblematic.” Habermas also uses the phrases “prereflective,” “taken-for-granted background assumptions,” and “naively mastered skills,” and he says the lifeworld “enters *a tergo* [literally, from behind] into cooperative processes of interpretation” (*TCA1*, 335). He quotes Wittgenstein, who said the certainties present in his (Wittgenstein’s) worldview are “so anchored that I cannot touch [them]” (Wittgenstein, 1969, ¶103, p. 16, quoted at *TCA1*, 336).

Habermas thinks of society as a whole as having a lifeworld, which over the course of history is “rationalized.” At an early stage, if the cultural stock of knowledge is strong the lifeworld is dominated by political autocracy, tradition, dogma, and ritual, all relatively unchallenged. Over time it is rationalized in the sense that claims of validity increasingly are exposed to criticism and discussion rather than accepted merely on faith. Communicative action is crucial in that rationalization:

A lifeworld can be regarded as rationalized to the extent that it permits interactions...guided by...communicatively *achieved* understanding. (*TCA1*, 340)

Socially integrative and expressive functions that were first fulfilled by ritual practice pass over to communicative action....[There is] a release of the rationality potential in communicative action. (*TCA2*, 77)

The end result of rationalization? The lifeworld might remain a powerful force, with communicative action the predominant social action. But that doesn’t happen in modern capitalist societies, says Habermas, which is why the

lifeworld plays so important a role in his critical theory. The lifeworld loses power at the expense of forces like markets, law, bureaucracy, and the monetization of transactions, which Habermas collectively calls “system.” These forces—Habermas calls them “steering media” (*TCA2*, 183 and elsewhere)—were originally designed to reproduce the lifeworld materially, and are unobjectionable, even indispensable, in certain domains, but they grow more complex, uncoupled from the lifeworld, and they cut down and crowd out the lifeworld. The system “colonizes” the lifeworld, one of Habermas’s most quoted metaphors. “Steering crises” may arise, and, depending on how the system copes with them, there may be “pathologies” in the lifeworld, anomie or alienation, loss of legitimation and motivation, and “unsettling of collective identity” (*TCA2*, 385-386). These warnings have made Habermas one of the inspirations for so-called “new social movements” (NSMs)—movements for environmental protection, nuclear disarmament, gay rights, and women’s rights, for example, which “seek to defend, restore, or create new spaces for a communicatively based lifeworld” (Miller 2000, p. 30).

3. A HABERMAS-INSPIRED VIEW OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

I claim communicative action and the lifeworld help us understand social capital, especially if one also brings in another Habermasian concept, normatively regulated action, which planning academics have not paid much attention to.

A. COMMUNICATIVE ACTION

Communicative action is individual action designed to promote common understanding and cooperation in groups. Therefore, we should see it as being based

on people's respect for the trust embodied in social capital, their goal of maintaining social capital by putting it to effective use, and their desire to build new social capital by forming new bonds with other actors. To play this role in practice, communicative action must create and maintain resources for society as a whole in the sense that Coleman described. In thinking of communicative action in this role, *we must conceive it in the same broad way* that I described earlier when explaining how communicative planning theorists conceive it. Whether it is done by planners or other policymakers by individual citizens or groups, it must involve participation, inclusion, *and enabling*.

I will show that some planning academics have used language suggesting a connection with social capital, but generally they have not stated the connection clearly, and very few have emphasized it. As I mentioned earlier, I hope the following examples show that my reasoning is sound, but also I'm not working a field already well plowed.

Tore Sager has made the connection most clearly. In his 1994 book he introduced Carole Jean Uhlaner's theory of "relational goods," which are goods that are valuable only by virtue of social relationships: "they cannot be pursued *independent of the situation and preferences* of all other people" (Uhlaner 1989, pp. 254-255, italics added). Examples are social approval, solidarity, friendship, desire to experience one's history, desire to maintain an identity, fulfillment of a duty or moral norm (ibid., p. 255; all the phrases in my sentence appear there). Uhlaner did not use the term social capital, nor did Sager in discussing her idea, but it's clear to me that relational goods are social capital, so I find it revealing that Sager says: "The pursuit of relational goods is guided for a large part by the integrative aspect of communicative rationality, although one may have instrumental motives too" (Sager 1994, p. 7).

More remarkable is that in a more recent book Sager (2013) goes much further (the book appeared after I formulated my own argument). Now he explicitly links Habermas's communicative action to social capital. The most prominent statement is:

In Habermasian communicative action theory....dialogue [creates] the positive communicative externalities that are inherent in relational goods....Anticipation of relational goods can be one reason why people accept a moral obligation to reciprocate in dialogue....Trust and trustworthiness are integral elements of reciprocity. As such, they are also core links between social capital and communicative collective action" (Sager 2013, pp. 28-29).

Other unambiguous statements are: "Social capital networks brought into being by communicative planning generate relational goods such as social approval, confirmation of identity, and community attachment" (Sager 2013, p. 20). "Relational goods ... afford incentives for communicative planning" (ibid., p. 28). "The encounters of communicative planning generate networks of social relations in which social capital is embedded" (ibid., p. 29).

A less emphatic example comes from Patsy Healey. In her oft-cited book on collaborative planning (Healey 2006), in which she relies on Habermas for intellectual support, she frequently mentions that collaborative planning results in "social and intellectual capital" (pp. 33, 57, 69-70, 140, 200, 243, 264, 311). As she notes, it's a phrase used by Judith Gruber, a political scientist, who I believe originated the phrase, and Gruber's frequent collaborator Judith Innes, a planning academic (Gruber 1994, Innes 1994, 1996, Innes, Gruber et al. 1994). Healey says that social and intellectual capital comprises "relational resources" (Healey 2006, p. 57) and that communicative planning requires acceptance of reciprocity and trust (ibid., pp. 53, 311). However, only once does she refer to Habermas and social and intellectual capital in the same breath:

after advocating “collaborative, multi-cultural communication and learning,” she says, “Habermasian *communicative ethics* provides a valuable conceptual resource for thinking about how to do this. Collaborative efforts...serve to build up *social, intellectual and political capital*...” (ibid., p. 311, italics in original). Yet she does not cite James Coleman, Robert Putnam, or other theorists of social capital.

In his well-known *Planning in the Face of Power* (1989), John Forester discusses communicative action at length. We cannot expect to find explicit attention to “social capital” as early as 1989, but Forester does mention some phenomena that sociologists later associated with social capital. He mentions in passing that various forms of capital are involved in the organization of society’s attention (ibid., pp. 157-158), and also describes the reproduction of “knowledge, consent, trust, and formulations of problems” (ibid., p. 72). In a later book (1993), he expands the latter description, now using the term “communicative infrastructure of society” for institutions that connect actions to social structures and that produce, among other results, “patterns of trust and mutual recognition (patterns of solidarity)” (p. 144). Among these examples of infrastructure are member associations and churches, along with firms and government agencies. With the benefit of hindsight, these remarks suggest social capital.

Regional scientists will appreciate that in an article on regional economic development planning Patricia Wilson (1997) puts forth this chain of connections: economic development depends greatly on social capital; creating social capital requires a certain “protocol” by development planners; that protocol can draw on the theory of communicative action, among other philosophical roots. However, she does not link communicative action directly to social capital, or cite any specific work by

Habermas. Peter Muhlberger (2001), a political scientist, argues that social trust depends on the quality of political deliberation, and the principles of communicative action provide standards for the quality of deliberation.

B. NORMATIVE ACTION

I now introduce Habermas's concept of "normative action." Planning academics have paid much less attention to it. Habermas's own explanation of it is shorter than of communicative action and the lifeworld, but it is a significant topic in *The Theory of Communicative Action*, and he introduces it at the same time as he introduces communicative action. It definitely contributes to derivation of a "Habermas-inspired" view of social capital, and in a way different from the connections that Sager draws.

Habermas defines "normatively regulated action," which I abbreviate to "normative action," as a separate *model of social action* from communicative action and instrumental or strategic action (*TCA1*, 85). In this model

members of a social group...orient their action to common values....Norms express an agreement that obtains in a social group....The central concept of *complying with a norm* means fulfilling a generalized expectation of behavior....Members are *entitled* to expect a certain behavior" (ibid.).

Here again Habermas refers to coordination: normative action accomplishes coordination through agreement on "values and norms instilled through cultural tradition and socialization," as opposed to the teleological action that specifies coordination "as the interlacing of egocentric calculations of utility" (*TCA1*, 101).

Normative action is routine behavior, action from second nature, out of deeply entrenched shared habits. It is "the consensual action of those who simply actualize an already existing normative agreement" (*TCA1*, 95). In a particularly telling passage,

Habermas says normative action does not depend on careful consideration of “the facts” of a situation:

Their [actors'] reference is to norms and subjective experiences rather than to facts....The knowledge embodied in [them]...does not refer to the existence of states of affairs but to the validity of norms or to the manifestations of subjective experiences...the speaker can refer not to something in the objective world but only to something in a common social world or in his own subjective world. (*TCA1*, 15-16)

It looks like normative action is social capital in action. However, Habermas makes clear it's not “automatic,” not slavish obedience to a group. In normative action, “we have to describe the actors *as if* they consider the legitimacy of action norms to be basically open to objective appraisal” (*TCA1*, 420, n. 25). Actors draw on the lifeworld as a “reservoir of taken-for-granted,” but they mobilize “single elements, specific taken-for-granted...in the form of consensual and yet problematizable knowledge” if the situation calls for it (*TCA2*, 124). Surely social capital is similar: people generally trust each other and routinely expect others to behave in certain ways, and they act accordingly, without checking all the facts in each encounter ... but *they know to make exceptions*.

C. THE LIFEWORLD

I suggest the lifeworld is a store of social capital. Habermas says it is a stock of knowledge that provides

unproblematic common, background convictions that are assumed to be guaranteed; it is from these that contexts for processes of reaching understanding get shaped, processes in which those involved use tried and true situation definitions or negotiate new ones. (*TCA2*, 125)

The lifeworld is created in part by social interactions. “This store is not just an individual bundle that we carry around with us. We share and develop it with others, shaping and consolidating it through our relational interactions” (Healey 2006, p. 62).

I infer from Habermas that the lifeworld, *once rationalized by communicative action*, can support *normative action* that is routine, unproblematic, coming from second nature, based on shared values and trust, and it can do this without privileging dogma or autocracy. The lifeworld is a place for creating and revealing social capital.

Although Sager and Healey connect Habermas’s communicative action to social capital, they do not do the same with normative action or the lifeworld. The only writer I know who makes an explicit and detailed connection between Habermas’s lifeworld and social capital is Rod Dobell, an economist whose work I found after I formulated my own argument. He characterizes experience in the lifeworld as building bonding social capital, and experience in the system as building bridging social capital (Dobell 2001, 2008). Dobell’s concern is how social capital can help establish norms that are *constraints* on individual freedom and property rights that he feels are necessary to achieve environmental sustainability.

Planning academics who are attracted by Habermas would, I think, benefit from developing a Habermas-inspired view of social capital more fully. Doing so would make some of their use of Habermas’s concepts appear less abstract, and it create collaboration with planning practitioners. It would also open up opportunities for interdisciplinary work with other disciplines whose scholars are working on social capital. It would likely result in further progress on the research program that Habermas himself envisaged.

4. CRITICISMS OF HABERMAS

Here I limit myself to criticisms of the theories in *The Theory of Communicative Action*, and to criticisms that may raise doubts about the relevance of Habermas for social capital. In this section of the paper I pay attention to criticism from philosophers as well as planning academics and geographers, postponing to the next section issues that are suggested by economists' models.

One Can't Separate Communicative Action from Instrumental and Strategic Action So Sharply as Habermas Does. Isn't all action really teleological in some sense? Aren't all actors pursuing some goals of their own, even if they are departing from narrow self-interest? Habermas anticipates this complaint. He says, yes, communicative action has some teleological structure, but the mechanisms of *coordination* are different. In teleological action, the balance between conflict and cooperation depends on the self-interests. Teleological action "*rests content* with an explication of the features of action oriented directly to success" (TCA1, 101), but in communicative action "the acts of reaching understanding, which *link* the [participants'] teleologically structured plans...and thereby first *combine* individual acts into an interaction complex, cannot themselves be reduced to teleological actions" (TCA1, 288, italics on "link" and "combine" added). Communicative action "cannot be *imposed* by either party....What comes to pass manifestly through outside influence...cannot count subjectively as agreement. Agreement rests on common *convictions*" (TCA1, 287).

What Habermas is saying, I think, is that in communicative action, actors have goals, but the goals are to achieve consensus by sound argument, without "excluding

motives from public communication,” by enabling participation by all concerned, and in a spirit of being willing to be convinced to change their minds.

Too Much Attention to Language, Too Little to Action. This is to be expected given Habermas’s emphasis on language and how it figures in his models of social action. A crude form of the criticism might be that communicative action is just talk, but the issue is more whether Habermas really has an effective model of action.

Habermas explains he was influenced by J. L. (John L.) Austin (1962) and John Searle’s interpretation of Austin (*TCA1*, 288-292, 294, and 319-321). Austin’s phrase “how to do things with words” (Austin 1962, title) captures the fact that speech is action, that we need not think of words only as words. Habermas insists the communicative action model does not *equate action with communication* in the sense of mere speech. Language is a medium of communication, but communication is a broader concept, and communicative action is “*coordinated through speech acts and does not coincide with them*” (*TCA1*, 101).⁴ This insistence is consistent with planning academics’ broad conception of communicative action, which I earlier said we also need if we are to relate communicative action to social capital. That said, one must recognize that those “actions” are different from words, and are also diverse in themselves, so any theory of communicative action must recognize each action’s distinctive character.

An interesting sidelight here: It is an idea of long standing to define “human” as essentially linguistic, and Habermas must appreciate that. Charles Taylor comments: “We could take as our motto [the German poet] Hölderlin’s phrase, ‘Since we have conversed we are’....Habermas attempts to understand society from the *vantage point* of language” (Taylor 1991, 23, italics added)

Habermas Neglects Power. One charge is that Habermas slights forms of power that don't fit with his theme of colonization. It is said he does not deal with power exercised in the gendered division of labor, the family, and in groups we wouldn't consider part of the "system" (see Allen, 2007, 2008 and literature she cites). The criticism is often allied with skepticism about the validity of Habermas's two-level model of system and lifeworld.

A more general complaint is that Habermas slights power across the board. It often goes along with a preference for Michel Foucault's theories, and there's a large literature on a "Foucault-Habermas debate." Two examples from planning theory are interesting. Bent Flyvbjerg, a Danish planning academic, acknowledges that Habermas is a "champion thinker of the Enlightenment," along with Plato and Kant, and so justifies Enlightenment ideals (Flyvbjerg 1998, p. 3). But, says Flyvbjerg, those thinkers are weak when it comes to "understanding how modernity works in practice, and to implementing and practically defending the ideals" (ibid.). Pauline McGuirk, an Australian political geographer, says communicative planning theory assumes away powerful interests that "infiltrate planning practice" and doesn't account for planners' positions, as individuals, "in a nexus of power, knowledge, and rationality which validates expert forms of knowing/reasoning/valuing" (McGuirk 2001, p. 195). However, in recent years there have been efforts to reconcile Habermas's and Foucault's approaches, and to show that they complement each other (see for example Hillier 2002, ch. 4).

These criticisms do point to the need to supplement Habermas with other perspectives when theorizing about social capital. They alert us to the possibility of

using power to raise barriers to forming and preserving beneficial social capital, and the possibility of creating social capital that has negative effects.

By now even the most ardent admirers of Habermas appreciate these qualifications. Habermas remains relevant. To borrow my earlier language about social capital, Habermas appeals to many scholars because he makes it possible to ask, and answer, questions in ways not available before. John Forester expresses this thought: “Some distortions of communication (e.g., imperfect information) are inevitable, necessarily present in the structure of any political-economy....Nevertheless, many distortions are not inevitable; they are artificial, and thus the illusions they promote may be overcome” (Forester 1980, p. 276).

Remember that Habermas takes pains to point out communication is a model. As far back as 1970 we find this statement: “On the strength of communicative competence alone...and independent of the empirical structures of the social system to which we belong, we are quite unable to realize the ideal speech situation; we can only anticipate it” (Habermas 1970b, p. 372). Ideal communicative action is something to strive for, to move toward. Weber was famous for saying political success depends on “the art of the possible,” but then adding, “the possible is often reached only by striving to attain the impossible that lies beyond it...I, for my part, will not try to dissuade the nation from the view that actions are to be judged not merely by their instrumental value but by their intrinsic value as well” (Weber 1949, pp. 23-24).

Tore Sager offers an effort to combine an ideal model based on Habermas with practical realities. His own combination is “dialogical incrementalism” (Sager 1994, p. 4). It is “no practical planning approach,” but a “tool for theoretical analysis and a distant

guiding light for planning” (p. 246), something to be moved toward. The very process of raising questions and organizing attention is important (ibid., p. 255). He suggests reformulating the goal from “how to implement what was once figured out” to “how to figure out what is now implementable” (ibid.). There’s not a blueprint, for “the myopic implementation of the blueprint, the blindness to everything but the preconceived picture” can violate the public’s preferences just as much as other models (ibid.).

Habermas Ignores Place. Geographers Trevor Barnes and Eric Sheppard exemplify this criticism: Habermas’s argument “is abstracted from the reality of a geographically differentiated social world” (1992, p. 19). I could add that Habermas is not helpful on how communicative action and normative action work, and how they should work, in different kinds of *places*. How do they work in “thin” places compared to “thick” places, to use Robert Sack’s terms (1997, pp. 7-13)? The same questions arise about the lifeworld. Some geographers note approvingly Henri Lefebvre’s two concepts, abstract space and social space, that are similar to Habermas’s system and lifeworld but incorporate space explicitly (Lefebvre 1991, Gregory 1994, Miller 2000). Byron Miller relies on Habermas for a general theory of new social movements, but he says that in other respects Lefebvre serves geography better, because Lefebvre describes a “commodification and bureaucratization of the social spaces of everyday life that is virtually identical to Habermas’s discussion of the ‘colonization of the lifeworld’” (Miller 2000, p. 12).

I find the criticism about neglect of geography one of the most valid and important ones, because geographical context is so important for social capital. How different places work in this regard is an important subject for continued research.

However suggestive Habermas is, his ideas need to be supplemented by a consideration of place. Communicative planning theorists and other social scientists have done this in many case studies of social capital.

IV. ECONOMISTS' MODELS OF SOCIAL CAPITAL INVESTMENT

I have chosen three illustrative models here. All are models of what Habermas calls strategic action, as the individuals act in social situations to increase their own utility.

MODIFIED BECKER MODEL

I start with Gary Becker's (1974) model of social interactions because Becker was a pioneer: "The study of social influences on individual behavior in economics is a relatively recent phenomenon....Becker (1974) is an example of theoretical analysis that predate[s] the modern literature" (Blume, Brock, Durlauf, and Jayaraman, 2013, p. 1). The model is actually a special form of a general "household production" model, which of course reflects another of Becker's important theoretical contributions. An individual produces and consumes a single final good, called a "commodity," using two inputs, one a composite of market goods and the other a general characteristic of people she interacts with. I call that characteristic "social capital," but Becker suggested it might be something like Nassau Senior's "distinction" (Becker 1974, p. 1067). Maximizing utility requires maximizing production of the single commodity, so we can write the preference function as $U = U(X, C)$, where X is the composite good and C is social capital. Social capital is measured on a nonmonetary scale, and X is measured in monetary expenditure (so the price of $X = 1$).

Social capital has an exogenous component, C_o —Becker calls it “social environment”—and an endogenous component, H —created by the person’s own effort—so that $C = C_o + H$. The person can acquire H by activity that requires her to reduce X by P_C per unit of H . This specification captures the need to divert time or expenditure (in group activities, perhaps) away from X . Thus P_C is the opportunity cost or the “price” of H . The same price is used to value C_o . Thus the individual maximizes $U = U(X, C)$ subject to a budget constraint:

$$X + P_C H = Y_M \quad (1)$$

where Y_M is money income. It is useful to restate the budget constraint. Becker defines “social income,” Y_s , as the sum of money income and the market value of exogenous social capital: $Y_s = Y_M + P_C C_o$.

Adding $P_C C_o$ to both sides of (1) we have:

$$X + P_C H + P_C C_o = Y_M + P_C C_o$$

$$X + P_C C = Y_s \quad (2)$$

Equation (2) shows the person’s consumption of X and C is limited by her social income.

Analysis of first-order conditions for an optimum shows the individual’s responses to changes in C_o and Y_M . Starting from an initial optimum in which she acquires some H , assume Y_M remains constant but C_o increases. She will buy more X , decreasing H to free up money income to do so: the decrease in H partly offsets the effect of C_o on total social capital, C . If Y_M increases but C_o doesn’t, the money income elasticity of demand for H is higher than for C , total social capital. Becker sees this result—a relatively high elasticity of own efforts—as one of the most important results of the model. An increase

in $(P_C C_o)/Y_S$, the share of the value of exogenous social capital in social income, increases the money-income elasticity of demand for H. Similarly, if P_C changes, H has a greater price elasticity than does C, and the effect is the stronger the higher is that share.

Becker's model forces attention on the costs of investing in social capital, something that is only implicit in Habermas's discussion of communicative and normative action.

Glaeser, Laibson, and Sacerdote's Model. Edward Glaeser, David Laibson, and Bruce Sacerdote (GLS) (2002) are motivated by a desire to model individuals' investment behavior rather than the community characteristics and institutions that they see as the dominant concern in sociology and political science. They note that group-level or society-level approaches may inhibit economic theorizing because formal models of communities as decision makers are not common (GLS 2002, p. F443). In a separate article Glaeser expresses regret that the typical social science approach has defined social capital as an aggregate, even though decisions are made by individuals, and thus has "sabotaged attempts to understand its causes" (Glaeser 2001, p. 2). GLS want to model how aggregate social capital affects individuals' behavior. To do that they must model two separate effects: individuals' investments produce the aggregate endogenously; the aggregate feeds back to create incentives for individuals.

A person accumulates personal characteristics that have externalities for the rest of a community; examples are social contacts, involvement in groups, and social skills. GLS remind us externalities can be positive or negative; a salesman who has social skill in overselling items with defects has negative externalities. The community's aggregate

social capital is a function of its members' social capital, but it's not a simple sum, rather a complicated function that in theory incorporates all the externalities.

In the model a person builds personal social capital by devoting time to social interactions—*investing* in interactions. Examples are joining a social network, accumulating social skills and status, buying a home, getting formal education (pp. F443-F444, F452, F456). What are the returns? Social networks reduce social distance, which in turn increases information flows, trust, loyalty, altruism, and cooperation. Repeated social interaction reduces free-rider problems and opportunism. Social connections can substitute for costly legal procedures in investment and other financial transactions. Social skills and status may pay off if one works in a “sociable occupation” (p. F450). Buying a home implicitly commits one to reduced spatial mobility, which increases the value of social capital that is specific to a location. In schooling, one may learn social skills or language and communication skills that increase the direct utility from social interaction.

Elsewhere Glaeser says he suspects “the direct effect of social connections on utility is probably even more important than [various] indirect effects” (Glaeser 2001, p. 4). He cites researchers who find a correlation between individuals' membership in organizations and their happiness, and ones who find a connection between social capital and personal health. Social capital in one's neighborhood can increase a homeowner's financial wealth if the neighborhood's attractiveness increases house prices.

The most abstract feature of the model is that an individual is in an initial position and then plans his entire future life. If we think of discrete periods of time in the future,

then in every period the person has a stock of social capital, S , measured in units appropriate for social interactions. He earns a rate of return (in utility terms) on S , and that rate of return is a function of \hat{S} , which is the per capita level of *aggregate* social capital of all other people in a relevant group. If the group is large the per capita average of the entire group approximates well the average over all other members. This *rate* of return, $R(\hat{S})$, increases as \hat{S} increases, a kind of snowball effect. In each future period, the individual can increase S by any investment, I , and the decision variables are the I 's in all future periods. However, S also depreciates in every period; the depreciation is faster, the more community-specific the person's S is and the more likely he will leave the community (leaving the community depreciates S sharply, but doesn't drive it to zero because S includes some social skills useful in other places).

How does the individual decide, in the initial situation, the entire future time path of I ? He must forecast how his S changes, increasing due to I and decreasing due to depreciation. In each period, t , he will receive a benefit = $R(\hat{S}) \cdot S_t - wC(I_t)$, where $R(\hat{S})$ is the rate of return on S , $C(I_t)$ is the time cost of investment I_t , and w is the opportunity cost of time, measured in utility terms. The R function differs across individuals, for two reasons: preferences differ, so that different people value a given \hat{S}_t differently, and the network externalities affect people differently. The person must forecast the levels of \hat{S}_t , and it's assumed the interaction group is so large his own S has a negligible effect on \hat{S} . He also forecasts how fast his own S depreciates. Given all these assumptions, he plans a sequence of future investments I_t so as to maximize the present value of benefits. In the solution—which, remember, is a *future path*— I_t varies positively with \hat{S} and $R(\hat{S})$, and negatively with age, the opportunity cost of time, the rate

of time preference, rate of depreciation, expected mobility, and degree to which S is community-specific.

The model reminds of human capital investment models, but it has two distinctive elements, both of which add features that we don't find in Habermas: One is the attention to place and geographic mobility. Individual social capital S may be highly location-specific, and if so the qualities of place affect the incentive to invest. For example, home ownership implicitly commits one to reduced probability of exit, which makes investment in one's locality more attractive. The other distinctive element is that gross benefits are returns on one's own S but the *rate* of return depends on the aggregate, \hat{S} . This element means an individual's action has the "social multiplier" found in various theories in economics: his accumulation of S is a function of \hat{S} , which in turn is a function of everybody else's S. If there's a strong feedback from the community level to individual investments, "it is likely the *aggregate* elasticity of social capital with respect to any parameter...will be much higher than the micro-elasticity of [the individual's own] social capital with respect to the same variable" (p. F442, italics in original). The faster $R(\hat{S})$ rises with \hat{S} , the greater the social multiplier.⁵

GLS note that the interdependence between individuals' S and the community aggregate \hat{S} creates the possibility of multiple equilibria. "In some communities, the level of investment is high and the return to investment is consequently high. In other communities, no one invests and the return to investment is low....Multiple equilibria models explain how small differences in initial conditions can generate large divergence in long-run levels of social capital (p. F442).

Brock and Durlauf's Discrete Choice Models of Social Interaction. The social capital literature is replete with analysis of what we might call “joining,” where “join” means a choice to do something other people are doing. I’m using “join” in a broad sense of interaction, including but not limited to becoming a member of a formal organization. It could mean speaking up at a planning meeting, for example, because friends and neighborhoods are speaking up. A major reason for the attention to joining is the availability of extensive quantitative data on organization membership and participation in group activities. Another reason is that econometric methods to analyze discrete choice—to join or not—are available and already in wide use in research on labor force participation, school/college enrollment, migration, modal choice in transportation, and referenda voting. It’s also attractive that, at least theoretically, one can analyze choice among several alternatives, for example “conscious avoidance,” “apathetic interaction,” and “enthusiastic interaction.”

However, as Steven Durlauf and others note, it’s difficult empirically to separate the effects of social capital from other effects of social interaction that are correlated with social capital proxies but are not the result of individual choices. For example, identifying with others of a certain race, or taking others of that race as role models, is not a choice that represents social capital investment; investment requires *interaction* with others in a group (Durlauf 2001, pp. 50-52; Durlauf and Fafchamps 2005, pp. 1666-1667).

William Brock and Steven Durlauf (hereafter, B-D) have been major figures in building discrete choice models of social interaction (Brock and Durlauf 2001a,b; Durlauf 2000). As in GLS, group qualities feed back on individual choices. B-D’s goal is

to improve analysis of behavior like school attendance and effort, drug use, criminal or antisocial activity, labor force participation, language or dialect use, etc. In these choices the actor's utility depends in part on how many other people do the same thing, which is also a feature of social capital. Durlauf says B-D models potentially allow a more rigorous theory of social capital (Durlauf 2000, p. 24) and "much of the massive literature on social capital is in essence attempting to uncover group influences" (Durlauf 2001, p. 51).

One B-D model is the following (Brock and Durlauf 2001a).⁶ A person i 's utility is an additively separable function with three components:

$$V(\omega_i) = u(\omega_i) + S(\omega_i, \mu_i^e(\omega_{-i})) + \varepsilon(\omega_i) \quad (3)$$

where:

ω_i is i 's binary choice (-1 or 1), and $u(\omega_i)$ is the private utility from it;

$S(\cdot)$ is the social utility from the choice;

ω_{-i} is the vector of choices by all other agents, i.e., $(\omega_1, \dots, \omega_{i-1}, \omega_{i+1}, \dots, \omega_N)$;

$\mu_i^e(\omega_{-i})$ is the conditional probability i puts on the choices of others;

$\varepsilon(\omega_i)$ is a random utility term.

The variable ω_i is discrete and binary, unlike H in the modified Becker model or I in the GLS model. The component ε depends on ω , because $\varepsilon(1)$ results if the person has certain personal characteristics that are relevant if she joins a group, and $\varepsilon(-1)$ results if she has characteristics that are relevant if she doesn't (Brock and Durlauf 2001b, pp. 3305-3306; Durlauf 2000, p. 10).

Theoretical and econometric analysis is tractable only under restrictive specifications of ε and $S(\cdot)$. B-D assume $\varepsilon(-1)$ and $\varepsilon(1)$ have probability distributions that

allow standard logit regression models. On $S(\cdot)$, they assume μ is a function of the average of i 's subjective expectations of behavior by all other agents, then analyze two different specifications of S as a function of that average.

In a social capital context, it's worth exploring $S(\cdot)$ in a bit of detail. Define: $m_{i,j}$ = i 's subjective expected value of household j 's choice of ω (I suppress the superscript e), and define $\bar{m}_i = \sum_{j \neq i} m_{i,j} / (N-1)$. Alternatively, \bar{m}_i might be a weighted average, different weights applying to each j . For large N we can treat \bar{m}_i as continuous and define $S_m = \partial S / \partial \bar{m}_i$. The analysis is simplified if S is such that $\Delta S_m / \Delta \omega_i$ is a positive constant, which must be a ratio of discrete changes since ω_i is discrete. A specification that meets this criterion is $S(\cdot) = J \omega_i \bar{m}_i$, where J is the positive constant value of $\Delta S_m / \Delta \omega_i$ just described. Durlauf argues J can be an indicator of social capital, because it captures how the behavior of other people in a group affect an individual's valuation of alternatives (Durlauf 2000, p. 24). The multiplicative relationship between ω_i and \bar{m}_i creates a social multiplier, and also implies a one-to-one correspondence between $\omega_i \bar{m}_i$ and another attractive measure, namely p_i , which is the proportion of other people who make the same choice as i : $\omega_i \bar{m}_i = 2p_i - 1$. Specifically, social utility, S , is positive if and only if ω_i and \bar{m}_i are both positive or both negative, that is, social utility is positive if i 's choice is the same as the majority of others; S is zero if others' decisions are evenly divided between -1 and 1 , so that $\bar{m}_i = \text{zero}$ (note $S = 0$ regardless of the sign of ω_i); S is negative if ω_i and \bar{m}_i have different signs.

For the polychotomous case, there is no longer a one-to-one correspondence between $\omega_i \bar{m}_i$ and p_i , the fraction of others making the same choice. A given $\omega_i \bar{m}_i$ is consistent with an infinite number of distributions of choices in the population of others.

Several writers propose using the fraction p_i itself as the measure of others' aggregate behavior (Brock and Durlauf 2002, Bayer and Timmins 2002). Then the model has i choose an action, $\omega_{i,k}$, from among K possibilities ($k = 0, 1, 2, \dots, K-1$) and the utility function is:

$$V(\omega_{i,k}) = u(\omega_{i,k}) + Jp_{i,k} + \varepsilon(\omega_{i,k}) \quad (4)$$

where p refers to i 's expectation of the fraction of others making the same choice as she does, and J again indicates the strength of utility from interaction. That allows a standard multinomial logit model, but p seems a less suitable measure of interaction than \bar{m}_i is in the binary case.

V. COMPARISONS

Habermas never was and never will be, or think like, an economist. At a point when he is criticizing the process of the Enlightenment, he makes this remark: "The social system escapes from the intuitive knowledge of everyday communicative practice," making it "accessible only to the counterintuitive knowledge of the social sciences" (*TCA2*, 173).

A huge difference between Habermas and economists is that Habermas is being very normative, and he routinely commingles normative with positive analysis. That of course is to be expected in "critical theory." The typical economist wants to separate normative and positive analysis more neatly. From the point of view of planning, of course, being normative is welcome and necessary—as long as it is done in the spirit of communicative action.

When economists analyze "action," they usually define it more narrowly than Habermas, because quantitative data offer limited proxies. For example,

they may analyze membership in a small set of organizations, or people's answers to very specific questions about trust. They do not model something as broad as communicative action. Economists who have written on social capital have had the goal of empirical testing from the start; Habermas leaves empirical testing to other scholars.

It is useful, however, to consider what empirical testing of a Habermas-inspired view of social capital would mean. It would require proxies for communicative action, normative action, and characteristics of the lifeworld. It would require the social scientist to differentiate people in terms of their capacity for communication, their style of communicating, their propensity to innovate (in Taylor's sense), and also their position in social networks (with attention to links, structural holes, etc.). An empirical approach to the lifeworld would require thinking about and finding data (not only quantitative data) on individuals' past lives, in fact more so than the typical economist has done. The lifeworld suggests quite different empirical analyses for a Habermasian compared to most economists.

If economists do want to be normative, they choose explanatory variables that allow for policy intervention, such as subsidies to membership associations, or creation and preservation of physical environments that facilitate social interaction and reinforce memory. Even though Habermas is normative, his theory is incomplete in the sense of lacking such policy levers. However, one must admit that economists' variables capture only a few dimensions of communicative action or the lifeworld. Effective planning for social capital requires attention to both the broad concept and the specific details.

Economists have come to pay attention to the social environment, but what they see is rather different from Habermas's lifeworld, and certainly they do not concern themselves with a long history of rationalizing, let alone colonizing, it. This difference is one of the characteristics of economists' theories that make them "theories of the middle range," to use sociologist Robert Merton's (1949) phrase.

Nevertheless, there are similarities between Habermas and economists. To start with, both communicative action and social capital investment are individual behavior that affects the rest of society, and they produce a feedback from community to individual. In economic models the social multiplier captures the feedback; in communicative action, the dynamic is implicit in the notions of argument and rationalization, and Habermas also notes it explicitly by saying the actor is both initiator and product—a product of the "traditions in which he stands, of the solidary groups to which he belongs, of socialization and learning processes to which he is exposed" (*TCA2*, 135).

Charles Taylor gives us an insight here. He says that Habermas's theory implies that individual practice affects social structures, and the structures exist "by virtue of practice" (Taylor 1991, p. 25). Social structures can't explain all actions, because individuals innovate in their practice. Practice draws on "background knowledge, namely the horizon of our implicit know-how and pre-understanding," but it's a "background which can simultaneously be the source of innovative statements and articulations" (*ibid.*).

Habermas and economists are similar in coming from discontent with previous theories. That is obvious in the case of Habermas. For economists, modeling of social interaction is an attempt to temper methodological individualism, to acknowledge that social influences matter, but individuals' choices still matter, too. Quite a few economists grant that Mark Granovetter (1985) had a point in chiding them for undersocializing human behavior. Becker and Kevin Murphy (2000) urge economists to build models in which social capital and individual choice complement each other, and GLS and B-D do that. Becker and Murphy explicitly approved of models that incorporate "effects of social structure on behavior commonly emphasized by sociologists and anthropologists" (Becker and Murphy 2000, p. 9). However, in a comment that captures a particular point of view remarkably well, they say, "at a more fundamental level social capital changes the focus rather than reduces the importance of individual choice," because it shows how important are the individual's choices on peers, interactions, and other things that shape social capital (ibid., pp. 9-10).

The mutual causation of social structure and individual behavior in economists' models illustrate Taylor's point that "practice" is both dependent and innovative. They would illustrate it even more if economists were not so fond of a stable preference function—stable over a whole lifetime, even—so that changes in behavior are due to changes in prices, opportunity costs, income, and community social capital...but *not* to changes in preferences. Community social capital increases utility, but only by increasing in size, not because a person comes to "like" or "appreciate" community social capital any more.

Sociologists, too, found themselves discontented with established theory. For them, social capital added individuals' motivations and independence to theories of social context, without replacing social context totally. Many sociologists admit traditional sociological theories *oversocialize* behavior, and they seek more balance. Granovetter (1985, pp. 213-7) and Coleman (1988a, S96) discuss oversocialization and undersocialization and the need for more balance, and both of them refer to Dennis Wrong (1961), a sociologist who much earlier warned about oversocialization in sociological theory. Coleman thought of social capital as part of a disciplinary strategy: it relies on rational action but “reject[s] the extreme individualistic premises that often accompany it” (1988, pp. S95), and “without the assumption of atomistic elements stripped of social relationships” (ibid., pp. S118; see also Coleman 1993).

Recall that for Habermas, the lifeworld, which I argue is a store of social capital, can have unfortunate effects on society as a whole. That is the case when it relies on autocracy, unquestioned authority, and dogma. However, Habermas seems to have faith that communicative action could reduce those unfortunate effects if the system did not succeed in colonizing the lifeworld. Economists and sociologists alike recognize that social capital can have negative effects. Tight bonds and group loyalties may lead to antisocial behavior, insularity, exclusionary practices, inhibition of entrepreneurial initiative (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993; Portes and Landolt 1996; Portes 1998; Sandefur and Laumann 1998; Putnam 2000, pp. 350-66; Rupasingha, Goetz, and Freshwater 2002 (who remind us of Mancur Olson's (1982) “distributional coalitions” that inhibit growth); and Westlund and Bolton 2003 (who find support in Schumpeter's discussion of entrepreneurship). Rod Dobell hypothesizes that tight bonds raise

problems for achieving environmental sustainability, which are accentuated as we move down decision-making hierarchies toward “more tightly defined groups” (Dobell 2001, p. 362). “The dark side of social capital shows itself: membership implies exclusion just as surely as it implies inclusion....Can there be reconciliation of universal values with distinctive community bonds?” (ibid., pp. 362-363).

Habermas pays little attention to social networks. In his discussion of groups, under the topic of normative action, he does not go into how a group’s composition is formed or what “joining” entails. In a later book, *Between Facts and Norms* (1996), he refers to networks a few times in passing, at one point saying “networks of interaction” occur along with “action coordination” in processes of reaching understanding (Habermas 1996, p. 35). About the lifeworld, he says:

The lifeworld is constituted from a network of communicative actions that branch out through social space and historical time, and these live off sources of cultural traditions and legitimate orders no less than they depend on the identities of socialized individuals....[who] find support in the relationships of reciprocal recognition articulated in cultural traditions. (ibid., p. 80).

Here again we see a brief reflection by Habermas that needs much more in the way of specifics to be helpful. Won’t an individual’s choice of communicative versus instrumental action depend on her place in a social network—on whether she is playing a bridging role or reinforcing bonding? The details of discourse and reasoned argument, for example the choice between words and other symbols (maps, data, graphics) in communication, will also depend on network characteristics. The power of the lifeworld in shaping normative action depends on the nature of the lifeworld’s networks.

Economists, for their part, now know how important networks are, but they have found it difficult to add details of network structure to their models of individual behavior.

However, economists do have the benefit of paradigms that lead them to look for data on network characteristics, including spatial and place data that allow analysis of geography.

VI. CONCLUSION

No theory is perfect, none is the “best” taken by itself. Habermas’s theory is abstract and he leaves empirical testing to others. He does not suggest incentives society might use to increase social capital, perhaps because many incentives would put too much weight to instrumental action rather than communicative action. Economists’ models deal with a limited range of action, one that pales in comparison with an understanding of communicative action. They also seldom have a place for the historical experience and cultural details that are suggested by the lifeworld.

Planning and research in the spirit of Habermas actually requires adding insights from other sources than his own writings, as I have suggested at many places in this paper. Those insights can come from a more detailed understanding of communicative action, normative action, the lifeworld, and social networks. We need to recognize how power can complicate the creation of social capital and even create group social capital that harms other groups and society as a whole. The many critics of Habermas, the communicative planning theorists who have offered combined approaches, economists—all can be helpful. I believe a Habermas-inspired view of social capital bundles many signals of how we might forward.

Habermas’s critical theory will always be attractive to a significant number of intellectuals. For them, the Habermas-inspired theory of social capital can attract other scholars, not such ardent fans, to collaborative research. For the ones not fans, the

theory can provide insights without requiring them to accept every one of Habermas's theories. For example, one can find communicative action and normative action useful without accepting the dual system-lifeworld model. After all, even scholars most attracted to Habermas have rejected some of his theories while embracing others.

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ENDNOTES

*I read an earlier version of the paper at the symposium in honor of my friend Andrew Isserman at University of Illinois, Urbana, in November 2011. Andy was a noted planning academic, among many other things, and he was an exemplar of building and maintaining social capital in many communities. In places I've drawn on two earlier unpublished papers (Bolton 2002, 2005).

1. Andrew Edgar (2005) is a good introduction to Habermas's many theories. Edgar organizes his book chronologically, relating the evolution of the theories to Habermas's life course. He explains how *The Theory of Communicative Action (TCA)* depends on Habermas's previous work, and also how he explored new issues and changed emphases after *TCA*. Stephen White (1988) shows how important *TCA* is in Habermas's thought and how it depends on but also departs from the earlier writings. Thomas McCarthy (1978) and John Thompson and David Held's (1982) collection describe Habermas's writings on communicative action and critical theory before *TCA*; the latter contains Habermas's long "Reply to My Critics." Matthew Specter's intellectual biography (2010) concentrates on topics other than communicative action and the lifeworld, so is a good general source but less relevant for my purposes here. Miriam Bankovsky (2012) explains how, perhaps surprisingly, a deconstructive approach to Habermas (along with Rawls and Honneth) can be illuminating. Joel Anderson (2011) describes the changing nature of Habermas's association with the group called the Frankfurt School.

2. It is worth quoting Taylor more fully: "Jürgen Habermas is an exemplary public intellectual.... Unremittingly and with great courage he has intervened in the important debates of our time.... One might almost say that theory and practice are organically linked in the thought of Habermas: as a theorist of democracy and of open, undistorted communication, he cannot but intervene when these crucial values are suppressed or denied, without being untrue to himself. Or in any case, that is the way he lives his philosophy, with a kind of passionate integrity.... In the making of policy the intellectual is often replaced by the expert, master of some narrow field, who is rarely asked to decide on the use to be made of his expertise. In this world, Jürgen Habermas stands out as a shining example of the philosopher-citizen, two roles indissolubly linked in a figure of great depth and integrity. We, in democratic countries and beyond, are all in his debt, and that more than anything else accounts for his unparalleled prominence." (Taylor 2009).

3. Habermas credits George Herbert Mead and Harold Garfinkel for the "paradigmatic significance" of communicative action in social science (*TCA1*, 86). Habermas had worked out and published much of his own theory before he published *TCA1* in German in 1981 (*TCA1*, *xli* and Habermas 1970a,b, 1971, 1988); John Forester relied on the pre-*TCA* writings in his pioneering articles applying communicative action to planning theory (Forester 1980, 1982).

4. Habermas claims “the use of language with an orientation to reaching understanding is the *original mode* of language use” and the instrumental use of language is “parasitic” on the communication action use (*TCA1*, p. 288). He repeats that argument in writings after *TCA*; for example, if a speaker achieves success by concealing information—“leaves the hearer in the dark”—it is parasitic because the hearer has wrongly assumed the speaker is seeking understanding (Habermas 1998a, p. 224; his phrasing in 1998b, p. 301-302 is very similar; see also Habermas, 1991, p. 239). Many observers regard this distinction between primary and parasitic as fundamentally important in Habermas. David Rasmussen: “This thesis regarding the primacy of the communicative mode constitutes the major theoretical insight sustaining the entire edifice Habermas has built” (Rasmussen 1990, p. 28; his language at pp. 37-38 is similar). Others reject the argument, for example saying it is not scientific and merely reflects Habermas’s personal preferences for the communicative mode, or it is based unscientifically on utopian ideas. Some would actually prefer a utopian basis rather than an unsupportable “scientific” basis for practical policy recommendations of the kind that Habermasians espouse (Rasmussen, 1990, 37-55).

5. Becker and Murphy (2000, 13-14) have a useful formulation of the social multiplier: For each person i : $S_i = S_i(x_1, x_2, x_3, \dots, x_n; \hat{S})$, where $S(\cdot)$ expresses steady-state S as a function of various explanatory variables (such as ones GLS suggested) and also as a function of \hat{S} . Then $\hat{S} = (1/N)\sum_i S_i$, and the total derivative of \hat{S} with respect to one of the x variables, say x_k , is:

$$d\hat{S}/dx_k = (1/N)\sum(\partial S_i/\partial x_k) + (1/N)\sum(\partial S_i/\partial \hat{S})(d\hat{S}/dx_k) \quad (1)$$

On the right-hand side the first term is a direct effect of x_k on the individual’s behavior, the second term an indirect effect through the influence of the group. Further manipulation produces the social multiplier:

$$(d\hat{S}/dx_k)\{1 - (1/N)\sum(\partial S_i/\partial \hat{S})\} = (1/N)\sum(\partial S_i/\partial x_k)$$

$$(d\hat{S}/dx_k) = \left[\frac{1}{1 - m} \right] (1/N)\sum(\partial S_i/\partial x_k) \quad (2)$$

where $m = (1/N)\sum(\partial S_i/\partial \hat{S})$, the average response of individuals’ social capital to the aggregate social capital, and the term in bold brackets is the social multiplier, which of course looks similar to the familiar Keynesian multiplier. In the GLS model, the average response m is high if returns are high, if the probability of exit from the community is lower, and if the capital is more community-specific.

Glaeser, Scheinkman, and Sacerdote (2003) have a slightly different formulation, which is a monotonic transformation of the Becker-Murphy version.

6. Brock and Durlauf mention the model has a probability structure that is equivalent to that in a model of statistical mechanics, namely a form of the Curie-Weiss model of magnetism (2001, 240; statistical mechanics models predict average characteristics of systems in which physical objects, such as atoms, interact). In addition to allowing straightforward econometrics, it has an *equilibrium* property, that is, one can derive conditions necessary and sufficient for every person’s choice to be consistent all others. That property is beyond my concern here, but it’s important to recognize that many economists regard it as highly desirable and some as *de rigueur*.

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