



## CHAPTER 4

# THE DIFFERENCE THAT THEORY MAKES

... our lived time, time as imbued with symbolic meaning, is caught in the throes of forces of which we only have a dim understanding at present. The many 'postisms', like ... postmodernism ... circulating in our intellectual and cultural lives, are at one level only expressions of a deeply shared sense that certain aspects of our social, symbolic and political universe have been profoundly and most likely irretrievably transformed.

Seyla Benhabib (1992)

## ON RESCUING DROWNING BABIES

Theory is necessary to figure out what's REALLY going on. People always want to be a saviour for the community. It's like they see a baby coming down the river and want to jump in and save it. We need to stop being so reactive to the situations that confront us. Saving babies is FINE for them [other organizers/organizations] but WE want to know who's throwing the goddamn babies in the water in the first place.

Michael Zinzun<sup>1</sup>

This comment about drowning babies offers a crucial insight into the importance of theory and the place of theorizing in the daily life of a community-based activist. Without a theory that suggests why those babies are coming down the river, they will keep right on coming, and activists will be powerless to affect the source of the problem. Those of us who wish to work for social change first need a critique of the problem, a counter-analysis to that of the status quo, and a theory of social transformation. For activists, theory is not a static, unchanging doctrine but an understanding that is informed by practice and enriched by reflection on daily life.

This chapter outlines a counter-hegemonic theory for planning, linking our knowledge of insurgent planning histories (Chapter 2) with our appreciation of the need to replace the Enlightenment epistemology which has underpinned modernist planning with a multiplicity of ways of knowing (Chapter 3). I begin by establishing the need for a restructuring of planning theory, and a recognition that a counter-hegemonic planning theory cannot be neutral with respect to race and gender. I then review six significant shifts within the modernist planning paradigm since the 1940s: from the rational comprehensive model to advocacy planning, from radical political economy to equity planning, and from communicative action to radical

planning, noting that all six are alive and well in the 1990s. I argue that a truly radical planning theory must be sensitive to the multiple forms of oppression and domination and exploitation that exist in any society and not privilege any one form of counter-analysis, such as class analysis. I apply the lens of postmodern critique to the planning theory literature in an effort to broaden the literature, to include the works of feminists and people of colour who are addressing the condition of postmodernity in constructive and progressive ways, within a revised radical democratic tradition, addressing both what is wrong with our cities, and what is wrong with our ways of seeing the world. But first, I need to distinguish between different uses and meanings of the term theory, and to explain what I mean by planning theory, what it is and what it is not, and why we need it, whether we like it or not.

### ON THEORIES, PARADIGMS AND METAPHORS: THE LANDSCAPE OF PLANNING THEORY

There is considerable disagreement as to what constitutes the subject of planning theory (Klosterman 1981, 1992; Friedmann 1995; Sandercock 1995a). We are familiar, in the social and physical sciences, with theories that are either predictive or explanatory, and there have been efforts to replicate these modes of theorizing at one time or another within planning. In the tradition of applied rationality and societal guidance, thinkers such as Etzioni (1968), Lindblom (1959), Faludi (1973, 1986) and Rittel and Webber (1973) have theorized that planners' purposes are to maximize welfare and solve problems through the use of analytical tools from the social sciences that influence decisions, and through the design of regulations and implementation strategies that will produce desired outcomes. Their planner is, ideally, a rational man operating, so to speak, in surgical gloves – that is, at an antiseptic distance from the real world of messy politics.

More recently, there has been a not-so-subtle shift in the literature, acknowledging that planning theory may be different from other modes of social science theorizing, in that its primary function is normative. That is, planning theory is a theory about good practice. Its object is to improve the practice of planning (Friedmann 1995). Theorizing in this case means to think systematically and critically about what planners do, to help us to become 'reflective practitioners' (Schon 1983). But what is it that planners do? And who are they, anyway? Those who practise planning today are employed in a great diversity of settings, doing many different things. It is not just that some planners 'do' housing, some do transportation, others do land use, while many work on the environment, economic development, and community-building. Beyond these obvious substantive differences are also differences in approach and allegiance. Some planners work for the state; some are private consultants whose clients may be the state or the private sector; they also work for big developers, non-profit organizations, and mobilized

communities. Can any one planning theory embrace this diversity of task and orientation? Or do we need a range of theories at our disposal – theories of power and theories of knowledge; theories of justice and inequality; theories of social transformation; theories of interpersonal relations; theories of good city form and theories of the good society; theories that are context-dependent rather than theories that are context-neutral? In the past, planners have pursued the holy grail of the one theory, arguing that their overall concern is with the public good. But two decades of critical studies of planning practice, by Marxists and feminists, communitarians and communicative action theorists, have exposed the hollowness of that claim. Within the modernist paradigm, there have in fact been a succession of competing theories, each claiming the intellectual or moral high ground at different times over the past fifty years. What follows is a brief sketch of six competing theories or traditions of good planning practice, arranged in the form of a chronological narrative. The interesting point is that as each new theory emerges, it seeks to redefine precisely what it is that planners 'do', not so much in terms of substantive fields but in terms of approach, process, and allegiance. And each contains subtle epistemological shifts.

### THE RATIONAL COMPREHENSIVE MODEL

For two full decades after the Second World War this model, shaped by and exported from the University of Chicago planning programme, dominated the field. With its origins in Enlightenment epistemology, an underlying faith in the possibilities of Reason in public life characterizes this model. The focus is on the need for intervention by the state in markets and in 'spontaneous' social processes, and a central question is the appropriate form of societal guidance. Belief in the possibility of greater rationality in public policy decision making has informed this mode of theorizing ever since Herbert Simon first proposed his synoptic model of decision making in 1945. Theorists from Simon (bounded rationality) to Lindblom (incremental decision making, mutual partisan adjustment) to Etzioni (mixed scanning) have shared a faith in instrumental rationality. For them it was a given that technology and social science could make the world work better, and that planning could be an important tool for social progress. They worked on policy analysis, administrative behaviour, organization theory, decision theory, public choice theory, systems theory and so on.

The University of Chicago planners, Tugwell, Perloff, Banfield, Meyerson, and their students (such as John Friedmann), were deeply influenced by this school of thought, in which planning's central concern was with hierarchy and the laying out of alternative courses of action for those in power at the top. Planners, in this model, are handmaidens to power, and in their ideal moments they 'speak truth to power' as in Wildavsky's much-quoted phrase. Planners are also part of an ambitiously comprehensive public policy process, attempting to coordinate more

and more specialized and narrowly defined activities. Here is planning at its most heroic, confident in its capacity to discern and implement the public interest in specific settings.

In this model, the planner is indisputably 'the knower', relying strictly on 'his' professional expertise and objectivity to do what is best for an undifferentiated public. The notion of 'the public', never critically examined within planning, implied a group in which differences of class, race, or gender, were not considered relevant. This is a decision-centred rather than a control-centred approach in the sense that planning is defined as 'correct decision making concerning future courses of action' (Faludi 1986), without asking who is in control and with what consequences. It is a model that assumes a benign state, 'above politics', a state whose structure is neutral with respect to questions of gender, sexual preference, race, and ethnicity.

Within two decades this model faced challenges from within as well as from without: from the dilemmas inherent in instrumental rationality, as well as from critiques of this form of top-down planning as anti-democratic. Over the past two decades the range of critiques has swelled. Judith Innes has summarized the critiques from within very succinctly:

Rittel and Webber (1973) . . . pointed out 'wicked problems' which could not be solved because the problem definition kept shifting and there was no way to aggregate incommensurable values. The unsolvable puzzles were many, including the tragedy of the commons (Hardin 1968), the prisoner's dilemma (Rapaport and Chammah 1965), the failure of collective action (Olson 1965), the limitations of cost-benefit analysis and other systematic analytic methods (Rivlin 1971), the indeterminacy of the implementation process (Bardach 1977; Pressman and Wildavsky 1973), the inevitability of uncertainty in goal and technology for planning problems (Christensen 1985), the impossibility of aggregating the public interest so that its optimisation can be amenable to rational systematic analysis (Altshuler 1965), and the impossibility of relying on the large-scale model for societal guidance (Lee 1973).

(Innes 1995: 184: the references are those cited therein)

Yet despite apparently definitive critiques and ongoing community opposition, this model continues to win adherents and to create new theorists, from Andreas Faludi (1973, 1986a, b) to Franco Archibugi (1992a, b) and Ernest Alexander (1992). Its attraction is that it offers decision rules that are logical and clear and that allow planners to study alternatives and consequences. The model seems to offer professional legitimacy. It also dovetails with the economists' paradigm of rational resource allocation. Even so, in the face of mounting critiques, why does the paradigm persist? One explanation could be that we continue to teach it in planning schools. By emphasizing rational/objective analysis through courses such as quantitative methods, modelling, use of computers, and so on, we create expectations that favour such methods. And, of course, we operate in daily environments pervaded by rationality and its bureaucratic implications. A whole planning culture has been built around privileging the rational comprehensive

model. It offers the illusion of certainty and objectivity, and allays what Richard Bernstein has called 'the Cartesian anxiety' – the fear that, if we reject the possibility of absolute truth (correct answers, correct procedures), then anarchy is loosed upon the earth, and 'anything goes' (Bernstein 1985).

### THE ADVOCACY PLANNING MODEL

The first serious challenge to the rational comprehensive model was the concept of advocacy planning that emerged in the mid-1960s in the United States. Significantly, there had been major riots in US cities in 1964–5, and the Civil Rights movement by then had a decade of momentum, which created a climate in which dissenting opinion might be heard.<sup>2</sup> A new approach coalesced around an article written by Paul Davidoff and published in the *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* in 1965, 'Advocacy and pluralism in planning'. Concerned that the rational model of planning was obsessed with means, he warned us that the question of ends remained. He stressed the role of politics in planning. The public interest, as he saw it, was not a matter of science, but of politics, and he urged planners to participate in the political arena. He called for many plans rather than one master plan, and for the full discussion of the values and interests represented by different plans. He brought the question of *who gets what* – the distributional question which the rational model had so carefully avoided – to the foreground.

The idea of advocacy planning was that those who had previously been unrepresented would now be represented by advocacy planners, who would go to poor neighbourhoods, find out what those folks wanted, and bring that back to the table in the planning office and city hall. With his lawyer's faith in due process and enlightened plural democracy, Davidoff had outlined a model which, although seemingly at odds with its predecessor, would in fact serve to perfect both the rational model and pluralist democracy as a result of the planning advocate informing the public of all the social costs and benefits and formulating alternatives which would be incorporated into a better master plan. His approach found an immediate following among left liberal intellectuals, mostly white middle-class professionals, who soon headed off into poor neighbourhoods and black communities to offer their advocacy skills.

Advocacy planners' experiences in Harlem and Boston were sobering. ARCH, the Architects Renewal Committee in Harlem, quickly found that what the poor lacked most was not the technical skills that the advocates were offering but the power to control action. They could organize to stop something but had no power to go beyond that. The advocates, as outsiders, could not bring the community together to plan. Moreover, they often found that they were not working with the truly poor but with the more organized and upwardly mobile elements of poor areas. By the late 1960s, ARCH had changed from a white organization to a black one and the rhetoric had changed to focus on the issue of self-determination, of political power

supported by technical expertise rather than political debate emphasizing technical analysis. Finally, ARCH dropped the advocacy label altogether and decided to provide the means by which its community could represent itself. In other words, it turned away from advocacy to an empowerment model (Heskin 1980).

Similarly, in Boston, UPA (Urban Planning Aid), a group of predominantly white professionals (including such prominent names as Lisa Peattie, Chester Hartman, and Robert Goodman), wanted to assist the poor by taking their ideas and translating them into the technical language of plans, to make them forceful in the policy arena. Peattie (1968) later described their work as 'the manipulator model'. Professionals set the agenda, conceptualized the problem, and defined the terms in which a solution to the problem would be sought. She noted that the issues raised were likely to be those that the professionals were most comfortable with, rather than those which were highest on the community's list. Robert Goodman's disenchantment was equally evident, in *After the Planners* (1972), in which he described planning professionals as agents of social control, as the 'soft cops' of the system. He argued that taking the poor off the streets and encouraging their participation in planning was not empowering them but robbing them of their power. UPA's reaction to their own critique was to reorganize internally and externally, to change the focus of their activities to that of a radical political action group (Heskin 1980).

Clearly, advocacy planning represented a significant expansion of the definition of what it is that planners do. Under this model some planners would now explicitly think about and represent the poor in the planning process – without, however, actually giving the poor a voice in that process. Instead, advocates became the ventriloquists for poor communities. Advocacy planning expanded the role of professionals and left the structure of power intact, confident in the workings of plural democracy.

Both ARCH and UPA came to recognize that the advocacy model was, after all, still an expert-centred model. *Three new directions* emerged out of these early critiques of the advocacy experience. Some planners drew the conclusion that there was a need to focus on the development of participatory mechanisms which would include the poor and hitherto unrepresented in the planning process itself. A huge literature has resulted from this line of thought, developing and refining techniques of public participation. Sherry Arnstein's article, 'A ladder of citizen participation', was a landmark of its time (Arnstein 1969), setting out eight ascending steps in the participation pantheon, from manipulation to therapy to placation to, eventually, citizen control. There was a period in the early 1970s in which the very idea of public participation was seen as the solution to all the problems of planning (Sandercock 1975b, 1978). But UPA and ARCH learned different lessons. They came to recognize the key problem as political, and that members of poor communities had political skills often superior to those of planners. They had begun by thinking their job was to educate the community about planning, but discovered that it was the planners who had the lessons to learn, including the lesson of the limits of their professional competence (Heskin 1980).

From this experience with advocacy, different planners drew different conclusions. Some, like Norman Krumholz and Robert Mier, were deeply inspired and saw the possibility of perfecting the advocacy concept by planners allying themselves with progressive politicians and doing 'equity planning' (Mier 1993; Krumholz 1994; Clavel 1994). Others drew lessons that focused more on process, and either became advocates for citizen participation, like Arnstein, or began to rethink the role of planners as experts, and to formulate new ideas of transactive planning, mutual learning, and social learning (Friedmann 1973). A third group drew the more radical lessons of UPA and ARCH, and moved towards an empowerment model (Heskin 1980, Leavitt 1994, Peattie 1968, 1987, and, much later, Friedmann, 1992). But before I tell those stories, there is another model that emerged in the mid-1970s, partly in response to what some perceived as the failure of advocacy planning, but more in response to new theoretical analyses of the structural relationship between planning and capitalist society. It is to the Marxist political economy critique of planning that I now turn.

### THE RADICAL POLITICAL ECONOMY MODEL

Just as debates about participation, mutual learning, and empowerment began to preoccupy the planning profession in the early 1970s, an entirely new narrative and analysis erupted on the periphery of the planning world. With the publication in 1973 of geographer David Harvey's *Social Justice and The City*, and the English translation of urban sociologist Manuel Castells' *The Urban Question* in 1976, the story of planning began to be rewritten. In the Marxist story, planning was no longer the hero but something more like the divine fool, naive in its faith in its own emancipatory potential, ignorant of the real relations of power which it was serving and in which it was deeply and inextricably implicated. The works of Marxist urban scholars in university departments of geography, sociology, and urban studies enjoyed a decade or so 'in the sun', as a powerful critique of mainstream planning, focusing on planning as a function of the capitalist state. Manuel Castells produced one of the first (and much imitated) case studies of the role of urban planning in the development of the growth pole of Dunkirk (Castells 1978). He identified three functions of planning: as an instrument of rationalization and legitimation; as an instrument of negotiation and mediation of the differing demands of the fractions of capital; and as a regulator of the pressures and protest of the dominated classes. Richard Foglesong's *Planning the Capitalist City* (1986) summarized the contradictions of planning in a capitalist society in one sentence: planning is both necessary and impossible.

The function of urban planning, these authors argued, springs from the continuous attempt to render the chaos of individual decisions more orderly by means of zoning and other regulatory mechanisms, and by supplying urban goods and

services such as low-income public housing, public transportation, and so on. But both the private ownership of property and the imperatives of capital accumulation place real limits on any sort of state intervention on behalf of the dominated classes. David Harvey's analyses have concentrated on conflicts between fractions of capital active in the built environment. He has argued that some form of coordination among private investments in the built environment is necessary to ensure that the aggregate needs of individual producers are met. The role of urban planning is to bring about some balance between competing fractions of capital, and between capital and citizens, through a mixture of repression, cooptation, and integration: by decreasing the risks of long-term investment, by supplying collective goods, and by avoiding the emergence of monopolies in space that would have disruptive effects on socially aggregated needs (Cenzatti 1987). Whether the focus of these radical political economists is on production or on consumption, on the state's role in capital accumulation or its role in providing collective goods and thereby maintaining legitimacy, the conclusion is the same with respect to the function of urban planning. Far from being the progressive practice that the profession claims for itself, in the Marxist narrative planning can always and only be in the service of capital.

The emergence of this new literature presented a challenge to planning schools and planners, exacerbating already-existing divisions between theorists and practitioners. While some of the more theoretically oriented planning faculty have sought to import this new work into the planning field, more practice-oriented folk have denied its relevance. The latter reaction is understandable in the sense that Marxist analyses have denied planners a role in social transformation and that too much of this kind of theorizing has a paralysing effect on policy debates. The lasting value of this model is at the level of critique rather than action. Marxist or radical political economy theory locates planning as an inherently political activity within a capitalist state which is itself part of a world capitalist system. We can no longer ignore this structural reality in our analyses of planning practices and policies. Further, Marxist critique has demystified the idea that planning operates in the public interest, making it very clear that class interests are always the driving force. But there is also a problem with this last insight, for insisting on the primacy of class interests in their counter-analysis, Marxists have either ignored, or tried to subsume into their class analysis, other forms of oppression, domination, and exploitation, such as those based on gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual preference.

But the ultimate weakness of this model has been its inability to provide an alternative definition for planning, and for what planners can do. Generic or half-hearted answers such as 'The planner can become the revealer of contradictions, and by this an agent of social innovation' (Castells 1979: 88) have not proved sufficient to inspire a new generation of radical planners. For that, we must turn back to those who have developed the legacy of advocacy planning in the three directions outlined in the previous section.

## THE EQUITY PLANNING MODEL

While the advocacy movement of the 1960s began clearly outside the aegis of city halls, one group of planners who see themselves as inheritors of the advocacy tradition have developed the tradition in the direction of making alliances with and working for progressive politicians. The two most prominent practitioners and definers of this new model of equity planning are Norman Krumholz and the late Robert Mier, the former in his career as chief planner for the city of Cleveland for a decade in the 1970s, the latter in his work as Head of Economic Development Planning during the regime of Harold Washington as mayor of Chicago.

Norman Krumholz was a city planning student in the early 1960s when the rational comprehensive model still held sway. He was taught that planning was a-political; that a unitary plan prepared by a public agency was adequate to express the interests of the entire community; and that city planning was the artful planning of land-uses in such a way as to improve the quality of city life (Krumholz 1994: 150). In that context, the arrival of Paul Davidoff's article was a revelation and an inspiration:

His article offered practitioners like me a way to broaden our area of concern beyond purely physical planning. We could also accept the deep political nature of our craft, reach out toward the poor, to minorities, and to other unrepresented groups, and in the process try to serve a more inclusive pluralism. Davidoff's ideas, along with those of Herbert Gans and others, have had a great impact on my work and on the work of many planning professionals, from the 1960s to the present.

(Krumholz 1994: 150)

Krumholz defines equity planners as those who consciously seek to redistribute power, resources, or participation away from local elites and toward poor and working class city residents. In his book with John Forester, *Making Equity Planning Work* (1990), Krumholz tells his 'war stories' from Cleveland as a sort of inspirational tale of how good can be done, and precisely what it is that equity planners do, within given structural constraints. Equity planners begin with an understanding of urban inequalities, asking political economy questions about who is getting what out of local urban policies and plans. Accepting the dictum that planning is a handmaiden of politics, equity planners choose the politicians they want to work for. There are personal costs involved, in the sense of a willingness to be reasonably mobile, not expecting to stay in one job forever, but only for as long as the planner has the support of a progressive regime. Given such a regime, Krumholz argues that planning within the local state can be both meaningful and ethically defensible. The state isn't a monolith but rather a terrain of political struggle, and planners with the interests of the poor and unrepresented in mind can do good and constrain evil.

Interestingly, this model retains a belief in the planners' expertise and doesn't say much about drawing on local knowledge. The planner is still the centre of the story, the key actor. But what the planner does is now defined much more broadly

than in the rational comprehensive model. Krumholz stresses the importance of talk: at local meetings, at county and state testimonies, speeches to the profession, op-ed pieces, interviews with reporters, speech writing for mayors and councillors, and engaging in dialogue with other city agencies. The planner is a communicator, a tireless propagandist, and good communication skills are critical. The planner is also a gatherer of information and analysis, a problem formulator. By reformulating a problem, planners have some power to shape debates, to shape public attention to issues which planners see as important. Planners need to be bold, to seize the initiative, and never accept given definitions of tasks and problems. They should be permanently engaged in 'opportunity scanning'. But planners also need to beware of 'taboo' words like 'socializing' or 'empowerment'. Within this sphere of constraints and opportunities, planners can create a 'moral community' of reform and resistance amid (in the belly of) the bureaucracy.

Interestingly, Krumholz and Forester do not offer any analysis of Cleveland's power structure, beyond the level of who holds the office of mayor, and nor do they attempt to locate Cleveland in terms of the global economy. Equity planning is still engaged in speaking truth to power, still engaged in a state-centred planning, only now it is a consciously politicized practice, and its allegiances are consciously directed to those who have been excluded. But the excluded, the poor, the marginalized, are still not part of the action, and do not feature as active agents in the narrative or theory of *Making Equity Planning Work*.

A decade later, under Harold Washington's rainbow alliance in Chicago, the story is a little different. The Chicago planners working for Harold Washington, led by Robert Mier, adopted an administrative procedure of 'inclusion'. Important meetings had to have not only white male but also black, Latino, and female faces present, otherwise the meeting would be postponed. This forced administrators to learn to seek out such representatives from these groups before proceeding (Clavel and Wiewel 1991; Clavel 1994). This suggests an evolution of equity planning in which, in the past decade, equity planners have learned to respect the social movements that energize the neighbourhoods, which is certainly a step forward from previous bureaucratic styles that recognized only the institutionalized powers of ward committees and city council members (Clavel 1994). It also suggests that we must pay more attention to the institutional settings – political, social, cultural – in which any attempt at planning takes place, asking insistently who is at the table making decisions, who will carry out whatever is decided, how, when, and where, and what the sanctions are against default. It is not enough simply to get the excluded to the table.

### THE SOCIAL LEARNING AND COMMUNICATIVE ACTION MODEL

Paul Davidoff believed in opening up the political process, overtly espousing competition among plans. The first generation of advocacy planners under his influence

took their technical skills into poor communities, intending to offer assistance so that alternative plans could be created which took into account the needs of such communities. Some advocates learned a different lesson from this, a lesson about local knowledge and about the political skills that exist within poor communities. Reflections on this lesson by a number of planning theorists and practitioners have led to the emergence of models of social learning and communicative action.

In *Retracking America* (1973), John Friedmann wrote of a (specifically American) post-industrial society in dual crisis: a crisis of values which was the result of the breakdown of absolutes under modernism, and a crisis of knowing, which was reflected in the emerging conflict between expert/processed knowledge and personal/experiential knowledge. He described the growing polarity between so-called experts and their 'clients', a polarity exacerbated by the inaccessible language in which professionals usually formulate problems, and he argued that neither side ever has all the answers. The obvious solution was to bring the two together to engage in a process of *mutual learning*, to develop a personal relationship between expert and client through the adoption of what he called a *transactive style of planning*. Friedmann characterized transactive planning as the life of dialogue, emphasizing human worth and reciprocity in contrast to the traditionally arrogant and aloof stance of the professional. This involved acceptance of the authenticity of the other person; a fusion of thinking, moral judgement, feeling, and empathy; a recognition of the importance of the non-verbal as well as the verbal; and an acceptance of and willingness to work with and through conflict.

What is radical about this approach is its epistemological shift away from the monopoly on expertise and insight by professionals to an acknowledgement of the value of local, or experiential, knowledge. It is also a shift away from a static conception of knowledge (as in 'body' of knowledge) to a more dynamic concept and metaphor of learning. Friedmann's work evolved over the next decade from the initial relatively simple concept of mutual learning to a more complex model of social learning (Friedmann 1973, 1987). This stressed experiential knowledge acquired in the course of action itself, and thus moved from a document-oriented and anticipatory mode of planning to a transactive relationship between planner and community. The social learning approach turns planning itself into a form of strategic action that increasingly takes place in real time. It can be summarized as *learning by doing*, and continuously and critically reflecting on that, in what becomes a 'double-loop learning process' in which the goals of action are reassessed along with the chosen means (Argyris and Schon 1978).

Beginning with the same fundamental observation that planning is, above all, an interactive, communicative activity, another group of scholars – notable among them John Forester, Patsy Healey and Judith Innes – coalesced in the late 1980s around the study of planning as a communicative practice. Inspired initially by the work of John Forester, who calls his theory *critical planning*, basing it on the Habermasian concept of communicative action and on philosopher Martha Nussbaum's emphasis on contextual knowledge (Nussbaum 1990), the work of

this group is a significant departure from the rational comprehensive model. They have moved from the instrumental rationality of the earlier model to an emphasis on communicative rationality. They rely more on qualitative, interpretive inquiry than on logical deductive analysis, and they seek to understand the unique and the contextual, rather than make general propositions about a mythical, abstract planner (Innes 1995: 184). These theorists tell stories and look for insights, rather than trying to impose order and definition. They focus on what planners actually do, subjecting planners' practices to a micro-analysis of interpersonal interactions, listening to what is said and not said, by whom, why, and in what circumstances. Forester's fine-grained, detailed observational study of planners at work, *Planning in the Face of Power* (1989), stands as a primary text for this group. For Forester, planning is primarily a form of critical listening to the words of others, and observing their non-verbal behaviour. It is a mode of intervention that is based on speech acts, on listening and questioning, and learning how, through dialogue, to 'shape attention'. Forester is interested in what story is being told in any planning situation, because these stories embody and enact the play of power, the selective focusing of attention, the presumption of 'us and them', the creation of reputations, and the shaping of expectations of what is and is not possible as well as the production of politically rational strategies of action. What planners say 'involves power and strategy as much as it involves "words"' (Forester 1991: 23).

Forester's work has inspired others to undertake similar studies, each of which brings slightly different emphases, from Susskind and Cruikshank's negotiation and consensus-building (1987) to Throgmorton's discourse and rhetoric (1991); Peattie's attention to representation (1987) and Judith Innes' attention to the social construction of knowledge (1995); Bent Flyvbjerg's 'science of the concrete' (1992) and Patsy Healey's institutional analysis and discourse (1988, 1992), leading to 'collaborative planning' (Healey 1997). Each of these scholars is critically interested in the relationship between knowledge and power, in the potential for oppression inherent in instrumental rationality, and in finding more emancipatory ways of knowing. Here they have been inspired by Habermas' *Theory of Communicative Action* (1984),<sup>3</sup> and by Foucault's much darker analysis of the links between knowledge and power, into critical reflection about the appropriate processes for learning and deciding, such as assuring representation of all major points of view, equalizing information among group members, and creating conditions within group processes so that the force of argument can be the deciding factor rather than an individual's power or status in some pre-existing hierarchy. If equity planners can be said to be trying to perfect planning as an Enlightenment project by representing the interests of the poor and the marginalized in city halls, then communicative action theorists might be said to be trying to perfect the Enlightenment's democratic project by removing the barriers to communication, by creating a model of open discourse, by removing distortions. The emphasis is less on what planners know and more on how they use and distribute their knowledge; less on their ability to solve problems, more on opening up debate about them. In this

model, planning is about talk, argument, shaping attention. Forester redefines what gives planning its legitimacy, shifting away from professional expertise and efficiency toward ethical commitment and equity.

These theorists have moved far away from the decision focus of applied rationality to a concern with interactive social processes. But for both, the primary actor and source of attention is still the formally educated planner working primarily through the state. And for communicative action theorists, the insistence on studying practice and practitioners means that their theory will always conform to the current practice of planning rather than imagining alternatives or calling for social transformation. While this is certainly a more inclusive theory of planning than its predecessors, it does have serious weaknesses from a counter-hegemonic perspective. It does not attempt to address the issue of empowerment raised by the third (about-to-be-discussed) group of critics of the early advocacy model, except in terms of speech acts. It acknowledges, but then brackets, the problem of structural inequalities. And it treats citizenship as an unproblematic concept which is gender- and race-neutral, following the Habermasian and Rawlsian use of universal categories, and in the process suppressing the crucial questions of difference and marginality and their relationship to social justice.

To find a forum for discussing these last issues, we need to turn to those who have been trying to elaborate theories of radical planning, or empowerment.

### THE RADICAL PLANNING MODEL

Among the relatively small community of scholars who have sought to outline a radical or emancipatory practice in the past two decades, many roads have been taken to arrive at this point. While some are direct descendants of advocacy planning (Heskin 1980, 1991; Peattie 1987, 1994; Leavitt 1994) or other experiments in social reform like the Great Society (Marris 1987), others have arrived via a feminist critique (Leavitt 1994; Hayden 1980) and still others through engagement in the civil rights movement and ongoing struggles around racism (King 1981; Leavitt and Saegert 1990), contemporary debates around multiple forms of oppression and exploitation (Starr and Lee 1992; Hooper 1992; Sandercock 1995a), or working on problems of poverty and exclusion in an international development context (Friedmann 1992). (And, of course, there are overlaps.) Perhaps more than any other model of theorizing, radical planning has been linked into multiple critical discourses about social transformation. I will be less concerned with genealogies here than with the actual contours of a radical planning practice, searching for shared perspectives and focusing on what it is that radical planners actually do.

Radical practices emerge from experience with and a critique of existing unequal relations and distributions of power, opportunity, and resources. The goal of these practices is to work for structural transformation of systematic inequalities and, in the process, to empower those who have been systematically disempowered. The

focus of radical practice will depend on the focus of the critique. In the field of planning, the dominant radical critique of urban inequalities from the 1960s through to the 1980s was that of class analysis, particularly after the rise of Marxist urban political economy and sociology in the mid-1970s. But those white professionals who actually went into poor communities were faced with more complex situations, intersections of racism, poverty, sexism, homophobia, anti-immigrant sentiments, to name the most obvious. It began to occur to some planners that 'the poor' and the 'oppressed' were not a homogeneous 'mass' but rather spoke with many different voices. By the 1980s, feminist activists within planning were developing their own spatial as well as social and political analyses of gender inequalities; people of colour (and some white allies) were drawing attention to racist practices within and effects of planning; and gay and lesbian activists were documenting a history of oppressive spatial and social practices affecting their lives in cities. Questions about social justice and the city have correspondingly been expanded from the earlier formulations of Marxists like Harvey and (the early) Castells to include 'what would a non-sexist city be like?' (Hayden 1980), and, by extension, what would a non-racist and non-homophobic city be like? But the toughest question of all is – what can planners do about any of these inequalities? Radical planners have given various answers, in their theory and practice. Most of these answers are related to community organization, urban social movements, and issues of empowerment, rather than to working through the state. Weaving itself through each of these is an ongoing angst about the relationship between professional identity and radical practice.

Radical planning theory has grown out of and been informed by experiences of oppositional practices and a tradition of social mobilization. The starting point is always a concrete problem. Some of today's radical planners were involved in the advocacy movement of the late 1960s, which served to clarify for them the insoluble dilemmas of working as a planner in the bureaucracy. Allan Heskin (1980) and Jacqueline Leavitt drew similar conclusions from that experience. In Leavitt's words, 'on the one hand, advocacy planning couldn't fight city hall, on the other hand it didn't deal well with conflicting interests in the community' (Leavitt 1994: 119). For Heskin, and for Leavitt, the obvious conclusion was that in order to make a difference in the lives of the poor, the excluded, the marginalised, an empowerment approach was required, and that such an approach could only be practised outside the bureaucracy:

*Community-based groups who develop bottom-up programs are engaged in planning that occurs outside the local planning establishment. At some point the people with whom I work will interact with either the planning establishment or other political bodies. They will frequently need to use research I have helped produce with them for that purpose. I may or may not be at the meetings: when I am, my role is to validate but not to be their voice. The overall intent of this type of practice is not to create a plan as much as it is to generate a political process that involves plans or programs.*

*(Leavitt 1994: 127)*

Leavitt describes what she does as entering a community, gaining trust, allocating time, listening, arguing, and letting others speak. The primary requirement of this kind of community-based practice is allocating enormous amounts of time to 'hanging out' with the mobilized community.

Heskin's and Leavitt's work has revolved around housing struggles in multi-ethnic, multi-racial, poor communities. Other radical practices have been organized around plant closures and worker buy-outs; women mobilizing to get a whole range of women's needs in the city addressed; the establishment of credit unions in previously red-lined neighbourhoods; community gardens, child care, bicycle paths; opposing the siting of environmental hazards like toxic waste incinerators in poor and minority communities. . . . Taken separately, none of these struggles may seem all that system-threatening, but together they do constitute a challenge, because they have the potential for making people less dependent on global capital, increasing their social power, and experiencing their own political power, albeit at local level. But it is precisely through action at local level that people begin to get some handle on how to make a difference to their own lives and concerns as well as those of fellow citizens – concerns about jobs, housing, schools, health.

Working in and with such mobilized communities, planners' roles are not the heroic ones described in the rational model. Rather, in working for social transformation in community-based organizations, planners acknowledge that theory and practice become everyone's concern and that responsibilities for both are multiple and overlapping. Planners bring to radical practice general and specific/substantive skills; everything from skills of analysis and synthesis to grantsmanship, communication and the managing of group processes, as well as specific knowledge of labour markets or environmental law or transportation modelling or housing regulations. But they also recognize the value of the contextual knowledge that those in the front line of local action – the mobilized community – bring to the issue at hand. And they are open to learning through experience. Above all, radical practice depends for its effectiveness on interpersonal relations of trust (Friedmann 1987: 402; Leavitt 1994), and a social learning approach based on a 'radical openness' (hooks 1990: 148).

Radical practice, then, does not lie on a logical continuum with rational planning for societal guidance. It is not primarily about participation in projects by the state. More often than not, radical planners will find themselves in opposition to either state or corporate economy, or both. This implies an epistemological break with past ways of thinking and doing (Friedmann 1987: 391), of what it means to be a planner, and what it is that planners do. It requires nothing less than a new professional identity. How might that identity be described? There are two somewhat conflicting portraits in the current literature. Radical practitioners like Heskin and Leavitt state very clearly that the allegiance of the activist planner is to the community with whom he or she is working. There is a 'crossing-over' implied here, in which the professionally educated planner sheds his or her professional status/identity and chooses, instead of loyalty to professional codes, loyalty to the poor

and the oppressed. For Heskin this is a clear choice about class allegiance. A planner cannot cling to her professional class status and hope to be helpful to 'the community'. To contribute to community empowerment, she must not see the community as a client, but see herself as the ally of that community, helping people to clarify their goals, enabling them to achieve collective self-determination.

Here is a dramatic shift from the other five models of planning, in which the planner is still the driving force. In these other models, the professional planner, by definition, works through the state, even if, as an equity planner, for example, her goal is to achieve some kind of redistribution of resources on behalf of the poor. It's the *on behalf of* that is the problem for the radical planner. In Heskin's description of radical planning, it is the community that initiates, and the planner who enables, assists, but never imposes his solutions and only offers advice when asked. Similarly in Leavitt's work, she immerses herself in the community, hangs out with them, helps them with research and preparation of documents, advises on how to deal with bureaucracies, but never does these things *for* the community, always *with* them. The identity of the radical planner in these works is that of a person who has, essentially, gone AWOL from the profession, has crossed over 'to the other side', to work in opposition to the state and corporate economy. This does not mean that community-based planners have nothing to do with the state. There is a clear acknowledgement in Heskin's and Leavitt's work of the need to think strategically about the state, to make alliance with those planners who do work within state agencies, especially those who might be regarded as friendly to the cause. And the knowledge that these activist planners possess of the workings of the state is invaluable to the communities with whom they are working. But there is a clear line being drawn in the sand. Choose the community and you are choosing professional/class death. Choose to work for the state and you retain your professional identity, but don't delude yourself about whose interests you are serving.

In the radical planning model elaborated by John Friedmann there is a different take on this notion of professional identity. Friedmann insists that a radical planner has to maintain a notion of critical distance. He or she does not, ultimately, cross over. 'Radical planners must not become absorbed into the everyday struggles of radical practice . . . as mediators, they stand neither apart from nor above nor within such a practice' (Friedmann 1987: 392). While not denying that radical planners must be committed to the group's practice and to the global project of emancipation, he nevertheless posits 'an optimum critical distance between planners and the front line of action' (Friedmann 1987: 404). Friedmann's definition of the identity of the radical planner is then someone who mediates between theory and action and for whom, beyond a certain point, 'the closer they come to the action, the less useful are their mediations likely to be'. And the same holds in the other direction. The further away they move from the immediacies of the action, the less they will be able to accomplish, in part because this distance may fracture the very bonds of trust upon which their effectiveness depends. Friedmann's radical planner is then a tightrope walker, trying to maintain some

autonomy *vis-à-vis* the radical group or community, and yet certainly not striking any pose of neutrality.

But why is this autonomy/critical distance necessary? Why not just cross over? Friedmann's writing is not clear on this point, but there is a clue in his language. He talks about radical planners working with groups who are 'carriers' of radical practices. He talks about the relevant actors in the struggle for a new society (the global project of emancipation) as being individual households who have opted for the alternative; organized social groups based in local communities; and larger, more inclusive movements not bounded by territorial limits. Heskin and Leavitt, on the other hand, talk almost exclusively about the 'struggle for community' (Heskin 1991) or 'community-based planning' (Leavitt 1994). For Heskin and Leavitt the state is and can only be an adversary. For Friedmann, any social advances achieved through a radical planning that by-passes the state 'will quickly reach material limits. To go beyond these limits, appropriate actions by the state are essential' (Friedmann 1987: 407). Clearly, the state has been the missing ingredient so far in this discussion of radical planning. And while it may well be a contradiction in terms to think of the state engaging in radical planning, it is equally misleading to think that radical planning can do without the state.

Lyotard has argued that 'there is no such thing as Reason, only reasons' (Lyotard, in Van Riejen and Veerman 1988). The same might be said about 'Community' – there is no such thing as Community, only communities. In the writing of most radical planners, 'the community' has been reified and romanticized. If the state is the enemy, the implicit argument seems to be, then the mobilized community can do no wrong. But we are all familiar with specific communities (straight, white, Christian, mentally or physically able . . .) who try to use planning to exclude specific other communities (gay, black, Jewish, mentally or physically challenged . . .). What rights should communities as collectivities have *vis-à-vis* individual rights, on the one hand, and the rights of the larger society, on the other? This is a very difficult question in political theory which planners cannot avoid, especially in the contemporary context of the rise of mobilized groups and communities in civil society, asserting and demanding respect and space for their 'difference'. I will return to this question in the next and subsequent chapters.

Here I want to draw attention to the repressive potential of mobilized communities<sup>4</sup> just as, in their past analyses, radical planners have emphasized the repressive practices of the state. Conversely, we need to remember that, in the conflict over legal segregation in the southern United States during the 1960s, the federal government eventually intervened in local affairs and acted against local authorities, in a clear case of the transformative power of the state. The lesson of this paradox is –

that planning needs to engage not only the development of insurgent forms of the social but also the resources of the state to define, and occasionally impose, a more encompassing conception of right than is sometimes possible to find at the local level.

... Above all, planning needs to encourage a complementary antagonism between these two engagements.

(Holston 1995: 49)

It is this antagonistic and yet also dialectical relationship between the state and the mobilized community that radical planners have yet to address. The first is to get beyond the notion of the state as always and only the adversary. In the past fifty years we have moved slowly away from the CLAM visionaries' embrace of state-directed futures to an opposing vision of a fragmented metropolis driven by the chariot of community self-determination. We must move beyond these simplistic dichotomies and begin to think about the complementary as well as antagonistic relationship between state and civil society and of the possibility of social transformation as a result of the impact on the state of mobilized groups within civil society. If modernist politics could be defined as the bipolar struggle between capital and labour, in which the state was allied to capital, then a postmodern urban politics is perhaps best understood as a multiplicity of struggles around multiple axes of oppression, in which the role of the state is not a given (not simply 'the executive committee of the bourgeoisie'), but is dependent on the relative strength of the social mobilizations, and their specific context in space and time.

In other words, there is an unresolved, and unresolvable tension between the transformative *and* repressive powers of state-directed planning practices, and their mirror image, the transformative *and also* repressive potential of the local, the grassroots, the insurgent. In order to work with this tension, perhaps Friedmann's concept of critical distance assumes a new importance. And in maintaining a productive tension between state-driven planning and the insurgent practices of mobilized communities, radical planners do need a different kind of professional practice, different in both objective and method. This difference amounts to a reconceptualization of the field and of the notion of professional identity. Rather than the 'crossing-over' outlined in Heskin's and Leavitt's work, the appropriate image may be that of crossing back and forth, of blurring boundaries, of deconstructing ('community', 'the state') and reconstructing new possibilities. In terms of methods, an *epistemology of social learning and of multiplicity* (see Chapter 3) is the theory of knowledge underlying radical practice. This means that action is primary, but that we need to develop new ways of knowing and being as well as new ways of acting. One possible source of guidance for such new ways of knowing and being and acting comes from what I have called 'the Voices from the Borderlands' (Sandercock 1995a), the voices of women and people of colour, postmodern and postcolonial voices resonant with experiences of marginality, exploitation, and domination. To feel at home in the multi-ethnic, multi-racial cities of this and coming decades, we need to listen to and understand these voices. They will become our guides in the next chapter as we move from the difference that theory makes, to the theory that 'difference' makes. But first, some conclusions about where we have arrived at in our journey through the landscape of planning theory.

In telling the story of the postwar evolution of planning theory through six models or paradigms and arranging the story chronologically, there are two dangers. One is of imposing an order and coherence where there may have been none. The other danger is in appearing to create a progressive and inevitable account of history, from the 'bad' rational planning model through successive 'improvements' to the 'good' radical planning model, implying that the latter has superseded the former, like the latest model out of the car industry. Neither has been my intention. The chronological account of developments in planning theory was intended to demonstrate relationships between 'successive' theories, to indicate that planners do indeed learn from mistakes and examine their own practices critically. But, unlike Thomas Kuhn's account of scientific revolutions, in which, eventually, the new paradigm replaces the old, I would argue that all six paradigms of planning are alive (and reasonably well), and that adhering to one rather than another involves a political choice rather than scientific verification. It involves questions of values and allegiances as much as it involves commitment to the scientific and technical body of knowledge that is supposed to constitute and legitimate any profession. So, there are some planners today who still adhere to the rational model, as they did thirty years ago, and others who have moved over the past thirty or forty years from the rational model to a social learning model and then to an empowerment model. And there are students today who, when presented with this spectrum of ways of being a planner, will choose the rational comprehensive model in preference to all others, certainly not convinced that radical planning is the highest and best evolutionary form of planning. There are many within the profession who maintain a belief in 'the public interest', and only a few who question what has, after all, been part of the justification of the profession. So, rather than implying any necessary (r)evolutionary 'progress' in this account, I want to insist that adherence to any one of these theories is above all a political choice, and also a practical judgement of what planning can and cannot achieve. And in real life, many of us find ourselves moving between paradigms – this year working for the state as equity planners, next year for the mobilized community, depending on the availability of funding and of ongoing judgements about what can be achieved in which political arena.

Part of my intent in elaborating these six models of planning, in setting out how each differs with respect to its definition of what planning is and what planners do and know, is to suggest that there can never be the *one* true all-embracing planning theory that explains who we are and what we do. This will and should always be contested terrain, precisely because planning is an inherently political practice. Instead of one planning theory that we can all agree on, we need to acknowledge the usefulness of a variety of theories, depending on the context, depending on the purpose of the planner. We all – rational, or communicative, or radical planners – need theories of knowledge and theories of power, theories of social transformation and theories of interpersonal relations, theories of the state and theories of group dynamics. The list is endless.

Finally, the need for different kinds of theories shifts as societies change. Theoretical restructuring is a necessary accompaniment to economic and demographic restructuring. For the *'longue durée'* of the modernization project, the model of applied rationality was the perfect handmaiden. But that hegemonic project began to be challenged in the 1960s, at the levels of both culture and economy, by those groups who had been excluded from its domain and its fruits, and by others who were concerned about the environmental consequences of the global drive to modernization. The shifts in the paradigms of planning theory need to be situated in these material and cultural contexts, as reflecting economic, environmental and cultural crises in the modernist project, and as attempts to solve those crises from within. It is only the radical model that has looked to a social transformation beyond modernization, and it is only this model which can accommodate the full (multi)cultural implications of the postmodern world into which we are moving. Exploring those implications is the subject of the next chapter, in which I ask about the difference that 'difference' makes to an emancipatory or radical theory and practice.