

CHAPTER FOUR

CRITICAL AND PRAGMATIC TRADITIONS AND CRITICAL PRAGMATISM IN PLANNING THEORY

Introduction

If contemporary planning theory is dominated by approaches that may be called collaborative, critical, post-modern and pragmatic, then this theory is broadly seated in the two camps I have already established. The collaborative and pragmatic approaches to planning theory are closely associated with the communicative turn, while critical approaches are aligned with concerns of power as central to planning. Yiftachel, in his reflections of the 1998 Oxford Conference of Planning Theory identifies two main perspectives in the work of leading contemporary planning theorists: the ‘communicative-pragmatist’ approach and the ‘critical’ approach. Yiftachel identifies Campbell and Marshall, Healey, Throgmorton, Mandelbaum and Muller *inter alia* as communicative-pragmatists. Flyvbjerg, Huxley, Richardson and Yiftachel rank amongst the critical group (Yiftachel, 1999).

In Yiftachel’s argument, communicative-action theorists are excluded from the term ‘critical’ because theorists in this group are considered to have overlooked the analytical and critical components of the Habermasian theory their work is based on; they have adopted communicative-action approaches without engaging in the societal critique necessary for effective communicative action. Furthermore, their focus is on normative approaches, on reforming planning from within. Their definition of planning focuses on processes of decision-making. The critical scholars, on the other hand, “examine the role of planning in creating, maintaining, or reproducing social control, oppression, inequalities and injustices” (Yiftachel, 1999:268). These scholars examine planning from the outside. Arguably these positions are not mutually exclusive, albeit that they are the subject of fervent debate and considerable disagreement amongst theorists such as Forester, Yiftachel, Hillier and Flyvbjerg (Huxley, 2000; Huxley and Yiftachel, 2000; Flyvbjerg and Richardson, 2002).

It is difficult to sever critical approaches from pragmatic approaches. For pragmatism is not entirely power blind or uncritical. Communicative planning theory, in turn, is

drawn from a critical school but is closely associated with pragmatism in planning. It may be more valuable to interrogate the pragmatic or critical content of theorists across a wider spectrum than to categorise them in a fixed way as wholly pragmatic or critical. This is particularly so given the overlaps in the base philosophical traditions that have been noted in Chapter Three. There are planning theorists, such as Forester, who bridge the traditions of pragmatism and critical theory. However, for the purposes of analysis, this chapter will seek to draw out the individual aspects of each approach in order to examine them more closely.

The pragmatic and critical theoretical framework that is developed in this dissertation allow for an assessment of these elements of a planning practice case accords closely with a concept that Forester has termed 'deliberative' and for which he has called for an analytical approach of 'critical pragmatism'. The latter term is used by Forester (2001) and emerges out of his lengthy studies of planning practice and the philosophical writings of Habermas. In planning literature it is a concept that has developed from Forester's roots in a communicative planning approach to his later 'deliberative' planning approaches. Critical pragmatism in this view is an approach that is "... critical because (it is) concerned with ethics and justification, (and) a 'pragmatism' because (it is) concerned with practical action, history and change" (Forester, 2001:207).

The approach is sensitive to issues of power and ethics, while analysing concrete, situated action in planning and related political processes (Forester, 2003a). Forester has not elaborated on the mechanisms of a critical pragmatic analytic tool but his own studies reflect largely an approach to observation and analysis that incorporates the elements he ascribes to critical pragmatism.

While Chapter Three has examined the philosophical roots of a critical pragmatism the present chapter specifically locates critical pragmatism within planning theory. This chapter is structured in five sections to serve these intra-disciplinary ends.

This first section introduces the chapter. The second section outlines the critical tradition in planning theory. It introduces critical approaches in planning and within this tradition focuses on the communicative school.

The third section explores the tradition of pragmatism in planning theory. Together these provide the bases for a critical pragmatism in planning and a discussion of that approach follows. Both approaches are, however, limited in their treatment of ethics and thus a brief section on ethics in planning thought is covered in the fourth section. The final section consolidates a discussion on critical pragmatism in planning theory.

The exploration of critical pragmatism is undertaken against the key themes identified in the analysis of the philosophical roots of critical pragmatism, namely context, outcomes, power, rationality and ethics. Each element is discussed: firstly, in terms of its genealogy in planning theory, and secondly in terms of my interpretation of that element as a lens of critical pragmatism.

The Application of Critical Theory in Planning Thought

This section focuses on the tradition of critical theory within planning thought. It tracks the social mobilisation traditions and the traditions that have stemmed from the works of Foucault and Habermas, key proponents of critical theory.

Two philosophers have been particularly influential on the recent writings of planning theorists who have sought to understand and analyse power in planning. The philosophical pillar of communication is rooted in the work of Habermas, while the foregrounding of relations of power in recent planning thought finds a philosophical home in the work of Foucault. Planning theorists have themselves defined and aligned their work in terms of these schools, although, more recently, they have tried to avoid too explicit a connection with particular philosophers or social frameworks. These influences are discussed below. First, however, the more traditional Marxist influence on a social mobilisation tradition in planning is outlined.

Social Mobilisation in Planning Thought

The monumental work on historical materialism of Marx and Engels has influenced traditions in planning that are grounded in a commitment to using planning practice to alter existing patterns of unequal power relations. For planning the focus is on the role of planning in relation to power dynamics and structures of power in society. An understanding of this at a conceptual level requires an interrogation of the concerns of

the critical school of planning with issues of power relations in planning, the so-called 'dark side of planning' (Yiftachel, 2001).

In the 1970s and 1980s a social mobilisation following of the Marxist and emerging feminist traditions strongly challenged Universalist perspectives. Writers such as Scott and Roweis (1977), Castells (1979), Harvey (1973) and many others argued that planning was not benign. On the contrary, they wrote of planning's power, of planning as a means of social control. Theorists found that planning had been ineffective and inefficient, had worsened problems of poverty, had reduced market competitiveness and had been applied for less than benign ends. The neighbouring development studies scholarship was similarly highlighting the failures of an ostensibly benevolent enterprise that was increasingly seen as an exercise in imposing western ideals and social control on societies of the south (Yiftachel, 2001; Parfitt 2002).

Radical planning was proposed as an alternative to social reformist approaches (Friedmann, 1987). Planning as social mobilisation was to be focused on the goal of emancipation of humanity from social oppression. The impulse for particular planning interventions would have to come from the community itself. Like other forms of planning, radical planning is concerned with the link of knowledge to action. Friedmann (1987) finds that radical planners' critique of the present situation provide analytic support to mobilised communities to search for practical alternatives; assist groups in refining technical aspects of their transformative solutions; abstract from experience to enable collective learning; and mediate the encounters between communities and the state's regulatory and oppressive agencies in a representative role for communities.

Influences of Habermas and the Centrality of Language on Planning Thought

The centrality of language as a tool of power in planning is a fundamental starting point for planning analysis in several contemporary schools of planning thought. For while the communicative school is most closely associated with language, to the point of preoccupation, the critical and pragmatic schools also acknowledge language as the

vehicle of power relations in planning, which is necessarily an interactive science. The deliberative leanings of both schools influence the tradition of practice writing.

In South Africa, the pre-communicative planning approaches have limited application. Their focus on the rationality of the planner limits the importance of the intentions, strategies and manipulations of the state and other stakeholders as forces in devising and impacting planning outcomes. In a country in which planning has so strongly been associated with state action to engineer social outcomes – with apparent famously disastrous consequences – the planning models that provide for planning as a controlling or regulatory science centred around the power of planners are critically flawed.

By the mid-1980s the critique of planning theory in the 1970s and 1980s produced a broad consensus position against pure instrumental rationality. A rejection of instrumental rationality in planning is also rooted in wider philosophical shifts away from positivism. Allmendinger (2002) identifies two reasons for the shift in thinking away from positivist epistemologies. First, new insights provided by philosophers of science questioned the positivist understandings of the universalisation of conditions of knowledge, the neutrality of observation, the givenness of experience and the independence of data from theoretical interpretation. Second, they questioned the distinctions between the natural and social sciences (Baert 1998). Instead, attention to the social sciences and in planning began to turn to context, practices and histories to explain what counts as knowledge, and “data, theories and disciplines themselves began to be understood as belonging to larger social and historical contexts in which they were applied, changed and developed while social reality became to be understood as a social construction” (Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones, 2002:5). Quite simply, the increasing recognition of diversity in society has challenged the capacity of planners to serve the public interest through merely technical means. It has similarly challenged politicians in their relationship to planning information and rationality, as the relationship between planners and politicians and between planners and political power has become increasingly blurred.

This allowed for the emergence of a new path in planning, namely collaborative planning, or its theoretical partner, the ‘communicative turn’ in planning theory. A

move from outcomes-focused approaches to approaches based on process and on the inclusion of marginalised groupings in planning decision-making dominated the new wave. Serving as an umbrella framework for a series of ‘communicative planning’ styles, collaborative planning was popularised in planning vocabulary by the work of Healey. She contends that collaborative planning is concerned with “why urban regions are important to social, economic and environmental policy and how political communities may organize to improve the quality of their places” (1997a:xii). Healey elaborates on collaborative planning as a framework for practical action (not as a theory, although it has been criticised as a theoretical initiative). Similarly, Harris views collaborative planning as wide-ranging and ambitious in its integration of several topics of contemporary concern in the field and discipline of planning:

These concerns include: notions of community; relations of power; global economic restructuring and regional impact; environmentalism; cultures and systems of governance, institutional design; technocratic control and the nature of expertise; mediation and conflict resolution; and spatial planning. (2002:23)

At a theoretical level, the communicative turn is typically associated with the mid-1980s and later planning contributions of communicative planning theorists (such as Forester, 1993; Healey, 1992, 1993; Healey and Hiller, 1996; Mandelbaum et al., 1996). The theory is based on the notion that communication can be used to either distort or improve democratic processes in planning. Although a concern with communication was not new to town planning, Campbell and Fainstein (1996) note that the 1990s approach is distinguished from earlier periods by a focus on interpersonal elements in communication. The authors also refer to the centrality of the idea within communicative planning theory of “planners as communicators rather than as autonomous systematic thinkers” (Campbell and Fainstein, 1996:11). Harris (2002) indicates that interpersonal communication has also drawn the attention of planning theorists who have focused on the ‘micro-sociology’ and politics of planning practice. Here communicative concepts have been introduced into planning theory in an effort to both reflect the reality of practice situations and to overcome some of the limitations of the classic rational model of decision-making (Alexander in Harris 2002).

Habermas' findings in his communicative action theory (outlined in the previous chapter) inspired collaborative planning. Healey noted that these ideas had a "transformative impact within the planning field... as groups turn(ed) to the techniques of mediation and facilitation to deal with disputes and to organise(d) discussion" (1997a: 49-50) and outlines the key strands of communicative planning. In summary these are a recognition of:

- ▶ the social construction of knowledge and that scientific knowledge and practical reason are not as different as instrumentalists claimed;
- ▶ the different forms for the development and communication of knowledge (analysis, storytelling, expression, pictures);
- ▶ the social context in which preferences are formed, i.e. that individuals learn about their views through interaction;
- ▶ diverse interests and the potential of power to oppress and dominate;
- ▶ the importance of drawing upon the knowledge and reasoning of all stakeholders in deriving public policy;
- ▶ planning activity as being embedded in day-to-day relations; that practice and context are linked and;
- ▶ a shift from competitive interest bargaining to collaborative consensus building.

Collaborative planning was born out of concerns with "how political communities organise to improve the quality of their places" (Harris, 2002:22). This body of theory implores planners to use the process of dialogue strategically in the exercise of planning. Planners are to identify and mitigate against domination and manipulation in dialogue. This leads planners into the field of mediation. Harris (2002) finds that collaborative planning is also concerned with context (the nature of particular places and systems of governance), with structure [the nature of institutional organisations], with manifestation of power relations and with adopting more democratic planning practices. Its concern with power locates collaborative planning within a critical tradition. But, as argued below, collaborative planning has been criticised for not being 'critical enough' in its dealings with power.

Extensive critiques of collaborative planning have been levelled at both the theoretical foundations and the practical applicability of the approach. At a theoretical level the diffuse nature of Habermas' work has drawn criticism, and by association

collaborative theory in planning has been criticised for its complexity. Critiques of communicative planning theory quickly turn to critiques of the critical theory from which it is derived. Harris notes that:

The thesis presented by sociologist-philosopher Jurgen Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action has been called an 'important but inaccessible work' a 'sprawling, uneven work' that is 'unnecessarily long', and as 'massive and complex.' (2002:25)

The value of critical theory as a potentially transformative social criticism in planning is questioned, as its own basis is not substantially transformative.

The value of Habermas' thesis is perceived by contemporary theorists (Flyvbjerg, 1998a and Sager, 1999) to be the capacity of the ideal speech situation and of discourse ethics to be a generalised guide for increasing democratisation of public decision-making. Moreover, discourse ethics can be used as a normative yardstick for measuring specific communication, consensus-creation and decision-making circumstances to judge their distance from ideal speech. The conception of justice as the reasonable outcome that results from fair and uncoerced reasoning between free and equal citizens has been hugely influential in planning thought, particularly in the communicative school (Campbell, 2006).

Dissent and disagreement are not embraced in Habermas's view of reasonableness. This is problematic in planning, where contestation characterises the daily issues that planners deal with (Campbell, 2006). Flyvbjerg contends that in actually existing civil society it is precisely the conflicts that cannot be resolved by argumentation that are of interest and that procedures for dealing with such conflicts are needed in every society (Flyvbjerg, 1998a). The collaborative school is also criticised for not acknowledging the role of the planner in distorting communication. Planners themselves may manipulate discourse to achieve particular ends, and are not necessarily focused only on democratic process (Watson, 2001). Planners, like politicians make judgments and interact with different conceptions of justice or ideals in their activities – planning is in fact “essentially concerned with ethical questions” (Campbell, 2006:98).

“The problem...” Flyvbjerg contends, “... is that Habermas is idealistic. His work contains little understanding of how power functions or of those strategies and tactics which can ensure more of the sought-after democracy” (Flyvbjerg, 1998a:208). For all its real benefits the communicative approach focuses on the planning process, whereas much of what is happening in planning and affecting outcomes is not about the process. The political/critical school addresses this gap in its privileging of conflict and power relations.

Beyond the problem of idealism, communicative theory also comes under criticism for the primacy it accords communication as a lever in planning. This is related to its commitment to a consensual position in communication. While acknowledging the importance of communication and community action in shaping the built environment, Huxley and Yiftachel (2000) assert that the powers (negative and positive) of private developers, community groups and the state may well be intertwined in the communicative encounters involving planners. They argue that the actions of each group may also be analytically distinct from those of other groups. Planning itself is not at the whim of a communicative process between these groups but is ultimately a state activity, resourced and regulated by the state.

Collaborative theory has also been criticised for weaknesses relating to interpretation and omissions in the use of communicative theory (Harris, 2002). In terms of practice collaborative planning has been questioned because of the high demands it places on practice, such as Healey’s requirement that planners “(interrelate)d technical and experiential knowledge and reasoning” (in Harris, 2002:37). These demands would require considerable changes to existing planning institutions. Collaborative planning does not deal effectively with the existing constraints in planning systems, but rather optimistically and perhaps naively calls for widespread systematic changes.

Finally, communicative approaches are criticised for their failure to deal with what happens when open processes produce unjust results or when paternalistic and bureaucratic modes of decision-making produce desirable outcomes (Fainstein, 2000; Campbell, 2006).

Influences of Foucault on Planning Thought

Flyvbjerg and Richardson (2002) note that power has become an inevitable question for planning theorist. Moreover it may be the “acid-test of planning theory” (Flyvbjerg and Richardson, 2002:44). The sentiments echo the concerns of Yiftachel, who finds a neglect of issues of power in planning analysis. He attributes this in part to the predominance of the communicative school of planning since the late 1980s, a school which is embedded in procedure and communication and has, to the detriment of the field, not focused on the substantive elements of planning – the material consequences of the activity. While acknowledging that a focus on procedure and communication does not stand in opposition to a critical approach that invokes the actual political and material outcomes of planning, Yiftachel calls on planners to challenge the assumed usefulness of planning in society. The communicative school, on the other hand, is heavily defended by Forester who asserts that the communicative approach not only acknowledges the importance of power dynamics but goes further to provide an approach to planning ‘in the face of power’(Forester, 1989).

A critical reading of planning history re-emerged in the late 20th century through a range of Foucauldian (Flyvbjerg, 1998a), feminist (Sandercock and Forsyth, 1992), post-modern (Sandercock, 1998a), ethnic and racial (Hasson, 2001) and post-colonial (Robinson, 2002, 2006) critiques in contemporary planning theory. These, Yiftachel notes, demonstrate a concentration on critical analyses of planning that has not been equalled since the days of the Marxist school in the 1970s (Yiftachel, 2001).

Planning as an agent for positive change has been heavily critiqued as it has been shown that the same policy tools that have been applied for benevolent ends have also been applied as a means of social control. Such control is not exercised openly, nor is it an overt planning conspiracy on behalf of a self-defined group. Rather, it is part of what became generally accepted and unquestioned ‘social goals’. It is these that work or are manipulated to work to the ends of powerful groups that generally set societal agendas (Lefebvre in Yiftachel, 2001). Social systems devise methods of legitimising policies under labels such as ‘renewal’, ‘urban regeneration’ and many others. The policies executed under such labels have often benefited powerful economic and social interests while the labels obscured the negative consequences of the social and economic displacement and exclusion of minority interests. Planning literature

abounds with examples of such exclusion (Sandercock, 1998a, 2003). Aspects of the seemingly benevolent project of the Kathorus Integrated Presidential Project are shown in Chapter Eight to have been carried out through manipulations of power, and certain choices made in the project are shown to have resulted in exclusion.

If the role of power in planning is taken as a given, then there is no way around conceptualising issues of planning, of inclusion and exclusion but in terms of conflict and power (Flyvbjerg and Richardson, 2002). Flyvbjerg and Richardson (2002) show that Foucault reminds us of the importance of power in shaping discourses. His continual analysis of power would mean, in practice, that Foucault would not prescribe on either process or outcome. He would only recommend a focus on conflict and power relations as the most effective tools against domination. Yet Foucault denied that he was not action oriented and planning theorists Flyvbjerg (1998a, c, d) and Watson (2002) have applied his genealogical approach in analyses of planning practice in contexts as different as Aalborg in Denmark and Cape Town in South Africa.

In Flyvbjerg's (1998a) recent assessment of a large-scale project in Aalborg, Denmark he views power relations as inherent rather than as good or bad. Demonstrating how planning processes and technicist arguments were used and manipulated in the legitimisation of powerful interests, Flyvbjerg develops a thesis on the relationship between power and rationality. He develops ten propositions of rationality and power. In his thesis of power and rationality, Flyvbjerg concludes that the asymmetrical relationship between power and rationality, in which power will always dominate, is problematic. Modern democratic governance relies on rationality. If the power of rationality is weak, then the democracy built thereon will also be weak. The planning rationality proposed by Foucauldians is a strategic rationality. It is premised on the need for planners to invoke a rationality that is conscious of power relations and that invokes or deploys power, often in response to a threat of power by others (Yiftachel *et al.*, 2001). Planners are not benign in their power relationships, but engage strategically to pursue their self-interests (even where these may be defined as 'public goals').

Flyvbjerg has been strongly criticised for the leaps his work makes from the detailed findings of a single case study to broad mutually exclusive concepts. His presentation of rationality as a given and not a contested entity is criticised for robbing the term of its diversity. Flyvbjerg undermines the more sophisticated approach to the concept of rationality that Habermas embraced (Yiftachel, 2001). Flyvbjerg's over-generalised linking of power and rationality (such that power is totalising in defining and creating reality) to planning practice has dispensed with potential understandings of what planners really did in terms of power relations: where did they serve the interests of the powerful and where did they act against these? (Forester, 2001). Ultimately, in describing the rationality of any actors it is necessary to provide evidence of the intention of the planner or other actor. An extremely complex task, but one without which, Forester contends, the rationality written about is only assumed and cannot be distinguished from lies, claims to rationality, or exaggeration. Rather, in assuming that in a political world planners do withhold and manipulate information, it is valuable to analyse how they do this (Forester, 2001). Moreover, Forester calls for a framework that incorporates reflective ethical judgment, a framework that goes beyond a dissection of power or rationality at play, but that also searches the question of "how to do better".

Foucault's consideration of spatiality is also relevant to planning. He examined the relationship between spatial structuring in prisons and the domination and control over that space. Richardson has examined similar relationships between discourses of mobility and freedom that produce transport polices dominated for example by high-speed transport that excludes other types of mobility (Flyvbjerg and Richardson, 2002). Using Foucauldian analysis, Crush (in Flyvbjerg and Richardson, 2002) has shown how mining compounds in South Africa were designed as spaces of control and coercion and also became sites for the practice of rich, oppositional cultures.

Planning theorists who have drawn on Foucault encourage planners to find theoretical approaches that embrace the centrality of power and that understand how power and space are closely bound up in practice. This is a view that tolerates conflict and difference (Flyvbjerg and Richardson, 2002).

In applying Foucauldian analysis to planning in Cape Town, Watson has underlined the argument that "planning cannot be a technical, rational exercise, producing

incontestable solutions to particular framings of the urban problem” (2002:153). She notes that this does not imply that the planning exercise was irrational. Rather, it was undertaken by individuals in a particular time and context who exerted power in a variety of ways, to very different personal and public ends – and this is likely to happen in any planning case, as planning presents the opportunity for the exercise of power (Watson, 2002).

Is the planning task rendered futile by a Foucauldian perspective? Watson argues that it is not. Being alert to power in the processes of which planning is a part, enables planners to give support to its productive and positive forms, while monitoring and revealing its negative forms. This becomes the basis of the planning task. It is also the basis for public action (Watson, 2002).

The Application of Pragmatism in Planning Thought

The dimensions of the philosophical tradition of pragmatism and particularly the pragmatism of Dewey, are sketched in Chapter Two. This section focuses on the application of the thinking of both classical and contemporary pragmatists in planning theory. Closely associated with the collaborative school, pragmatic planning approaches emphasise concrete action over abstract theorising and result in a positive and constructive view of the possibilities of planning. Harrison calls for “the deliberate exercise of a ‘will to plan’ despite a recognition that utopian dreams will never be realised in any absolute sense, and that planning will always have negative unanticipated consequences” (2001a:70).

Pragmatists have carved a space for planning to operate between the modernist striving for an ultimate truth and the scepticism of Foucault. In planning theory Forester, Hoch, Friedman and Harper and Stein write in the pragmatist tradition. In South Africa, Harrison has used a pragmatist framework and the work of Watson on the practice movement is implicitly pragmatist.

The social learning tradition in planning is derived from pragmatism (Friedmann, 1987). However, there was little reference to pragmatism in post-war planning theory, despite the clear links between Dewey’s concepts of reconstruction and planning’s

goal directed action (Harrison, 2002a). Harrison explains this by the dominance of logical positivism in planning thought in that period. He suggests that a renewed interest in pragmatism followed from the disillusionment with positivism, from a need to rediscover community in a post-neoliberalist period, a frustration with the lack of delivery in planning and a concern with the process rather than outcome emphasis of planning theory. Theorists including Friedmann (1987), Hoch (1992, 1996), Forester (1993) and Harper and Stein (1995) have embraced the openness and indeterminacy of pragmatism in their writings and studies.

While pragmatism cannot claim to provide a framework for what to do or what values to adopt in planning, it has been shown to provide a way of thinking that offers a “constructive and unpretentious alternative” to the ambitious aims of aligning with a universal consensus position on which collaborative planning approaches have been premised (Harrison, 2002a). The key principles of pragmatism for planning as extracted in the work of planning theorists who have written in this tradition are summarised below.

Influence of Classical Pragmatists (Dewey and James) on Planning Thought

It was William James who credited Charles Pierce with having inaugurated pragmatism. James himself developed a ‘radical pragmatism’ based on his notion of a ‘will to believe’. The notion of free will was linked to the notion of being responsible for the knowable consequences of one’s actions. Broadly, humans choose their actions on the basis of previous experience and previous consequence. James asserted that we have an emotional willingness to believe. He later added the condition that no belief would be held as true if it went against available evidence (in Weiner, 1974).

With pragmatist James as the philosophical guide in his planning theorising, Verma (1996) proposes that pragmatic rationality offers the best of the rational paradigm and deals with some of its key shortcomings. The theory of meaning employed in pragmatism argues that the touchstone of meaning is not in its methodological soundness, but in its consequences. The theory of truth holds that facts cannot be separated from the willingness of an audience to receive them. So, outmoded ideas continue to hold not because they are correct but because they may be readily

understood and received. Verma argues for a rationality that builds in pragmatic concerns with morality, aesthetics and psychology.

Dewey's philosophy, with its focus on contextualising of issues, on action and experience, and on individual growth is covered in substantial detail in the previous chapter. Pragmatism in planning embraces Dewey's focus on concrete problems in specific situations. It is an approach that is suggested for situations of wide ranging interests and values. In these circumstances, a focus on specific, clearly identified problems and concerns rather than on philosophical, potentially divisive issues is suggested (Jamal, Stein and Harper, 2002).

Following the tradition of Dewey, pragmatism in planning is results oriented. It is not focused on process or methodology for their own sake, but on process and method only in so far as they will bring about the desired outcome (Harrison, 2002a). Pragmatist planning is open to employing instrumental rationality for the setting of goals and direction for planning ahead of process, while it remains open to the possibility of outcomes being adapted given the learning and passage of the project. Similarly, methodology may be adapted as outcomes shift. The pragmatist would work within a democratic, community framework, but would remain free to apply individual creativity to the process. Decision-making in a pragmatic paradigm would be focused on jointly developing actions for particular policies on which there is some agreement (Jamal, Stein and Harper, 2002).

Hoch (1984) has interpreted Dewey's pragmatism for planning and has called in particular for planners to prioritise three core principles of that work. The first two of these concern action. Firstly, the role of experience in providing truth – lived experience is seen as the only real test of truth and applicability of ideas. What works, matters. Secondly, the search for practical answers to real problems – we test the ideas in real cases to find the best course of action. Problems in this sense are defined in terms of their own localised and historical situatedness. Thus actions or solutions relevant to one context are not automatically transferable to another context. In Hoch's words, "Beware the myths of moral purity and certain Knowledge!" (1992:214). Hoch's third principle derived from Dewey is that of democratic

participation as the means of plan implementation – plans should be executed through shared and agreed means (Hoch, 1984).

Influences of Contemporary (Linguistic) Pragmatists on Planning Thought

It is useful to examine the pragmatic approach to the communicative planning debate. Various iterations of pragmatism have evolved, with a focus by Rorty and others on the linguistic construction of truth. Concerns with language were criticised for diverting pragmatism from its radical activist roots, but nonetheless ensured that pragmatism was closely aligned with communicative planning. Like communicative planning, pragmatism emphasises reaching a consensus in a given situation, so that what is pursued in a planning exercise is an agreed path of action. Rather than a universal truth then, the ‘truth’ emerges and evolves out of what participants agree. The way in which ‘what works for us’ is achieved is through democratic collaboration and negotiation. In this tradition Mandelbaum (1988:20) writes of the value and promise of “open moral communities” in which we affiliate with many overlapping groups and are able to move through a variety of identities. This collective action still leaves the way open to individual judgement and action. A diversity of competing ideas is expected and a gradually constructed broad agreement around real experienced interventions is aimed for. Harrison (2002a) points out that this pragmatic goal of ‘solidarity’ does not equate with a Habermasian commitment to a universal truth but rather it represents individual’s loyalty and commitment to a deliberate process of relation-building.

In a context of multiple knowledge, pragmatism provides a means for bringing together instrumental reasoning and other ways of knowing as the frames of reference for planning evaluation (Harrison, 2001a). While not disregarding scientific reasoning, the neo-pragmatists like Rorty lean towards finding truth in the emotive, the ‘poetic’, the non-analytical side of life. It does not require necessary and certain knowledge, but reasons, descriptions and beliefs that others can recognise, understand and use to guide their actions. Pragmatism embraces the possibility of multiple and competing rationalities – “enhanced evaluation practice may result if the proposition for a multiple rationalities approach were adopted in land use planning” (Sager, 1999:10). For Sager there are few purely instrumental or purely communicative reasons in planning action. While approaches may be generally more communicative

(in conflict situations or issues of scarce resources) or instrumental (in goal directed planning practices) depending on the nature of the problem, the two rationalities are often applied simultaneously. The relevance here for the KSiPP is in the affective elements of rationality – the non-verbal fields. These are the elements of sympathy, sentiment, identity, personal affiliation that influenced project decisions and outcomes, as demonstrated in Chapter Eight.

The choice of rationality is based on the notion that planning may apply what knowledge and learning is necessary in a particular context. Planning incorporates only the knowledge that is relevant and the important things that the people who are involved want included (Hoch, 1996). It has been said that “pragmatism originates in reflection on experience and culminates in altered experience” (Kloppenber in Harrison, 2002a:159). It is past experience that enables planners to project likely futures and therefore to plan (Harrison, 2002a). Its combined emphasis of experience and democracy steers pragmatism from the cynicism of much of post-modern theorising (Kloppenber in Harrison, 2002a).

Interactive, learning-based approaches to planning in a context of conflict are proposed by neo-pragmatic frameworks (Jamal, Stein and Harper, 2002; Harper and Stein, 2006). Harper and Stein have recently proposed a ‘dialogical’ planning approach to deal with the perceived crises in planning theory and practice. The crises relate to the inability of traditional forms of justification to adequately ground our beliefs and values. As a response, Harper and Stein propose a planning style that accommodates several modernist and post-modernist perspectives. This neo-pragmatic planning approach is consciously procedural and normative. While it may be broadly situated within a pragmatist framework, the authors assert that the approach does not rely on a single philosophical or theoretical foundation, but starts with a normative position and draws from a variety of sources that are appropriate to the purpose of creating “the best planning approach for a contemporary liberal democratic society” (Harper and Stein, 2006:xvi). The work draws on a range of contemporary planning theory, particularly collaborative approaches, and North American planning practice cases to develop an explicitly liberal planning approach. The authors call for an interactive planning style that is simultaneously ‘critically liberal’, ‘pragmatic’ and ‘incremental’ (ibid.:xvi).

Contrary to communicative planning theorists, pragmatists see “sufficient common ground for collaborative social action” (Harrison, 2002a:163). This is achieved over time through processes of empathy, sentiment and common experience rather than through a universalistic consensus. Harrison notes too that pragmatist planning accords the planner agency, unlike the constraining Habermasian impulse of neutralising professional judgment. Coalitions that develop are limited in space and time and are open to renegotiation.

Influence of Contemporary Radical Pragmatism on Planning Thought

Cornel West is a contemporary, African American radical pragmatist. His work moves beyond the perceived liberal nature of Dewey’s work, and seeks to deepen and sharpen the focus of pragmatism on issues of racial and gender subjugation. In this he seeks to move away from a patriarchal discourse and to focus on the concerns of marginalised communities. His work has been scantily applied in planning thought – and this points to a limitation of pragmatism in planning. Yet West’s propositions are highly relevant to planning. A radical pragmatist, concerned with empowerment of marginalised groupings, West sees pragmatism as “citizenry in action with its civil consciousness moulded by participation in public-interest-centred and individual-rights-regarding democracy” (West in Muller, 1998:297). West calls for social forces that are focused on empowering the disadvantaged, the degraded and the dejected.

Although West’s important work may have been little used in planning thought, Hoch (1984) considers several other theorists to have used an approach that approximates a radical pragmatism in their work, including Forester, Marris, Burton and Friedmann. Hoch’s definition of a radical pragmatism in this argument concerns a bridging of mainstream and Marxist theories of planning. Forester focuses on rational speech and understanding in the relationship between planning and power. For him planning can intervene in the power distortions inherent in language. Marris is concerned with individual motivation and emotional experience in influencing action in planning. Planners thus need to focus not only on purpose, but also on the meaning of purposes involved for various decision-makers. Burton focuses on the relationship between planning and the political formation of citizens (in Hoch, 1984). Planners can play a role in mediating between the state bureaucracy and the demands of private interests,

by providing critical yet practical alternatives for participation and accountability. Finally, Friedmann's concerns with the global ambitions of large corporations that have undermined the power of communities and his consequent call for collaboration between labour and community in a context of democratic participation, is considered to represent radical pragmatism. Radical pragmatists do not accept that class struggle is the only conception of power. Rather, they concentrate on the promise of individual emancipation that already informs people's choices, people's knowledge of undistorted communication and people's expectations of democratic governance (Hoch, 1984).

Limitations of the Tradition of Pragmatism in Planning

Pragmatism offers a hopeful, action-oriented direction for planning that is flexible and is historically and contextually rooted, while being committed to democratic process. The limitation of this approach lies in a dangerous tendency to conservatism wrought by its failure adequately to acknowledge power relations and structural impediments to action. Friedmann (1987) notes that interests play a significant role in what actions are taken or omitted and that action is not frictionless nor can it be assumed to self-correct. Furthermore, a commitment to action cannot be assumed – humans are intrinsically attached to keeping things the way they are and resist change that involves separation and loss. Actions are not neutral free experiments but are rooted fundamentally in vested interests and structures of power. Political processes, in which planning action finds itself, are not rule-bound or open and the possibilities of undistorted process or equal access or capacity to engage with channels of communication and media cannot be assumed in the planning environment.

The limitations that the pragmatist tradition in planning faces in terms of its concern with power are partially supplemented by a dialogue with critical approaches. The limitation in providing normative principles, however, is a limitation that it shares with critical traditions. The ethical gap in pragmatism stems largely from the in-built danger of theoretical positions that have focused on the differences and peculiarities of particular contexts. These assessments can become relativist. Assessments are only valid in those particular contexts or in those that allow for actions and approaches to be justified because of local circumstances. The avoidance of a relativist position requires that some normative notions be built in, at least at the level of understanding

the choices planners make in the myriad of decisions they are party to in planning. This is what Campbell and Marshall (1999) refer to as bringing together the universal and the particular. An understanding of both the power of planners and their ethical choices are thus necessary to this framework. These limitations are explored further in the next section.

The Ethical Limitation in Critical and Pragmatic Traditions in Planning

The previous chapter has shown that while neither critical theory nor pragmatism are strongly rooted ethical theories, recent interpretations of the works of Dewey and Foucault point to normative positions in their work. Habermas's discourse ethics has also been noted. There are thus the beginnings of ethical leanings in both traditions.

Pragmatism in the main does not provide a fixed moral anchor, but calls for each situation to be judged individually, and it expects uncertainty and multiplicity in values. It does however call for the consequences of action to be attended to. Nor does it countenance a concern for particular groups, but rather for each individual. This is problematic in a society where particular groups have been the targets of unjust planning intervention. For pragmatism, a moral position is taken once the consequences of an idea have been proven in experience. This is limited in its usefulness both in planning and in the South African case of patently unjust actions being exercised in the name of planning. The critical perspective that is decidedly against domination and from which an ethical perspective related to justice might be derived is more helpful. But a key shortcoming of critical theory is its inability to offer practical alternatives. While it exposes planning for being a tool of the state, critical theory does not venture what planners ought to do (Oelofse, 2003a). A branch of the critical school – Habermas's communicative theory – has offered discourse ethics, which has influenced a major contemporary tradition in planning. The ethical approach offered in deliberative or communicative planning is, however, contested. It does not adequately address the issue of conflict and contestation in planning. Furthermore, it does not provide for the ethical position and personal values of the planner within deliberation.

Both critical and pragmatic traditions embrace the notion that ethical positions need to be situated within contexts. Pragmatism acknowledges multiple values and uncertainty. Both positions call for reflectivity between theory and practice and for a revising of positions on the basis of experience. However, both approaches are limited in their attention to power issues and neither offers clear guidelines for matters of justice. The critical aspect of ‘critical pragmatism’ provides at least a requirement for planners to incorporate such matters. There is limited application of this work in planning theory. Recently, however, Campbell has grappled with this issue in what is arguably a critically pragmatic approach to ethics in planning. In grappling with the dilemma of contested rationality, Campbell (2002, 2006) has shown that planning problems are on the one hand ‘situated’ and on the other ‘contested’. Planning problems concern specific places, historically located. They are, furthermore, contested both in process and outcome. Choices that are made around spatial processes rub up against varied experiences, different knowledges and different understandings of truth. Planning is inherently about ethics. Campbell asserts that in making decisions in the face of competing rationalities, planning institutions are required by society to be just. Justice becomes the normative measure in resolving contested rationalities. Further, because planning problems are contested, it is necessary to make ethical judgments that are situated with and for others, in just situations. The environment of decision-making must be seen to be just.

Conclusion

Chapter Three outlined the philosophical bases for critical and pragmatic traditions. This chapter has examined the influence of both on planning theory. It has illustrated the contribution of critical theory to incorporating concerns of power in planning. The influence of Habermas’ critical theory has been extensive in focusing a large stream of contemporary planning theory on the centrality of language, on discourse and on power relations embedded in language. Further, the critical theory of Foucault has illuminated the prolific nature of planning as well as the interlinkages of power with rationality. The chapter has also highlighted the contributions of pragmatism to planning thought. Here the role of classical, contemporary and radical pragmatists has been considered. Classical pragmatism has been shown to have contributed a focus on contextualising of planning situations and issues; a focus on experience and actual

outcome as the test of planning success; and a focus on the growth of individuals as the normative goal of planning. It has also embraced the application of a range of rationalities depending on the particular context. Contemporary pragmatists have added to these dimensions a concern with interactive-learning based approaches to planning. This approach is concerned with moving dialogue to a consensus developed within the particular group (as opposed to a consensus based on universal norms). Radical pragmatism contributes a focus on marginalised groupings. Both critical theory and pragmatism have been shown to be limited in their ability to provide guideposts for ethical choices made in planning, but both have normative frames that might be extended to provide guides for action.

The following chapter extends the theoretical component of this dissertation by explicitly presenting an analytical framework for the examination of planning practice, namely critical pragmatism, and is focused on five themes drawn from the traditions examined in Chapters Three and Four.