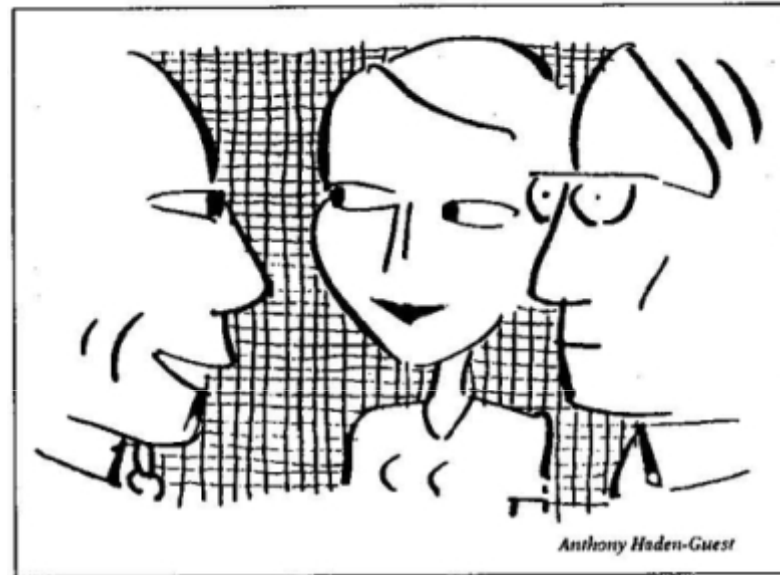# The role of theory in appraisal

'You're a terrorist? Thank God. I understood Meg to say you were a theorist.'

Leiv Bjelland, Martine Kuipers, Helmut Muller, Karen Syrett
and Tytti Voutilainen

Archidis Summer School 2011

- What is theory?
- What is appraisal theory?
- Does theory help practice?
- Conclusion

John Roberts

„We save what is historically valuable - *there*; that is the theory" (1987)

Terry Eastwood

„[T]heory is contemplation of the nature of some object or some phenomenon seen as the object

[F]or applied disciplines, theory and it's method to determine the nature of the thing to be treated come before […] practice and its method" (1994)

Preben Mortensen

- Theories must be understood as a product of archival practice. They are developed as solutions to specific problems

- Theory „need not, indeed *cannot* rely on something entirely independent of a historical, social, and political context" (1999)

Appraisal theory as problem solving

T R Schellenberg

Problem: Record overload

Need to destroy records and therefore have to assign value

- Primary
- Secondary

Hans Booms

Problem: State centered appraisal tradition

Value is in the context

- Contemporary focus
- Societal research
- Documention plan as a method

Terry Cook

Problems:
1) Record overload and new media
2) Unsystematic destruction of files (eg Investigation of Nazi war criminals)

- Planned and systematic approach
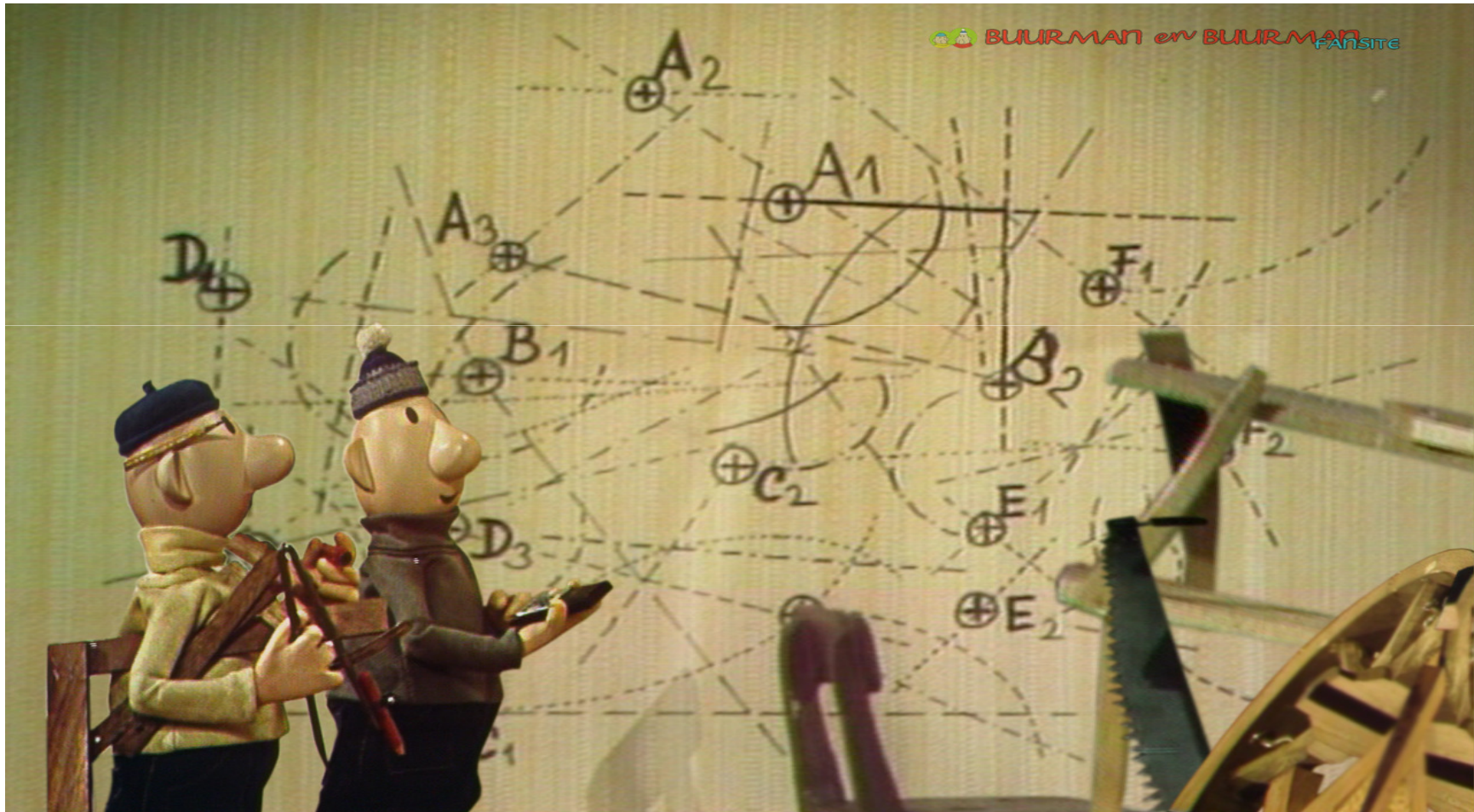- Macroappraisal
- Functional analysis

Cook

Problems:

3) How do you document society through government records?

- Societal value
- Inter-relationship between state and citizens
- Institutions manifest functions sanctioned by democratic society – filter societal values

Does theory help practice?

Conclusion

- The opposite of practical is impractical, not theoretical

- Theory and practice cross-fertilize each other

- We have regarded appraisal theory as problem-solving

- Appraisal theory is designed to solve problems, but does it really do that?