

CHAPTER NINE

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Findings of a Critical Pragmatic Evaluation of the KSiPP

The previous chapter has analysed the Kathorus SIPP in terms of a critical pragmatic framework developed in the theoretical section of this dissertation. This chapter extracts conclusions from the analysis. It further probes the value or limitations of critical pragmatism as an analytical approach in planning analysis, with particular reference to a context of political transition. The chapter is structured as follows: The empirical and theoretical findings extracted from the case study are presented generally and in terms of each of the five lenses that I have defined for critical pragmatism, namely context, outcomes, rationality, power and ethics. Thereafter, the value and limitations of critical pragmatism as an approach to the evaluation of planning practice in post-apartheid South Africa are explored. The constraints of methodology employed in this study are described and final comments conclude the dissertation.

This dissertation set out to apply a critical pragmatic approach to viewing a post-apartheid case of planning in South Africa. In this respect it has pursued a theoretical as well as a practical, analytical aim. In theoretical terms the study required the development of the concept of critical pragmatism towards an analytical framework.

The study achieved this in the first instance through an examination of the philosophical roots of critical pragmatism in Chapter Three. The value contributed to the concept of critical pragmatism by the critical school was shown to lie in its analysis of power relations, its firm stance in respect of domination and its focus on the relationship between rationality and power. Pragmatism on the other hand, provides for contextuality, an embracing of multiplicity and, importantly, a focus on actual lived experience as an approach to the analysis of ideas and their impact. Together these frameworks provide a basis for a critical pragmatism and suggest the elements that have constituted the analytical framework for this study.

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Following from the roots of critical pragmatism, Chapter Four of the study has interrogated the critical and pragmatic traditions within planning theory. This has provided a further foundation for extracting what the elements defined earlier on mean in a critical pragmatic framework of planning. These have been articulated in Chapter Five. The examination of the lenses within critical pragmatism provided a theoretical basis through which to analyse the case study and to reflect the empirical findings of professional assessments of the case study. The context in which this was applied, namely the newly democratic South Africa, was described in Chapter Five.

Using the findings of various evaluations of the Kathorus Special Integrated Presidential Project (KSiPP), Chapter Seven examined the broad outcomes of the project. Chapter Eight mapped the case study against the lenses of critical pragmatism. The findings of this analysis reinforced the significance of each lens and, importantly, the interplay between the different lenses. They proved useful in providing an in-depth perspective on planning process and outcome.

The following section explores the contribution of each theme to an analytical framework. It examines the value and limitations of each lens in analysing Kathorus. It then provides a broader commentary on the themes.

It is useful to note that the overall resonance of the critical pragmatic elements with the complexity of the KSiPP is high. In the first instance, the very particular nature of the time and place in which the project was situated, gave rise to circumstances that may have been peculiar and had specific effects on opportunity and outcome. The setting of the story in its historical context of transition highlights, above all, the role of power in manifold forms in the project and the interplay of power and planning. Secondly, the overt emphasis on delivery (outcomes) as well as the challenge of directing limited resources into an area of widespread need – within a restricted timeframe – in this project highlights the importance of a pragmatic approach. Thirdly, the backdrop of rationality, the reasons for planning, the rationale within the project and the competing and aligned rationalities are shown to have played out through the process. Fourthly, the case study demonstrates a key role for power - at the levels of the overarching political framework and rhetoric, the power of planning and of planning actors and the power of the beneficiaries of the project. Finally, the

dimension of planning choice, of the role of ethics in planning judgment and action in the case study is significant. This is demonstrated by decisions and actions of key planners and decision-makers in the project.

The application of critical pragmatism to the case of the KSiPP has demonstrated that none of the lenses of critical pragmatism is independent of others. This is explored in the previous chapter and in the section below.

Context: The analysis of the Kathorus story places the study of the project within a spatial, political and historical context. It examines the actions of the planners within the context of the powers of the institutions, the varied client communities and the planners themselves in the era that the project was set. The positioning of the KSiPP in its context is critical to the analysis of this case. This value lies beyond the importance of understanding context as a background to and impetus for the project.

Critical pragmatism has required an evaluation of the relationship between context and planning means and ends, in the KSiPP. Following this approach, I have situated the narrative of the KSiPP within a richly nuanced examination of the historical, economic, social, institutional, political and planning context within which the project emanated and was undertaken. The very particular socio-historic circumstances accounted not only for the conditions that led to a planning project, but intersected with planning process. A detailed understanding of this context enabled an analysis of the conditions of power in the project to be linked to the shifting power blocs in the country as well as at a local level. This provided an understanding of the latitude with which planning was undertaken as well as the limitations for planners of exercising a traditionally strategic planning approach in the area. It accounted for planning actions that, outside of this context, may have been impossible to sustain. The role of planning within this context, albeit of a benign nature, was highly legitimising of the state even while it exercised its own powers of manipulation of state and other stakeholders. Such actions as the overt security focus and the high costs of SOS systems as a key planning intervention, the ‘planting’ of personalities in local government; and the manipulation of the allocation of building contracts cannot be assessed as better or worse actions outside of the context of violence, political transition and conflict management within which they were undertaken. An

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assessment of contextual conditions also provided surprising insights. For example, it was indicated that the high levels of commitment of officials to the project was linked to the KSiPP's status as a Presidential Project.

For Kathorus the framing context in terms of timing – the historical juncture at which the project emerged, the national discourse, the space for and constraints on compromise, the political power of social movements, and the land development history of the setting – render various theoretical lenses more or less appropriate. The framing of objectives around security issues is not typical of large-scale planning interventions. This focus and the attention and support it was given ahead of other social issues relates to a particular era. It accords with the pragmatist view that reality is a shifting target and that truth is changeable. When assessed in a pragmatic sense the outcomes of the project prove highly successful, in that they met many of the objectives set in that context. A critical view, on the other hand, finds outcomes to have been inequitable and skewed away from social benefits and towards infrastructure.

The critical pragmatic framework, with its roots in two philosophical schools that foreground context and situatedness, requires a rich understanding of context. The project cannot be examined without an adequate contextualisation. The planning theory and methodology employed in this dissertation has shown the necessity of contextualisation to critical as well as pragmatic traditions, and to narrative approaches. A critical approach requires adequate objectivity and validity of the case; to a pragmatic approach that assesses action and outcome according to the experience of that outcome in a particular context, and finally to narrative requires that the narrative and narrator be situated.

Critical pragmatism requires that all aspects of analysis be reflected against context and that the interaction between the context and planning activity be understood. The danger of a highly contextually located approach is relativism. While actions cannot be divorced from their context, analysis needs also to be able to draw conclusions that are of value beyond that context. The linking of this specific site and particular practices to the wider relations of power is especially critical in avoiding the trap of preparing a self-endorsing case study. Most importantly, it is necessary to draw

normative conclusions from an analysis of projects in order to further the cause of improved planning approaches. In isolation, the theme of situatedness does not provide a guard against relativism. It is only the combination of this with other lenses that provide a more reflective stance. In particular, it is the normative lens of ethics that adds a dimension from which planning action can be judged both within and outside of the particular circumstance. Dimensions such as the power of personalities, who could be present in a different context and whose role leads planning direction, are critically important.

Outcomes are bound in a socio-historical context. An understanding of that context in South Africa and its impact on planning rationalisations and on process and outcome, are a necessary adjunct to understanding the outcomes of the Kathorus intervention. Planning approaches cannot be applied or assessed in South Africa without a deep understanding not only of a national context but of local peculiarities. This is particularly so because of conditions of conflict. Whereas overall peace had been achieved in Kathorus, ongoing localised conflict had to be assumed and factored into planning. Similarly deep and abiding division must be accounted for in planning processes elsewhere in South Africa. Notions of ‘community’ and therefore of the beneficiaries and victims of planning interventions cannot be understood in a neutral way given the history of South Africa.

When viewed in terms of the multiplicity and particularity of forces at play in the KSiPP this study is relevant to studies of other urban places. It is not because this tale is synonymous with any other context, but precisely because the examination of the KSiPP illuminates a complex and particular story that it is significant. Examining Kathorus experience against these multiple frames provides a better foothold for understanding this project and as Robinson contends, being mindful of the “diverse, contested, distinctive” (2006:114) nature of cities is a better starting point for understanding urban areas of the world. In the South African context, she notes, this requires approaches that consider cities for their complex social, political, historical and economic realities rather than a linear economic hierarchy of cities based on the activities of large firms. This perspective requires that all cities be viewed for their social and political distinctiveness and not only against a narrow set of

developmentalist interventions or globalising sectors of the economy (Robinson, 2006:142).

Outcomes: The achievements of the KSiPP can obscure a deeper analysis of the ‘dark’ side of the planning exercise. Inversely, a focus only on the power relationships and dynamics may avoid taking account of the project’s delivery. In sheer terms of scale the outcomes achieved are astounding and in a South African context where need is so extreme it is the onus of planners to grapple with the importance and lessons of such delivery. The consequences of planning action and how they are experienced constitute the basic pragmatic measure of the value of planning interventions.

This dissertation reflects on professional evaluations that have assessed the impact of the KSiPP on the area and its residents in multiple ways. It unpacks the drivers of the high delivery focus in the planning process, a critical dimension to understanding how outcomes were achieved, and can be achieved, elsewhere, in future. However, this conventional view of outcomes is limited.

A critical pragmatic perspective interrogates the outcomes in an enquiring way. It finds that substantial compromises were made between equitable outcomes and high-speed, quick deliverable outcomes that provided political gain. When measured against concerns for democratic outcome, the project appears less successful than at first view. The intended outcomes are seen to have been defined in top-down, technicist fashion.

Overall, outcomes are not independent of, but highly intertwined with, the tensions between community needs, available resources and political pressures. Positive process and outcomes are certainly evident in the KSiPP. In spite of the concerns raised, there is evidence of high levels of cooperation within the planning process, and of high levels of satisfaction in the outcomes. This is what Fainstein (2000) refers to as the irony of good outcomes resulting from paternalistic methods. An analysis of the relationship between power and outcomes must be nuanced and must take into account the benevolent as well as damaging effects of power on outcomes.

In Forester's framing of the concept, critical pragmatism foregrounds process and planning action ahead of outcome – it focuses on what planners actually do. Such a contextually based view of the causality of outcome is important to a holistic perspective in analysis. However, this is not sufficient in an assessment of planning in South Africa. In the South African context much of planning action is driven by high need and urgency. It is, in fact, outcomes-focused. Notwithstanding fundamental social needs and democratic urges for adequate process, the outward measure of planning in South Africa is more often than not based on the amount of infrastructure delivered. This may be questioned as a measure of success and it certainly cannot be substantiated as the sole or even premier measure, but it cannot be discounted. While both action and outcome need to be reflected on and assessed normatively as well as substantively, an analysis that puts action head of outcome is not adequate in this context of redress. How the effects of planning are accepted in the context, by the lesser recipients and beneficiaries of those actions, is crucial to analysing the impact of planning. Moreover, the long-term impact of the action on its environment and at a wider scale needs to be incorporated into the measure of better or worse planning. Thus outcome needs to be accorded at least an equal weight to process in planning analysis.

Rationality: The role of multiple rationalities in the KSiPP has been highlighted in the analysis. In particular, the power of technicist rationality to dominate the planning discourse has been assessed. But there is also evidence of competing rationalities and of the struggle for strategic and social rationalities against this technicist power.

The powerful role of a dominant rationality in determining the direction of process, and the use of such rationality in rationalising a myriad of questionable actions were graphically displayed in the planning activities in the KSiPP. Spending priorities, the sidelining of spatial planning, and the almost dismissive attitude to social development are evidence of this dominant rationality. The technicist rationality that, at least in part, influenced process and outcome resonate with the literature on critical planning that is concerned with the force of rationality. The Kathorus case study's emergence within the then prevailing development and political Reconstruction and Development Programme in South Africa echoes something of the reformist impulses with which planning's roots are associated. Here too was a response to destruction, to

social ill and underdevelopment. And indeed this ‘reconstruction and development’ framing led much of the buoyancy of key projects in the country in a period of political transition. The reconstruction of Kathorus took a strongly physical form (infrastructural development), and was led in large measure by technical expertise.

A perspective that enables an analysis of the multiple rationalities at play is necessary for understanding how rationalities shifted and how several were at play simultaneously in the project. Political and technical rationalities interwove and directed action and outcome in a dynamic way. Critical pragmatism enables an analysis of multiple rationalities.

In South Africa the interplay between power and rationality is critical. As the new democratic state carves space for itself the interplay between power and rationality is critically important. In particular the ability of power to close off or create the space for multiple rationalities is a necessary measure of the democratic space for planning.

Power: At a broad level the examination of theory has shown that planning is neither wholly independent nor can it be assumed benevolent. Rather, it is intricately woven into power relations and is itself an agent of and party to these power relations. Theories drawn from writings of power and a critical approach in philosophy help to show that interests of power drive planning priority.

This study examines the intricate role of power dynamics in the KSiPP. Included in this analysis are the dynamics of power at institutional level, at neighbourhood level and within the planning apparatus within and outside of the state. In Kathorus, no traditional views of the state or relationships between the state and planning could be assumed, for this was a state and a planning system in transition. In order to unpack the notion of power in Kathorus, several lenses of power have proved pertinent: planning operates within networks of power, operates through power relations, but also constructs its own power, a power created by the mystique of professionalism, by a particular body of knowledge, by an appeal to science that frames a technical rationality. The case has exposed the role of planning power in shaping agendas, shifting perspectives and determining the direction of resource allocation in the

project. Pragmatism is concerned with addressing real needs. In the KSiPP case there is no evidence of a needs analysis, but rather of a broad-based analysis of what the needs were. This analysis was informed partly by technical expertise and partly by a state agenda for stability. In this case needs assessment cannot be viewed only from a pragmatic perspective but must include a critical analysis of the involvement of power at the level of project objectives.

In terms of resource allocation and inclusion, the participatory approach in the project is also instructive. In spite of the participatory tropes that were upheld in early documentation and planning frameworks for the study, it has been shown that participation leaned towards being ‘sufficient’ for moving the projects forward. In some instances this was even cynically applied. The emphasis on action overrode traditional participatory aims such as citizen empowerment or democratisation. The sectoral nature of participation necessarily drew out some members of the ‘community’ for engagement in project deliberations and not others.

Planning outcome was limited by networks of power located within institutions. The limitations on strategic planning that was imposed by the territoriality of municipal institutions and the political need for quick delivery is an example of the effect of such power. In the project planning also exhibited its own power, a power created by the mystique of professionalism and by an appeal to science that frames a technical rationality. These findings in the analysis accord closely with Foucauldian perspectives on power relations and the relationship between power and rationality as explored in Chapters Three and Four.

In the context of a benevolent, developmentally aware state, the relations of power and the role of planning may be subtle. The tools of planning power – most notably language and communication – are important lenses for viewing the power configurations in planning projects. Theoretical perspectives on collaborative planning have been useful for an understanding of and an analytical approach to examining the operation of planning in this context. This is the basis of a critical pragmatic understanding of power – in a collaborative context. However, planning itself is not at the whim of a communicative process between different groups but is ultimately a state activity, resourced and regulated by the state (Huxley and Yiftachel,

2000). The variable and expedient nature of community participatory practices within the KSiPP attests to this.

The power located within planning, as well as planning as a tool and an agent of power find expression in the KSiPP and must be analysed for their oppressive tendencies as much as for their empowering impacts. The intense role of rivalries in steering the course and outcome of planning action can also not be discounted. For all its subtlety, the KSiPP represents a planning exercise in attempted social control (Flyvbjerg and Richardson 2002). Reverberating with the instincts of late apartheid planning efforts, this exercise sought to ‘win the hearts and minds’ of residents in a conflict-ridden area. While the intentions were directed at achieving a public good, the cavalier strategies and the levels of exclusion in this broad approach were marked. The overall high energy of the project often obscured tensions and conflict. Rivalries between builders operating in neighbouring parts of the townships, for example, were rife, as groups competed for employment in an area of limited resources.

Officials in Kathorus remarked that the consultants (read state planners, for they were fundamentally agents of the state) took the lead in decision-making around housing projects. This is an example of the power that planners have to make decisions and to filter issues onto or off decision-makers’ agendas (Forester, 1999a).

The interests that drove the substantial spending on middle class housing in an area where large numbers of poor people suffered desperate housing needs exhibits the marked power of class interests, even in a new democracy focused on a basic needs approach to development.

The overt manipulation exercised by the KSiPP project leader is evidence of planning exercising its own power (Yiftachel 2001). In the interests of a ‘public good’ that was defined through political concerns with security, possible class interests related to middle class housing, and sufficient delivery to ensure wide legitimacy, the rationale of development was manipulated to gain broad and particular buy-in. The strategy also co-opted groups, such as hostel residents, while simultaneously excluding them from material benefits of the project (as hostels were not adequately upgraded). A Foucauldian concern with the labelling and stigmatising of groups is thus also evident

in the KSiPP. The housing environment was, for instance, categorised in terms of ‘formal housing’, ‘informal settlements’ and ‘hostels’. Project benefits varied according to these categories and so residents of the area benefited differently according to a label imposed by housing policy.

The state exercised substantial power over the project, with its agents (the consultant team) serving the interests of the state even where officials might not have. This is a particular contextual irony and relates to the peculiarities of the political transition to democracy, where many officials resisted change.

Ethics: This dimension is poorly established in the small literature on critical pragmatism, but is mentioned by Forester as an element that determines whether practice is critically pragmatic. It constitutes the measure of better or worse planning and requires that value judgments that planners make, be analysed. In the KSiPP, planning was seated in value judgments about better futures. The drive for security, the choice of infrastructure and the standards of infrastructure, and the choices around the location of interventions, all had alienating and exclusionary dimensions even as they enabled and improved quality of life. These dimensions are critical because planning cannot be allowed to make such choice in an unconscious way. The necessity of exposing choice lies in the importance of understanding its full consequences – deleterious and good.

Within the KSiPP values played a large role in guiding planning decisions and action. The personal values of individuals involved in the planning process have been recognised as material to process and outcome (Flyvbjerg, 2001). The cameo of actors involved in the KSiPP provides some insight into why certain personalities worked well beyond the call of duty, why military style approaches were often resorted to, or why planners tried to drive strategic vision for housing against the odds of municipal rivalries and state pressure for immediate delivery.

Critical pragmatism provides limited guidelines for ethical action or the analysis of action as more or less just. From pragmatism the measures of democracy and individual growth are gleaned. Planning action and outcome can be assessed for the extent to which it has empowered disempowered and disadvantage groups and has

furthered the ends of democracy and of equity. Furthermore, both pragmatism and critical theory call for situatedness and are thus open to the application of context-specific moral codes. In the specific context of South Africa it is imperative that planning action take account of the unjust history. Furthermore, planning action must pursue progressive outcomes and consciously work to empower disadvantaged groupings. When examined in terms of a Rawlsian focus on equity and on a focus on the least advantaged, the KSiPP falls extremely short of success. Rather than providing broad benefits many of its interventions are shown to have had targeted and even piecemeal impact on lives of residents. Furthermore, major groupings of the least advantaged communities, such as hostel residents, did not benefit significantly from interventions.

Arguably, a 'pragmatic' focus on outcomes without an allied independent, coherent ethical grounding exposed the KSiPP to political pressures for quick delivery. While a critical analysis accepts that political pressures are likely to lead development it would be possible to introduce ethical grounding or parameters for an intervention that is just, and to have these parameters endorsed politically.

Value and Limitations of Critical Pragmatism as an Analytical Framework for Planning

I conclude that in analysing planning practice in terms of context, critical pragmatism requires a rich examination of the social, physical and political context within which planning takes place as well as an understanding of the relations of power that operate in that context. In analysing practice against outcomes, critical pragmatism requires a strong concern for what actually happened in the planning process and what outcomes were actually delivered. Both process and ends are important in understanding the passage and effect of the planning intervention. In terms of rationality, critical pragmatism is open to employing a variety of rationalities, allowing these to be tested in practical circumstances. In terms of power, critical pragmatism draws from the wider definition of critical theory. On the one hand, this foregrounds communicative power present in the interactions that are the substance of planning activity. On the other hand, it takes the view that power is pervasive, and so analyses the power relations present at a structural level, as well as the power of planners to act in the

face of multiple power dynamics. This accords with both a critical and an interventionist, pragmatic approach. Finally, critical pragmatism allows for situated ethical judgments in planning practice.

This study has shown that it is possible to use the concept of critical pragmatism to analyse a planning case. This concept has been elaborated into a broad framework for analysis. The value of a critical pragmatic framework for planning analysis lies in its ability to hold both the power dimension of planning and the action orientedness of the discipline in perspective. Approaches that have been more unitary in their perspective – whether foregrounding relations of power or focused on delivery – have not been found to be adequate assessment tools for planning that is both highly political and driven by a hopeful action-orientedness. The combination of these elements provides the necessary platform for viewing planning outcome in a more complete way. Critical pragmatism can be extended into a useful analytical framework for planning.

Traditional technical performance based or qualitative analyses are limited because of their linear focus on causality. By contrast, the critical pragmatic approach allows for a multidimensional tackling of the analysis of planning. Critical pragmatism is non-linear. In fact it demands a range of perspectives, in its call for multiple rationality, for the incorporation of narrative or planning stories, and for the assessment of both power and outcome in planning. It provides a more holistic perspective for evaluating planning intervention than conventional planning assessment allows.

While each element defined in the critical pragmatic analytical framework is not independent the nexus of lenses still provides value. Examining each element in a nuanced way enables the evaluator to be explicit and rigorous about the multiple dimensions of that element. It also requires that the evaluator be continually critical of the information being presented and that the task of probing be multidimensional. The interplay of a critical and pragmatic approach allows for the critical view to be balanced with the concerns for what was possible in the real conditions presented, and for an assessment of the hopeful dimensions of planning intervention.

In terms of the applicability of lessons that have emerged from the KSiPP, through this and other analyses, to other contexts, Robinson's work is instructive:

Global and world-cities analyses... have announced a new, more inclusive geography of the role of cities in globalisation. But they have left intact earlier assumptions about hierarchical relations amongst cities, with potentially damaging consequences, especially, but not only, for poorer cities. They have, in fact, consigned a large number of cities around the world to theoretical irrelevance. (Robinson, 2006:114)

Robinson (2006) argues that it is important for wealthier cities to be open to learning from the experiences of poorer cities. This relies on a post-colonial perspective in which all cities are perceived to be creative and dynamic. This view draws attention to the many different kinds of activities in cities and that all cities are cosmopolitan and capable of shaping their own futures rather than ebbing leaders or followers of other city models. A wide range of urban scholarship, including such apparently diverse literatures as those on globalisation and those focused on developmentalism, can be brought together in studying all cities, whether they are wealthy or poor. What is important is to pay attention to the diversity and range of experiences and challenges within the particular context under study. The lenses applied in this study can usefully be applied to other contexts as they do not inhibit situatedness of the analysis, yet they provide broad normative frames for viewing planning practice.

Method and Problem of Method

The examination of planning in a learning-from-practice mould is useful. In closely examining what influenced planning in terms of the contextual conditions, the relations of power and the planning processes a deeper understanding of the workings and possibilities of planning as well as the conditions under which planning operates can be achieved. The literature on such case studies demonstrates this aptly. This analysis has similarly focused on a deep examination of a practice case in order to promote learning around planning in post-apartheid South Africa. However, this empirical study would be limited without a dialogue with theory. Each case may add to theory, but is not, in itself, theory. Theory in turn provides the lenses against which practice can be explored. The critical pragmatic approach provides a framework for the requisite combination and dialogue of theory and practice to allow for

examination against conceptual foundations while simultaneously raising the actual lived experience of process and outcome into analysis.

Factors such as my personal epistemology and political values have invariably influenced the presentation of research and my interpretation of the data. A study of the same material through different lenses or by different scholars may reveal different theoretical findings, as evidenced by Lauria and Wagner's (2006) extensive study of practice based research. The particular lenses that I have applied in interpreting the data have provided a new richness and insight into the material previously used in professional evaluations.

The use of few sources is a limitation found in several empirical studies of planning practice (Lauria and Wagner, 2006). This dissertation has relied for its empirical and theoretical work on several methods and of a wide range of sources. These provide triangulation and strengthen the validity of the theoretical project.

The depth of the evaluations and data that inform this work and the detailed interrogation of the intricacies of one project provide depth of material for the study. However, the study is limited in its focus on one case study rather than comparative analysis of several studies. Lauria and Wagner (2006) urge planning researchers who undertake empirical work to consider doing comparative research to enhance the contribution to knowledge. While this study does not do this, it does meet the authors' concern that empirical studies that hope to contribute to knowledge should articulate study design, methodology and sources. Furthermore, it meets their concern that such studies need to relate to existing literature.

The findings in terms of outcome are limited in their ability to fulfil the pragmatic concern with real experience. Such an analysis of outcome would require a methodology that incorporated the views and experiences of beneficiaries and others affected by the project. An in-depth survey was not conducted in any of the evaluations that have informed this dissertation. The assessment of outcome must be considered only partial unless real lived experiences of outcome can be evaluated. This does not detract from the value of the framework but shows limitations of its application in the particular study.

Limitations of the Methodology

Forester's application of critical pragmatism has been in the analysis of the power settings, the ethical choices and the practical action taken by planners in their daily deliberations. This dissertation examines the usefulness of applying a critical pragmatic analysis to a broader planning exercise – one which encompassed many interactions, actions and manifold power relations and which extended over a five-year period. As such, the scope for unpacking individual deliberations is limited and is not pursued in this study. Rather the analysis focuses on a broad overview of the planning approaches and outcomes of the project.

Forester calls on planning writers to examine planning case studies against the theoretical backdrops but also in relation to other cases and to draw out comparative elements both at the level of similarity and difference. While the similarity will highlight the themes of and show how planners in a wide variety of contexts may employ tools of power, rationality and discourse, Forester (2001:269) notes that it is the variation across cases that shows that “planners are political agents and not only passive bearers of a discourse, that planners can resist some forms of power even as they exercise other forms of power”. He urges that an approach that provides a comparative study may highlight the “discrete and specific forms of power and rationality that can come into play under specific institutional and political conditions” (Forester, 2001:269). This argument is acknowledged and highlights a limitation of this thesis whose scope is focused on a study of one case. However, I do not believe that it is necessary to undertake comparative work in order to interrogate the forms of power in planning. In fact, the concentrated focus on one case study conducted in this thesis enables an in-depth study of some of the workings of power in a specific context. Yin (1994) cautions that the use of research results from the single case study is restricted. Since this work is not based on large samples, generalisability to larger populations is not possible. Generalisations to theory can however be made through theoretical propositions and use of the conceptual framework applied here may well have value and wider application in analysing other planning programmes in contexts of transition.

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The case study material is drawn from interviews and documentation extracted for various evaluative studies. The evaluations that this study is based on are extensive, but do not constitute ‘forensic’ evaluations of the KSiPP. The limitations of those evaluations in turn limit this study. They necessarily cannot be comprehensive assessments. Rather, they represent a range of insights into the project process and outcome from which a broad understanding can be achieved. They carry the usual limitations of interviews, both in terms of the questions asked and in the nature of replies. These included limitations of language. All interviews and focus groups were conducted in English. Where necessary, translators were used to translate questions and responses between the interviewers and respondents. It was clear, however, that much of the nuance of responses were lost in this process (GPG, 1999a).

Importantly, these interviews were conducted for non-academic purposes. They were also not informed by the five theoretical lenses that are applied to the material in this dissertation at the time of the interviews. These lenses have been developed as part of the current dissertation and the material has been weighted against the lenses. All that is possible within the limits of the study is to point to the components of the case study that reflect the theoretical approach.

Furthermore, none of the evaluations was a forensic audit. Where allegations of corruption were made in a focus group, for example, it was not possible to investigate those charges. The research team was only able to record how money was spent and to make observations about this spending in terms of policy perspectives or in terms of value obtained for the money spent.

The evaluations that formed the empirical basis of this work were also not definitive. Time and budget constraints limited the extent to which various projects could be investigated. The team selected particular projects for in depth investigation. It was recognised that the choice of projects would colour the outcome of the evaluation (GPG, 1999a). An effort was made to select projects, not on the basis of their success or failure, but because they were central to the KSiPP, because there was sufficient material to enable an evaluation, and because they were able to offer important lessons (GPG, 1999a).

The timing of evaluations imposed further limitations on the research. The evaluations were undertaken as post facto assessments, without the benefit of a parallel monitoring of planning activities through the life of the project. Beneficiary observations may have been influenced by the fact that interviewees were reporting (on process as well as outcome) at the end of the project. The evaluations did not benefit widely from observations of the effectiveness of the project some years down the line. Findings around the long-term benefits or disadvantages of the programme were not incorporated in the study. These are thus necessarily partial evaluations. If the evaluations were repeated at a later date they may have yielded different findings in terms of the sustainability of the project outcomes.

Finally, there is an uneasy relationship between some of the more rigid forms of evaluation (such as the logical framework) and the complexity of the KSiPP. This uneasiness is also apparent between such rigid processes and the post-positivist direction in which the theory has taken me. It has been necessary to rely on interviews rather than concrete data or written reports to interrogate many of the complex issues that arise out of the theory and out of the reality of the KSiPP. Harrison (Forthcoming) refers to these constraints on data in his discussion of outcomes of the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) processes in South Africa.

Concluding Comments

Critical pragmatism is not a developed analytical approach. This dissertation has extended the concept by suggesting a framework of lenses that represent the main elements of critical pragmatism. These have enabled a deep assessment of a planning case. They have allowed for an understanding of elements that may be seen to be in opposition to one another. They have also ensured a contextually bound investigation of planning. This serves to provide a useful outline to an analytical approach within critical pragmatism. It is not, however, a complete tool for analysis. The further development of critical pragmatism as an analytical approach might entail further theoretical work to interrogate and extend the lenses to provide detailed guidelines for planning analysis.

CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation lays the foundation for an approach to the examination of planning in a manner that provides for an iterative relationship between theory and practice. The analytical framework of critical pragmatism that is developed here in turn raises new questions.

Contemporary planning theory is seated in camps that have to some extent narrowed and stifled the assessment of planning practice. This dissertation has underlined the complementarities between two ostensibly separate approaches in planning theory and has shown that far from being irreconcilable, they can, together, build a robust and dynamic framework for analysis. Dialogue between planning approaches must necessarily strengthen the discipline and its theory base. Critical pragmatism provides one platform for such dialogue.