

P | l | a | n | n | i | n | g
T h e o r y

Copyright © 2006 SAGE Publications
(London, Thousand Oaks, CA and New Delhi)
Vol 5(1): 31–50
DOI: 10.1177/1473095206061020
www.sagepublications.com

DEEP DIFFERENCE: DIVERSITY,
PLANNING AND ETHICS

Vanessa Watson

University of Cape Town, South Africa

Abstract The article suggests that planning's current sources of moral philosophy are no longer an entirely satisfactory guide on issues of ethical judgement in a context of deepening social difference and an increasingly hegemonic market rationality. A focus on process in planning and a relative neglect of product, together with the assumption that such processes can be guided by a universal set of deontological values shaped by the liberal tradition, are rendered particularly problematic in a world which is characterized by deepening social and economic differences and inequalities and by the aggressive promotion of neoliberal values by particular dominant nation-states. The notion of introducing values into deliberative processes is explored.

Keywords conflict, ethics, judgement, social difference, values

Introduction

As planners, we are increasingly called on to operate in situations characterized by material and cultural difference, and to deal with the challenges and conflicts to which these differences give rise. Dealing with situations in which personal and group values conflict has long been a concern for planners in those parts of the world with historically multicultural populations, but increasingly it is being identified by a 'First World' scholarship as an issue affecting planners everywhere. As Bollens (2004: 212) has argued: '... differing value systems are a defining characteristic of ethnically polarized cities and also appear to be an increasing attribute of planning and resource allocation debates in North America and western European cities'.

Where there may be less agreement, however, is around the nature or degree of this difference. Very often, and more often than we care to recognize, these differences are fundamental ones and do not easily lend themselves to resolution or generalized solutions. In some situations we find ourselves dealing with seemingly irreconcilable gaps, between differing 'communities' or groups, or between expert planners and those planned for, where there is no obvious hope of constructing dialogue or reaching consensus, where world-views and the very meaning of development or progress differ, and where people regard each other from within completely different rationalities (Watson, 2003).

I suggest that this is indicating a growing incongruence between the everyday realities which confront planning and the philosophical roots which have traditionally informed planning thought. Rawls and Habermas, in particular, have their foundations in liberalism with its often universalizing and homogenizing assumptions about societies, which may not hold true in much of the work which we do. The aim of this article is to suggest that we seek alternative sources for thinking about questions of value and rationality, and reconsider the faith in consensus-seeking processes as a sole informant of decision-making.

I first explore the kinds and sources of difference which are beginning to confront planners in their work. Not only are there multiple sources of difference but it is also necessary to understand difference as dynamic, often opportunistic and inevitably interpenetrated by power. I then move to a discussion of the philosophical sources on which planners have drawn to inform thinking about values, and suggest that moral philosophies which recognize the situated nature of knowledge and values may be more appropriate than those which are based on universalist ideals. One implication of deepening difference is that it renders highly problematic a faith in the role of consensus-seeking processes as a central decision-making tool in planning, both to achieve a common view and to arrive at justifiable outcomes. The last section of the article explores this issue, as well as the argument that deliberation should be guided by values.

Deep difference¹

The notion of a ‘fractured public interest’, captured in the title of Bollens’s (2004) chapter, describes a reality which has confronted planning for some time. However, the essence of Bollens’s argument is that these fractures are widening in those parts of the world previously less conscious of them, and that planners therefore need to look to cities where there is a longer experience of grappling with such issues. The reasons for these widening fractures have been well covered in various literatures: Thornley and Rydin (2002), for example, point to the increased impetus for movement across the globe, giving rise to new migration streams to areas of economic opportunity, and the nationalist and racist tendencies which this can unleash; the globalization of the economy and the uneven impact which this has within cities, regionally and globally, such that economic growth and development are increasingly twinned with underdevelopment and social exclusion; the cultural impact of globalization, partly linked to the greater penetration of mass media and communications technology and carrying with it new values and beliefs often in conflict with pre-existing value systems; and global political forces which have seen the emergence of new supranational political bodies and a questioning of the role of the nation-state. In very recent years some of the most serious fractures can be traced to realignments in global political power which have seen an assertion of the United States’ political and military hegemony and a backlash of resistance to this, particularly in the Muslim world, but echoed as well in just about every city with migrant and multicultural populations. Hopes for ‘colourful’ and harmonious multiculturalism in cities of the West, and elsewhere, appear to be fading as divides deepen and become increasingly acrimonious.

The fractures which are of concern to Bollens and which have been widening and deepening as a result of contemporary social and economic forces, are complex, multidimensional and interrelated. However, it is possible to identify two main, interrelated, axes of difference which are of importance to planning. The first are ‘inter-group’ differences, brought about by material, ethnic, racial or other differences; the second may be described as ‘state–citizen’ differences, referring to the relationship between the hegemonic technical, managerial and political systems through which public authorities manage their relationships with their consumers/citizens, and the everyday needs and priorities of people. Each of these requires elaboration.

Inter-group difference

The issues of identity and difference have received growing attention in contemporary social theory and these ideas have found their way as well into conceptualizations of the urban realm (Jacobs and Fincher, 1998; Sandercock, 1998, 2003; Pile et al., 1999; Amin and Thrift, 2002). This has

given rise to a new attention to difference, but also to how identity is constituted and negotiated and the ways in which ‘empowerment, oppression, and exclusion work through regimes of difference’ (Jacobs and Fincher, 1998: 2). Theoretically this position brings together cultural, political and economic positions on difference, which together with a perspective on place and location produces a ‘located politics of difference’.

This perspective on difference widens the range of sources from which difference can emerge: class or material circumstances, ethnicity, gender, age, race, religion, sexuality, world-view, etc. Some sources may encompass others. For example Alasdair MacIntyre (1988) conceives of different world-views which arise from different philosophical traditions. These traditions (of which liberalism is one) are fundamentally shaped by the time and place in which they emerged, by contingent circumstances, by particular societal concerns and disagreements of the time, articulated in terms of the particular language and culture of that order. Each of these traditions has distinctive conceptualizations of practical rationality and justice which are not necessarily compatible with each other. But clearly, within such a tradition, people may hold common world-views which are nuanced according to gender, age or other aspects.

Thus, while it could be argued that some aspects of difference are potentially more formative than others, categories of difference cannot always be essentialized. Jacobs and Fincher (1998) describe the major shift in thinking about difference away from something that is pre-given and fixed to something that is socially produced and multiply located. What this points to, they argue, is the multiplicity of differences that may cohere around any one person:

social distinctions are constituted in specific contexts through multiple and interpenetrating axes of difference . . . and at any one time we may be fixed into or strategically mobilize different aspects of the array of differences through which our embodied selves are known. (p. 9)

Which aspect dominates is not haphazard – often the attribute to be emphasized is that which contributes most significantly to a subject’s marginalization or empowerment. Concepts of difference are thus inextricably linked to the issue of power. Jacobs and Fincher’s argument should not be taken to mean that nothing is real, that all aspects of identity are entirely contingent and can be put on or taken off like a set of clothing. Individual and group values, or world-views (which are always present to some degree), ultimately circumscribe the range of possible aspects of difference which any individual may be prepared to mobilize.

Following MacIntyre (1988), philosophical traditions, or world-views, are also capable of mutating and hybridizing. Traditions change and evolve as a result of new situations which are encountered or through contact with other communities and traditions (through migration or warfare and

invasion, and as well through the Internet and TV) which mean that 'internal' texts, beliefs, or authorities are challenged (experience epistemological crises) and have to be reformulated. If more appropriate or attractive theoretical resources are found in another tradition, MacIntyre argues, they will be adopted and will come to be shared by traditions. An example of this might be the embracing of the notion of women's rights, borrowed from liberalism, by women living under cultural or religious traditions where women have been repressed or exploited. Moreover, as groups or individuals from particular traditions come into contact with each other and begin to explore, or be exposed to, other rationalities, opportunity opens up to use these other identities, or even their own older identities in strategic or opportunistic ways. The revival by the San (Bushmen) people in South Africa of some of their older traditional practices in order to reinforce their claims under the land restitution process is an example of this (Robins, 2003). Jacobs and Fincher's position is highly relevant here: the acceptance or use of new forms of practical rationality or justice is often contested and shaped in various ways by power. Further, it is probably reasonable to conclude that such hybridizing and mutating of traditions is more the rule than the exception: given processes of globalization and information flow there must be now relatively few parts of the world where world-views have not in some way rubbed up against each other.

Whether or not inter-group differences are deeper and more complex now than at other periods in time is difficult to answer. But there is now a plentiful literature in the planning and urban studies fields which argues that globalization contributes to growing urban inequalities, social exclusion and dislocated communities and hence deeper social divides (for example, Castells, 1998; Amin and Thrift, 2002; Beall, 2002). Moreover these forces manifest themselves in new spatial forms and spatial divisions which themselves can reinforce social difference. Leonie Sandercock's book *Mongrel Cities* aims '... to provide a better understanding of the emergence of cities of difference in the context of globalization and other, related, social forces'. She describes these mongrel cities as places in which '... difference, otherness, fragmentation, splintering, multiplicity, heterogeneity, diversity, plurality, prevail' (Sandercock, 2003: 1). In the UK, the 2001 street riots in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford focused national attention on ethnic deprivation and segregation, and growing Islamophobia which peaked after 11 September 2001 (Amin, 2002). Amin's investigation reveals not only the new and complex nature of the divides which gave rise to these conflicts (he argues that the three factors of socio-economic deprivation, segregation and new youth politics cut across ethnic divides) but also that they tend to play themselves out at an urban neighbourhood level, adding an important local and territorial dimension to social difference. A similar point could be made in relation to recent uprisings in certain suburbs of French cities by populations described as largely of Muslim origin, but also as 'youth' and 'economically marginalised'.

In the cities and regions outside of the USA and Europe, Mike Davis links globalization with massive increases in migration and urbanization and the emergence of what he calls the 'new urban poverty', where urban slums of unprecedented size are home to a chaotic, heterogeneous and conflictual population concerned primarily with day-to-day survival. Here the new social cleavages are being fashioned by '... populist Islam and Pentecostal Christianity (which) occupy a social space analogous to that of early twentieth-century socialism and anarchism' (Davis, 2004: 30). In the region of Israel/Palestine, where conflict is fuelled both from the local and the global, Yiftachel and Yacobi (2003) describe 'ethnocratic cities' as territories where an exclusionary Israeli–Jewish identity has worked to essentialize and segregate Arabs and Jews. In some of the poorest countries in the world, in Africa, social and economic collapse and turmoil leave many people with little sense of belonging or little idea of who represents them. One way of avoiding this is to use identity in a highly opportunistic way, and identity in Africa is often a product of hybridization, fusion and cultural innovation. It is frequently self-generated and self-constructed, sometimes with a renewed stress on ethnic identity or 'retribalization', sometimes intertwined with global identities (De Boeck, 1996; Simone, 2004).

Citizen/state difference

A further potential source of difference, also of significant relevance to planning, arises out of relationships between states and citizens (or residents). With regard to the changing nature of the state, the last few decades have seen significant changes in the westernized world, and broadly the replacement of the Welfare State with what has become known as neoliberalism (Jessop, 2002).² This shift has of course been highly uneven and locally particular (Peck and Tickell, 2002) within the countries of the West, and has articulated in a great variety of ways, usually through global lending agencies, with countries outside of the West. What is important about this shift is that it appears to introduce a new, or perhaps newly framed, set of values to the conduct of political, social and economic life and to actively seek to hegemonize them. At one level these values direct institutional change: minimizing the role of the state; encouraging non-state mechanisms of regulation; privatizing public services; creating policy rather than delivering services; introducing forms of performance management, etc. (Rhodes, 1997). But at another level they seek to penetrate further. Brown (2003) argues for the recognition of a new neoliberal political rationality which is a mode of governance not limited to the state but also produces subjects, forms of citizenship and behaviour, and a new organization of the social. The essence of these values is the submission of all spheres of life (including the political and the personal) to an economic or market rationality, such that all actions become rational entrepreneurial action, seen in terms of the logic of supply and demand. These are the only values that

count: morality is seen simply as 'a matter of rational deliberation about costs, benefits and consequences' (Brown, 2003: 15). Thus:

The model neoliberal citizen is one who strategizes for her/himself among various social, political and economic options, not one who strives with others to alter or organize these options. A fully realized neoliberal citizenry would be the opposite of public-minded, indeed it would barely exist as a public body. The body politic ceases to be a body but is, rather, a group of individual entrepreneurs and consumers. (Brown, 2003: 15)

Significant here is the difference between this position and pre-existing forms of liberalism. Neoliberalism represents a shift, Brown argues, from relatively autonomous moral, economic and political rationalities, and from a liberal democratic political system separate from a capitalist political economy, to the integration of these under a market rationality. What is lost in the process are the liberal democratic values of representative democracy, individual liberties and freedom of expression, modest power-sharing and political participation. This shift thus adds to the range and sources of difference: between a citizenry which still adheres to values compatible with liberal democracy, including a degree of collaborative power sharing and economic equity, and a concern for the natural environment, and a neoliberal rationality which holds to market values in all institutional and social action. Even more deeply is this difference felt by those whose world-view is shaped by traditions outside of liberalism: by the largely religious traditions of the East, or by African philosophical traditions based on communalism and '*ubuntu*' (a concept which describes group solidarity and the notion that people only exist through the support of others).

What this means as well is a schism between the rationality of neoliberalism and at least some of the values traditionally held by planners: notions of regional balance, amenity, equity, physical access, environmental sustainability, social inclusion and participatory processes. In the earlier (1980s) period of deregulative neoliberalism planning was castigated as being a hindrance to market efficiency in profit-driven urban development. In the more recent 'roll-out' phase of neoliberalism (Peck and Tickell, 2002) urban-related policies have been harnessed to the market logic of the neoliberal project. This implies, on the one hand, policies to suppress and contain the fall-out from profit-driven development: surveillance of public spaces, policing and crime prevention efforts, immigration control, and 'community regeneration'. On the other hand it implies the promotion of 'competitive cities' poised to attract global investment, tourists and a residential elite through up-market property developments, waterfronts, convention centres and the commodification of culture and heritage (Kipfer and Keil, 2002). New spatial policies are thus reinforcing social divides. There are of course planners who have aligned their work and their ethics

to the cause of this particular project, making any debate on values in planning an unavoidably contentious one.

A second source of state-citizen difference, felt particularly outside of the liberal/neoliberal heartland of the USA and Europe,³ has to do with the imposition of political and economic forms on previously colonized territories and cultures (Escobar, 1995). Many of these forms were introduced under colonialism, but continue in the post-colonial era via international aid and development agencies such as the World Bank and the IMF (Slater, 2004). Structural Adjustment policies are the best known of these, but the influence of such agencies continues to be felt through the introduction of new neoliberal forms of governance and economy, and the recasting of citizens as consumers. Post-development scholarship (see for example, Pieterse, 2000; Schuurman, 2000; Escobar, 2004), as well as the writings of J.C. Scott (1998), critically assesses these attempts at 'modernization' and 'development' and interprets them as a new form of global capitalism. It is probably in contexts such as these where the conflict of rationalities between the 'modernizing' efforts of government and the value systems of subjects/citizens can be most acutely felt (see Watson, 2003). In the cities of the third worlds⁴ there are continual possibilities of a direct clash of world-views between what governments have come to regard as 'proper' urban environments (free of informal settlements and street-traders, and with a citizenry attuned to the marketization of public services) and the materially and culturally determined survival strategies of a rapidly growing urban poor.

Ethics and difference

The purpose of the section above has been to reinforce Bollens's (2004) point that differing value systems increasingly define the reality within which planners work. If it is indeed the case that as planners we are, more and more, confronted with conflicting rationalities in various forms, what does this imply for the way we think about a foundational aspect of planning – that of ethical judgement? I am taking the position here that, at least at the level of theory, planning has moved beyond a rational scientific approach to decision-making, which assumes that decisions can be informed via the processing of empirical data and value-neutral cost-benefit analysis – although in practice this kind of thinking is making a come-back via the market-driven philosophy of neoliberalism. Current thinking in planning generally accepts that planning decisions of all kinds are inevitably value-laden, even if this is not explicitly acknowledged. The making of judgements, about better or worse processes and possibilities, is an inevitable part of any planning decision.

Conceptions of value which inform ethical judgements in planning have experienced significant shifts over time, from those informed by notions of

a universal 'public good' to a recognition, more recently, that the 'public' and what it might regard as 'good' is much more differentiated. Reviews of ethical shifts in planning have been comprehensively covered elsewhere (see Campbell and Marshall, 1999, 2002). They track the ethical framing of Rational Technocratic planning to classical utilitarianism which justified planning ends according to the simple idea of maximum individual benefit. This position was challenged as a result of the influence of Rawls's theory of social justice on planning thought. Rawls held with a single, universal conception of the good – in this case social justice, but shifted emphasis from ends to means: utilitarianism is teleological, while justice as fairness is deontological, or the 'right' has 'priority' over the good. These ideas came to be reflected in the 1960–70s advocacy planning movement, as well as, Campbell and Marshall (1999) argue, in the work of Forester and his concern with how planners can intervene to counteract imbalances of power and ensure a fairer process. Postmodernism's challenge to the universalist conceptions which underlie these two positions further encouraged a focus (in planning thought) on the planning process because, it is sometimes argued, outcomes will be necessarily diverse and contingent. Planners turned to Habermas's communicative theories for inspiration, but the 'discourse ethics' which guide his form of communicative rationality have their own potential universality as well.⁵

Despite some recent shifts in planning theory,⁶ the mainstream position in much of planning practice assumes – explicitly or implicitly – that there can be a set of universal values which informs ethical judgements. Western traditions of liberal democracy, and increasingly neoliberalism, shape this thinking. Liberalism takes the individual as the basic unit of society, able to be conceptualized and defined independently of society, and in a normative sense holding a distance from society as an autonomous and self-determining being (Parekh, 1993). Morality then, or the notion of the good, is not a socially or collectively imposed construct, but rather an aggregation of individual choices or preferences. Related to this thinking is a strongly anthropocentric view of the world compared, for example, to eastern philosophies which hold a more organic view and an attitude of sanctity and reverence towards other forms of life and nature.

These generalized assumptions regarding good planning make themselves felt not only in the planning 'solutions' and models (new urbanism, gated villages, 'competitive city' strategies, public service privatization) which are so often applied in a wide range of highly differing local contexts, but also in assumptions about the nature of societies in which planners intervene. These are assumptions relating to kinds of social and economic needs and how they are best met, assumptions about what constitutes just and equitable judgement in situations of conflict, and assumptions about the kinds of processes (consensus-seeking or otherwise) through which planning issues can be resolved. These ideas have shaped a dominant rationality (which is increasingly a market-driven rationality) which in turn

sets standards of ‘normality’ regarding proper living environments, the proper conduct of citizens, acceptable ways of reaching consensus, notions of the public good, and so on.

When values or moral positions are referred to as universal, it is usually taken to mean that they hold true in all parts of the world, for all peoples and all situations. A central critique of liberalism (and neoliberalism) is that proponents of the views which liberalism embodies assume these views are superior and either are true or should be true, everywhere. Other views, arising from other philosophical traditions, are judged as problematic or irrational if they do not conform to those of liberalism. A particularly convincing argument for the differentiated nature of values has been put forward by Alasdair MacIntyre (1988, 1998) who, I would suggest, offers a useful source of moral philosophy to those concerned with understanding difference.

In a line of argument which has parallels in Kuhn’s concept of epistemological paradigms, MacIntyre (1988) traces the origins and emergence (the genealogies) of the great western traditions of enquiry (the Aristotelian, Augustinian, Humean, and liberal traditions) and the implications these have for practical rationality and justice, in order to show how they were fundamentally shaped by the time and place in which they emerged, by contingent circumstances, by particular societal concerns and disagreements of the time, and articulated in terms of the particular language and culture of that order. Each of these traditions has distinctive conceptualizations of practical rationality and justice which are not necessarily compatible with each other. For example, the shift from a Humean culture to the liberal tradition involved a shift from:

understanding the arenas of public choice, not as a place of debate, either in terms of one dominant conception of the human good or between rival and conflicting conceptions of that good, but as places where bargaining between individuals, each with their own preferences, is conducted. (MacIntyre, 1988: 338)

MacIntyre’s point is that if we follow this mode of analysis with regard to these or any other (non-western, non-liberal) traditions of enquiry we will reach the same conclusion – such traditions are contextually informed and situated with their own ways of thinking about practical rationality and justice. One implication of this position is that no one tradition can assert its principles of practical rationality and justice as universal, or as being of a higher or better order than that contained in any other tradition. It is this position that those within the liberal tradition find particularly hard to grasp, given that the central characteristic of liberalism has been an assumption of its own universality.

The implication of MacIntyre’s position on traditions of enquiry is that there is no ‘neutral space’ outside of traditions from which one can judge

different and competing claims. We reflect on practices and beliefs using the conceptual resources, frameworks, assumptions and language of the tradition within which we are situated, and there is no 'neutral' set of these waiting outside of traditions of enquiry which can be used to reflect back on what others do or believe. Further, to attempt to construct such universal positions, MacIntyre (1988) argues, for example in the case of a search for a universal theory of justice, we would have to find features of a moral stance which would attach to humans which are independent of any social or cultural tradition. Nonetheless liberalism, a tradition of enquiry in its own right with its own distinctive approaches to practical rationality and justice, has attempted to present itself as a 'neutral tradition-independent ground from which a verdict may be passed upon the rival claims of conflicting traditions . . .' (MacIntyre, 1988: 346). While the origins of liberalism lay in attempting to provide a form of enquiry which allowed an escape from tradition and authoritarianism, and hence a freedom of expression, it has not escaped the particularities of its time and place, embodied particularly in the liberal concept of the individual. The tensions now lie between the pretensions of liberalism to provide the neutral ground from which other traditions can be judged, and the contingent and situated nature of liberalism itself.

MacIntyre's work negates the possibility that planners or anyone else, operating from a 'neutral' epistemological position, can construct abstract principles of practical rationality and justice which contextually situated people or groups will accept. The most significant challenge to such positions has always been that of relativism: if the only available standards of rationality come from within traditions, then it is impossible to judge between competing standards. Rational judgements can be made relative to the standards of a particular tradition, but they cannot be rational as such. One set of rationalities is as good as any other and we cannot pass judgement on those of a differing tradition (MacIntyre, 1988). This is the position usually attributed to communitarians, but MacIntyre has strongly dissociated himself from the communitarian position, and in fact sees communitarianism and liberalism as quite compatible, as the concept of individual self-determination can be unproblematically extended to self-determination by groups. MacIntyre argues that we cannot answer the problem of relativism through recourse to any theory of rationality. Rather, the answer is to be found in understanding the ways in which traditions change over time and the possibility that shared values *can* emerge (from the inside out, rather than from a 'neutral' outside in) where problems, issues or new situations confront people and there are no resources internal to their tradition of enquiry which can satisfactorily provide answers – see above. Hence 'finding the common ground is not subsequent to understanding, but a condition of it . . .' (Donald Davidson, quoted in MacIntyre, 1988: 3).

Planning in a context of difference

An acceptance of deep difference obviously raises particular difficulties for planning professionals. If differences are so deep then any consensus (on planning issues) is impossible. Any action will represent an imposition of one group on another as groups (including the state) operate within different and often conflicting rationalities. Further, if process cannot be relied on to produce a justifiable outcome, neither can planning judgement on its own as there are no universally acceptable values or models. The planner is left with no guidance and no justifiable course of action.

It is precisely the dilemma of dealing with difference that has given rise in recent times to a faith in consensus-seeking processes as a way of arriving at acceptable outcomes. Postmodernism's suspicion of totalizing positions and theories in a context of diversity, and the deontological shift in the work of Rawls and Habermas, have both given support to the strong focus in planning on process rather than product. Both reinforce the liberal belief that outcomes must be subject to individual choices or preferences, and all that is required are laws that ensure a neutral ground on which individuals can bargain with each other. Both also reinforce an (earlier) instrumental rationality which seeks to combine facts with values and means with ends, thus obscuring contestation of these ends (MacIntyre, in Knight, 1998). They similarly reinforce the view that collaborative processes can arrive at decisions which will be mutually, and more generally, satisfactory. As Campbell (2004) indicates, these views assume a neutral state capable of ensuring the rights of free and equal citizens to make such choices. But an analysis of the state in the context of neoliberalism points to an active promotion of a market rationality rather than value-neutrality. The assumption of free and equal citizens (or groups) able to reach just and fair conclusions is also placed in question by the body of literature (Flyvbjerg, 1998a, 1998b; Huxley, 2000) which argues for the inevitable functioning of power (which can be constructive, but just as possibly, destructive) in any deliberative process. Promoting democratic and inclusive processes, and countering the homogenizing assumptions of modernism and liberalism, are very important, but in contexts of deepening difference (and, it could be added, global environmental deterioration) the neglect of outcomes is of great concern. In particular, it can leave unchallenged the new morality of neoliberalism, which asserts market rationality as a 'taken-for-granted' norm, and which in turn promotes a particular attitude to natural and non-human resources.

The issue of dealing with difference is not a new dilemma for planning theorists. David Harvey (1992: 591) raised just this issue in the context of conflicting claims to Tompkins Square Park in New York City, where '... far too many of the interests are mutually exclusive to allow their mutual accommodation'. He in turn traces debates back to the 1960s and 1970s when challenges from feminist writers and from ethnic and religious

minorities made the case that there could be no universally acceptable notion of social rationality but rather many different rationalities depending on social and material circumstances. Harvey's response was to suggest that the notion of social justice (which in turn could be understood in many different ways) was nonetheless a valid concern for everyone. He takes Iris Marion Young's (1990) 'five faces' of oppression⁷ and uses these as a basis for a set of propositions regarding social justice, as well as adding a sixth proposition regarding the need to recognize the ecological consequences of all social projects. Harvey rejects the possibility of a non-consensual conception of justice, and while he does not claim that his six propositions will find universal support he does suggest that they may be a starting point for 'a genuinely liberatory and transformative politics' (Harvey, 1992: 601).

Echoing Harvey's concern with outcomes, Nancy Fraser (2000) argues that an overriding faith in deliberative processes and the demands for recognition within these, are eclipsing demands for redistribution (in a context of growing economic disparity), and that the reification of cultural difference is encouraging separatism and intolerance. The results, she argues, are growing inequalities and a sanctioning of the violation of human rights. Identity politics displaces struggles for redistribution in two ways. Some positions cast the roots of injustice at the level of discourse (e.g. demeaning representations), rather than at the level of institutional significations and norms. This strips misrecognition of its social-structural underpinnings. Other positions, associated with cultural theory, assume that maldistribution is a secondary effect of misrecognition and that misrecognition should be considered prior to distributional issues. Fraser (2000) argues that not only do these positions obscure the real roots of misrecognition, which lie in institutionalized value patterns, but that reification of identity creates a moral pressure for group conformity, obscuring intra-group struggles, such as that around gender.

The central argument of this article is that deepening difference is increasingly putting into question the possibility that planning processes will produce decisions which are first, fully supported by all participating parties in open debate free of domination or manipulation, and second, that will (directly or indirectly) address and challenge bigger questions of growing social and material inequalities and environmental sustainability. In stating this I do not suggest that consensus-based planning processes are either undesirable or always impossible. There is no question that the concept of seeking and building consensus around planning-related decisions represents a major advance over entirely top-down, expert-driven approaches of past times. There is also no doubt that in many circumstances consensus-based planning processes have been, and can be, carried out and regarded as 'successful' by some or even all of the parties involved. Where societies are relatively homogeneous and stable, where stakeholders or groups see it as being in their own interests to collaborate and perhaps submerge differences, and where dialogue occurs in terms of the 'right

conditions' (Innes, 2004) then consensus-based planning processes may well meet the expectations of proponents and participants.⁸ But, I suggest, these may increasingly be the exception rather than the rule.

My intention here is to support and build on the argument of Connelly and Richardson (2004) that we need to introduce questions of value into decision-making processes. Connelly and Richardson (2004) have criticized a similar lack of concern for outcomes in the production of SEAs (Strategic Environmental Assessments), as well as the faith that deliberative processes will lead to a consensus on outcomes that could be considered sustainable. Instead, they argue, given the large-scale and potentially conflictual issues addressed by SEA, consensus is unlikely and cannot be taken for granted. What is missing, they suggest, is an explicit consideration of value and that the concept of 'environmental justice'⁹ can serve the function of guiding decisions. While they do not suggest abandoning public deliberation on environmental issues (and in fact argue that the inclusion of all interests and disadvantaged groups is essential to a thorough understanding of issues), what they are proposing is that progress towards environmental justice is viewed as a criterion for decision-making. This implies a new relationship between expert judgement and public debate, and preparedness to take a critical view of the conclusions of public debate if necessary.

But does this imply a retreat to an expert-led approach and an attempt to claim universality for a particular normative position? I would like to both extend the argument of Connelly and Richardson from the environmental to the social and built environment sphere, and to argue that introducing questions of value into deliberative processes is not necessarily contrary to a recognition of multiple and conflicting rationalities.

Iris Marion Young's (2000a, 2000b) exploration of the relationship between inclusive process and 'wiser and more just' outcomes draws on the feminist epistemology of writers such as Donna Haraway (1991) and her conception of 'situated knowledges'. Young interprets this as 'a conception of objectivity as constructed from the partial and situated perspectives of differently positioned social actors' (Young, 2000a: 2). Young's position differs from that of Rawls and other modern thinkers who see the task of deliberative democracy as being to formulate principles of justice that all can agree on and that will guide action. Young instead follows Nedelsky in suggesting that the goal should be to arrive at judgements rather than principles or technical solutions. The concept of judgement adopted here is not one which assumes that it is possible to bring particular (situated) positions under a universal, or aims to construct a general standpoint outside and above particular views, but rather one which involves an 'enlargement of thought' that comes from considering the perspectives of many differently situated people. The aim of deliberative democracy in this formulation is to arrive at new kinds of knowledge(s) or wisdom drawn from a range of situated perspectives. It does not, Young argues, imply that different people

have to agree on a common concept of justice. Deliberation may do no more than reveal structural conflicts of interest that require to be addressed at a larger institutional or economic level. Taking as an example the concept of human rights, these rights should not be thought of as a set of finite universal principles through which to evaluate local contexts, but rather as a set of ideals whose different meanings should be discussed. There is compatibility between this view and that of MacIntyre: both allow for the potential emergence of shared values which are developed from shared concerns in particular contexts, or as Campbell (2004: 17) puts it: 'an appreciation of multiple truths' which will inform 'situated ethical judgement'.

My interpretation of Young (2000a) is that she suggests, like Connelly and Richardson, that deliberative democracy should be guided by criteria relating to good outcomes: in her case the requirement that deliberation should address, or accept a concern for, the promotion of human rights. Like Connelly and Richardson as well, Young appears to see the function of deliberation as arriving at new forms of knowledge and wisdom which are just one input into a decision-making process, but not as the only mechanism for decision-making.

Introducing questions of value into process and casting process as deliberation which is essential to good judgement, raise the question of what these values should be for planning. The criterion of environmental justice, as outlined by Connelly and Richardson (2004), is obviously of central importance. The notion of environmental justice also embodies ideas of social justice, but for an unpacking of social justice in relation to cities, the guidelines put forward by Harvey (1992) provide a useful starting point for debate. These are:

- that just planning and policy practices must confront directly the problem of creating forms of social and political organization and systems of production and consumption which minimize the exploitation of labour power both in the workplace and the living place;
- that just planning and policy practices must confront the phenomenon of marginalization in a non-paternalistic mode and find ways to organize and militate within the politics of marginalization in such a way as to liberate captive groups from this distinctive form of oppression;
- just planning and policy practices must empower rather than deprive the oppressed of access to political power and the ability to engage in self-expression;
- just planning and policy practices must be particularly sensitive to issues of cultural imperialism and seek, by a variety of means, to eliminate the imperialist attitude both in the design of urban projects and modes of popular consultation;

- just planning and policy practices must seek out non-exclusionary and non-militarized forms of social control to contain the increasing levels of both personal and institutionalized violence without destroying capacities for empowerment and self-expression; and,
- just planning and policy practices will clearly recognize that the necessary ecological consequences of all social projects have impacts on future generations as well as upon distant peoples and take steps to ensure a reasonable mitigation of negative impacts.

Conclusion

The purpose of this article has been to question the appropriateness of much of the thinking in planning that relates to values and judgement. I argue that two main aspects of this thinking are problematic: a focus on process and a neglect of outcomes, together with the assumption that such processes can be guided by a universal set of deontological values, shaped by the liberal tradition. These aspects become particularly problematic in a world which is characterized by deepening social and economic differences and inequalities and by the aggressive promotion of neoliberal values by particular dominant nation-states. So while it could be argued that in a context of greater diversity it makes sense to focus on the achievement of more inclusive and democratic deliberative processes, and not to prejudge outcomes, all this does is to divert attention from the particular set of values and outcomes which is finding expression under the banner of neoliberalism. At the same time a situation of deepening difference makes the achievement of democratic deliberative processes more difficult, in part because of the need to achieve collaboration with an increasingly divided and conflictual public and in part because growing inequalities, and identity differences and hybridities, open the way for the destructive operation of power. Given the unprecedented global threats of environmental destruction, rapid concentrations of poverty and disease in the third worlds, and potentially explosive social conflicts in most parts of the world, I suggest that as planners we need to look for new moral philosophical sources to inform our thinking on issues of value and judgement.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank two anonymous referees for their helpful comments. Responsibility for the final article obviously remains with the author.

Notes

1. I am indebted to Leonie Sandercock (2004) for the term 'deep difference'.
2. Understood not as a new form of government, but as a new technique of governing, often described as 'governance', involving 'the state' as one political actor in a set of self-organizing networks and relationships which include a range of authorities and centres of power (Rose, 1999).
3. Recognizing that cultural impositions of various kinds have long occurred within this heartland as well, with the Anglo-American influence on the diverse cultures of Europe being particularly strong.
4. Escobar (2004) argues that what in the past was referred to as the Third World is now so diverse that it is more appropriate to refer to third worlds.
5. This is not to imply that all planning theorists who draw on Habermas necessarily accept his universalizing assumptions.
6. For example, the work of multicultural theorists such as Leonie Sandercock and those taking an 'agonist' position (Jean Hillier, Michael Gunder and John Pløger in recent issues of *Planning Theory*).
7. These five faces are: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence.
8. Innes (2004: 8) argues that 'agreement' may not be the main criterion of success of a consensus-building process (and that in practice 80–90% agreement, and not 100% is regarded as adequate), but that other achievements such as joint learning, intellectual, social and political capital, feasible actions, innovative problem solving, shared understanding of issues, shared heuristics for action, a reframing of identities, partnership creation and new institutional forms, should all be regarded as indicators of success. Innes correctly identifies alternative conceptions of the way in which power operates, both in society at large and in consensus-building processes, as providing a major source of critique of the claims of this approach and practices.
9. See Connelly and Richardson (2004) for a discussion of the meanings of this term.

References

- Amin, A. (2002) 'Ethnicity and the Multicultural City: Living with Diversity'. Report for the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions and the ESRC Cities Initiative.
- Amin, A. and Thrift, N. (2002) *Cities. Reimagining the Urban*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Beall, J. (2002) 'Globalization and Social Exclusion in Cities: Framing the Debate with Lessons from Africa and Asia', *Environment and Urbanization* 14(1): 41–52.
- Bollens, S. (2004) 'Urban Planning and Intergroup Conflict: Confronting a Fractured Public Interest', in B. Stiftel and V. Watson (eds) *Dialogues in Urban and Regional Planning*, pp. 209–46. London and New York: Routledge.
- Brown, W. (2003) 'Neo-Liberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy', *Theory and*

- Event 7(1): 1–19. (http://muse.jhu.edu.proxy2.library.uiuc.edu/journals/theory_and_event/v007/7.1brown.html)
- Campbell, H. (2004) 'Justice and Planning: Exploring the Key Dimensions of Situated Ethical Judgement', paper presented at the ACSP Conference, Portland, Oregon.
- Campbell, H. and Marshall, R. (1999) 'Ethical Frameworks and Planning Theory', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 23(3): 464–78.
- Campbell, H. and Marshall, R. (2002) 'Utilitarianism's Bad Breath? A Re-Evaluation of the Public Interest Justification for Planning', *Planning Theory* 1(2): 163–87.
- Castells, M. (1998) *End of the Millennium*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Connelly, S. and Richardson, T. (2004) 'Value-Driven Sea: Time for an Environmental Justice Perspective?', *Environmental Impact Assessment Review* 25(4): 391–409.
- Davis, M. (2004) 'Planet of Slums', *New Left Review* 26 (March/April): 5–34.
- De Boeck, F. (1996) 'Postcolonialism, Power and Identity: Local and Global Perspectives from Zaire', in R. Werbner and T. Ranger (eds) *Postcolonial Identities in Africa*, pp. 75–106. London: Zed Books.
- Escobar, A. (1995) *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Escobar, A. (2004) 'Beyond the Third World: Imperial Globality, Global Coloniality and Anti-Globalisation Social Movements', *Third World Quarterly* 25(1): 207–30.
- Flyvbjerg, B. (1998a) 'Empowering Civil Society: Habermas, Foucault and the Question of Conflict', in M. Douglass and J. Friedmann (eds) *Cities for Citizens. Planning and the Rise of Civil Society in a Global Age*, pp. 185–211. Chichester: Wiley.
- Flyvbjerg, B. (1998b) *Rationality and Power: Democracy in Practice*. Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Fraser, N. (2000) 'Rethinking Recognition', *New Left Review* 3: 107–20.
- Haraway, D. (1991) *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. London: Free Association Books.
- Harvey, D. (1992) 'Social Justice, Postmodernism and the City', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 16(4): 588–601.
- Huxley, M. (2000) 'The Limits to Communicative Planning', *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 19(4): 369–77.
- Innes, J. (2004) 'Consensus Building: Clarifications for the Critics', *Planning Theory* 3(1): 5–20.
- Jacobs, J. and Fincher, R. (1998) 'Introduction', in R. Fincher and J. Jacobs (eds) *Cities of Difference*, pp. 1–25. New York and London: Guilford Press.
- Jessop, B. (2002) 'Liberalism, Neoliberalism and Urban Governance: A State-Theoretical Perspective', *Antipode* 34(3): 452–72.
- Kipfer, S. and Keil, R. (2002) 'Toronto Inc? Planning the Competitive City in the New Toronto', *Antipode* 34(3): 227–64.
- Knight, K. (1998) 'Introduction', in K. Knight (ed.) *The MacIntyre Reader*, pp. 1–27. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- MacIntyre, A. (1988) *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* London: Duckworth and Co.
- MacIntyre, A. (1998) 'Politics, Philosophy and the Common Good', in K. Knight

- (ed.) *The MacIntyre Reader*, pp. 235–52. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Parekh, B. (1993) ‘The Cultural Particularity of Liberal Democracy’, in D. Held (ed.) *Prospects for Democracy: North, South, East, West*, pp. 156–75. Oxford: Blackwell/Cambridge: Polity.
- Peck, J. and Tickell, A. (2002) ‘Neoliberalizing Space’, *Antipode* 34(3): 380–404.
- Pieterse, J. (2000) ‘After Post-Development’, *Third World Quarterly* 21(2): 175–91.
- Pile, S., Brook, C. and Mooney, G. (1999) *Unruly Cities? Order/Disorder*. London: Routledge.
- Rhodes, R. (1997) *Understanding Governance: Policy Networks, Governance, Reflexivity and Accountability*. London: Open University Press.
- Robins, S. (2003) ‘Whose Modernity? Indigenous Modernities and Land Claims after Apartheid’, *Development and Change* 34(2): 1–21.
- Rose, N. (1999) *Powers of Freedom. Reframing Political Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sandercock, L. (1998) *Towards Cosmopolis: Planning for Multicultural Cities*. Chichester: Wiley.
- Sandercock, L. (2003) *Cosmopolis II: Mongrel Cities in the 21st Century*. London: Continuum.
- Sandercock, L. (2004) ‘Deep Difference: Can Talk Resolve Conflicting Rationalities?’, paper presented at the ACSP Conference, Portland, Oregon.
- Schuurman, F.J. (2000) ‘Paradigms Lost, Paradigms Regained? Development Studies in the Twenty-First Century’, *Third World Quarterly* 21(1): 7–20.
- Scott, J.C. (1998) *Seeing Like a State*. New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press.
- Simone, A. (2004) *For the City Yet to Come: Changing African Life in Four Cities*. Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press.
- Slater, D. (2004) *Geopolitics and the Post-colonial: Rethinking North–South Relations*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Thornley, A. and Rydin, Y. (2002) ‘Planning in a Global Era’, in A. Thornley and Y. Rydin (eds) *Planning in a Global Era*, pp. 1–11. Burlington, VA: Ashgate.
- Watson, V. (2003) ‘Conflicting Rationalities: Implications for Planning Theory and Ethics’, *Planning Theory and Practice* 4(4): 395–408.
- Yiftachel, O. and Yacobi, H. (2003) ‘Urban Ethnocracy: Ethnicization and the Production of Space in an Israeli “Mixed City”’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 21(6): 673–93.
- Young, I.M. (1990) *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Young, I.M. (2000a) ‘Situated Knowledges and Democratic Discussions’, paper presented at the conference ‘New Challenges to Gender, Democracy, Welfare States – Politics of Empowerment and Inclusion’, Aalborg University, Denmark, 18–20 August.
- Young, I.M. (2000b) *Inclusion and Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Vanessa Watson is Professor in the City and Regional Planning Programme of the School of Architecture, Planning and Geomatics at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. Areas of research interest and teaching are planning theory and practice (particularly in relation to the global south), and the institutional context of urban and spatial planning.

Address: School of Architecture, Planning and Geomatics, University of Cape Town, Rondebosch 7700, South Africa. [email: Watson@eng.uct.ac.za]