CHAPTER 3
EXPLORING PLANNING’S KNOWLEDGES

Country is underneath us all the time, but it’s all covered up and we in our minds are all covered up. So when we walk in the land, we can’t see anything for a while. We got all our possessions with us, and through these things we look at the land. Do you feel the sand you walk on? Are you aware of where your feet step? Are you aware of the trees you just passed, the birds that just landed? How much do you see? That has to shift and as soon as it does, we get a shift in mind which drops down to feeling. Then we wake up to feeling, what we call le-an here, and we become more alive, we start feeling, we become more sensitive. You start to read the country. Then all of a sudden there’s an opening down there. Before there was only a wall, but now that tree has meaning, now that rock has meaning and all of a sudden that thing takes you. You just follow. . . . See, you are that land, and the land is you. . . . You wake up, and you see a lot of things and the country starts living for you. Everything is based on that feeling le-an, seeing through that feeling.

(Sinatra and Murphy unpublished MS)

‘How much do you see?’ asks Frans, a white man from Holland who has been living in the remote north western region of Australia for the past two decades. Frans has been learning the importance and meaning of land from an Aboriginal perspective. His teacher is Paddy, an Aboriginal elder who is the custodian of the Lurujarri (coastal dunes) Dreaming Trail. The Lurujarri Dreaming Trail, an 80-mile coastal strip near the town of Broome, is part of the great song cycle of the continent according to Aboriginal cosmology. Thinking politically, Paddy has taught Frans tribal knowledge of the land to enable him to act as spokesperson and mediator in Paddy’s efforts to protect the living landscape. Paddy-teaching Frans was the first step in creating cross-cultural appreciation of the meaning of the land, as a way of protecting it. Paddy invites people to walk with his family members along the Lurujarri Trail so they can appreciate the importance of local beliefs by experiencing this cultural and spiritual landscape. Together, Paddy and Frans’ teachings provide an opportunity for people to see the beauty of the landscape – not in the western sense of a Kodacolor-registered beautiful landscape but through understanding the power that land has to sustain life. It is Paddy’s hope that the people who walk the trail will return home to become caretakers of their own country.

None of what Paddy teaches is written down. Aboriginal law/life and cosmology are passed down through storytelling traditions, through song and dance and ceremony. Maintained within this oral tradition are the laws of how to live in harmony with everything that makes up the living country. Frans talks about ‘a shift in mind, which drops down to feeling’, what the local people call ‘le-an’. ‘I mean, you’re trained one way or other and you actually look through that upbringing at the land. You project through your training process the reading in the
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land. And all of a sudden it doesn’t fit anything... Frans is talking about a shift in cognitive reality, discovering new ways of knowing. ‘Everything is based on that feeling le-ana, seeing through that feeling.’

It may appear odd to place a discussion of Aboriginal perceptions of land in the remote north-west of Australia at the beginning of a chapter on knowledge in the planning profession. It is intended to appear so. The intent is to ask what is missing from accounts of knowledge in planning, knowledge of cities and regions, that deny themselves a rich variety of ways of seeing/knowing, by privileging only one way – what we might call the epistemology of the Enlightenment. In fact, the Lurujarri Dreaming Trail is not so remote from the concerns of planners as this opening seems to suggest. The Trail begins near the fishing port and town of Broome. Aboriginal people make up 40% of the population of the Shire of Broome and yet, in the 1993 Broome Planning Strategy there is almost no demographic or social, let alone cultural, information about the Aboriginal population. In and around Broome there is land which is in the hands of Aboriginal custodians, and recent Native Title legislation makes it possible for Aboriginal groups to make further land claims. How can a Planning Strategy claim to be speaking for ‘the community’ when it systematically ignores 40% of that community, and when it operates in a professional language which is the equivalent of a foreign language to the Aboriginal community?

Why epistemology matters

The story of Paddy and Frans, of black and white walking a Dreaming Trail together, is a graphic way into the subject of epistemology in planning. Why is or should epistemology be important to planners? Why should we care about the philosophy of knowledge? A one-word answer would be legitimacy. Another would be Authority. The questions at the heart of a planning epistemology are: What do I know? How do I know that I know? What are my sources of knowledge? How is knowledge produced in planning? How and when do I know what I know? How secure am I in my knowledge? What level of uncertainty or ambiguity can I tolerate? What forms of knowledge offer me most security? How adequate is my knowledge for the purpose at hand? How can I improve the knowledge base of my (and others’) actions? What rights does my knowledge confer on me as a planner? What responsibilities do I assume for the application of what I claim to know? What is valid knowledge in planning? Who decides that? And who possesses knowledge that is relevant to planning? If these are the questions, the answers to them must surely constitute the very heart, or core, of planning.

How do we know what we know? How do we arrive at truth (itself a debated concept, as I shall discuss later), or certainty, or some adequate foundation for action? There have been at least half a dozen answers since the time of the ancient Greeks: from Greek rationalism to mysticism, empiricism to dialectical materialism, pragmatism to theoretical anarchism. Plato and Aristotle certainly didn’t agree on any theoretical or practical grounds...
on an answer. Aristotle distinguished three kinds of knowledge: episteme, or theoretical knowledge; techne, or technical applications of theory; and phronesis, or practical wisdom, which allowed a significant role for intuition, imagination, and emotion. For rational deliberation and choice in personal and public life, Aristotle advocated phronesis. For Plato, on the other hand, the idea that rational deliberation might draw on, even be guided by these elements (emotion, imagination, intuition) was a conceptual impossibility, since he defined the rational in opposition to these ‘irrational’ parts of the soul. Plato insisted that emotion and appetite (desire) were corrupting influences, and that the intellect needs ‘to go off by itself’ in order to make practical deliberations (Nussbaum 1990: 76). Plato rejected sensuous cognition as part of his general rejection of the bodily. Imagination was rejected as being wedded to particularity and the recognition of incommensurables, and therefore a threat to the impartial assessment of facts and probabilities.

Mysticism, through the ages, by contrast, has suggested that that which is most worth knowing is achievable through contemplation and meditation, and communicable only through poetic image and metaphor. Despite the virulent attacks on mysticism since the so-called Scientific Revolution beginning with Isaac Newton in the late seventeenth century, and continuing during the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, mysticism appears in many arenas today, from New Age environmentalism and deep ecology to the descriptions by some Nobel Prize-winning scientists of their actual methods of work. Albert Einstein, for example, wrote that ‘only intuition, resting on sympathetic understanding, can lead to discovery; the daily effort comes from no deliberate intention or programme, but straight from the heart’. And geneticist Barbara McClintock argued that ‘reason is not by itself adequate to describe the vast complexity, indeed mystery, of living forms’ (Keller 1983: 199). Perhaps this is also the ‘seeing through feeling’, the le-an of Aboriginal culture.

With the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century ushering in what has come to be called the Age of Reason, the scientific method of empiricism became the dominant way of knowing. Observation, hypothesis, experiment; the search for mathematically based laws of nature; and a sharp distinction between reason and emotion, these became the defining characteristics of the empirical method which has dominated Western approaches to truth/knowledge since the Enlightenment, and out of which developed the social sciences in the nineteenth century, earnestly trying to replicate the methods of the paradigmatic physical sciences. Apart from the voices of the romantic poets (Byron, Wordsworth), who embraced a pre-Enlightenment mysticism and reverence for nature that was in stark contrast to the Age of Reason’s confidence in conquering and dominating nature, the most important source of opposition to Enlightenment empiricism in the nineteenth century were the critiques of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.

Marx made the radical argument that all knowledge is a reflection of specific material conditions, and that the so-called objective scientific model of the Age of Reason was in fact the knowledge that served the emerging bourgeoisie whose industrial wealth was created by the technical applications of the scientific
revolution. Marx dared to argue that knowledge is class-based and reflects class interests. Bourgeois social science was, in his words, mere ideology. He proposed to replace this ideology with a 'truly' scientific method, which he called dialectical materialism. Based on the German philosopher Hegel's dialectics, Marx and Engels developed a method in which thought proceeds by contradiction and reconciliation of contradiction, to a new synthesis. Marxist social science was intended to expose the ideological foundations of 'bourgeois' social science, and to establish universal (dialectical) laws of society, nature, and thought. These dialectical laws, according to Engels, revealed that both nature and society are in a continuous process of evolutionary, though conflict-laden, development. Interestingly, Marxist doctrine is clearly based on the same Enlightenment territory of belief in objectivity and reason, only claiming that its method actually possesses those characteristics, while 'bourgeois' social science does not.

The New World had been very receptive to Enlightenment thought in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. By the late nineteenth century America was producing its own responses to empiricism (that is, to observation-based scientific method). The philosophy of pragmatism was very much an American invention of this era. Seeking action-relevant knowledge, philosophers like John Dewey criticized what they called the 'spectator theory of knowledge', arguing that the aim of knowledge was to make a difference in the world. What was important, therefore, was to assess the value of ideas by their outcomes, rather than by their (ideal) intentions. Dewey's writings gave an emphasis to social experimentation, to the reciprocity of theory and praxis, knowledge and action, facts and values. Out of this philosophical tradition came an epistemology of practice that we might call 'learning by doing', or social learning – a tradition that has developed a strong following in the planning literature (see Friedmann 1987).

One of the more extreme twentieth-century responses to the question of how we arrive at scientific truth is that offered by the philosopher Paul Feyerabend who, in Against Method (1975), argues that 'the only principle that does not inhibit progress in science is “anything goes”'. In a ferocious attack on Karl Popper's falsification theory, Feyerabend argued that science is, and should be, anarchistic. It cannot be reduced to a set of methodological rules. While Feyerabend's work resonates with some of postmodern thinking today, a less idiosyncratic response to some of the perceived inadequacies of empiricism and positivism can be found in the hermeneutic tradition that has enjoyed a revival in continental Europe and has found some North American adherents, attracted by the argument of the inapplicability of the methods of the physical sciences to the social sciences. (I will return to this tradition when I elaborate on the post-empirical crisis in knowledge.) But in the West, the most dominant epistemology by far since the seventeenth century has been based on empiricism, the verification of the physical world through scientific observation. We have come to refer to this as the epistemology of the Enlightenment, and it is this epistemology which has moulded and underpinned the history of planning thought.
PLANNING'S ENLIGHTENMENT EPISTEMOLOGY

Modernist planning is a child of the Enlightenment, that period stretching from the late seventeenth to the late eighteenth century (roughly from the time of the English Revolution to that of the French Revolution) which began with scientific breakthroughs in our understanding of nature and of our place in the heliocentric universe and ended not only with the technical applications of those scientific breakthroughs transforming the entire system of production (the Industrial Revolution) but also with challenges to the entire social and political order represented by the absolute power of Church and monarchy, and a feudal class structure. In his 1874 essay 'What is Enlightenment?', the German philosopher Immanuel Kant described it as that point in history when humanity put its own reason to use, without subjecting itself to any authority, particularly ecclesiastical authority. 'It is humanity's passage to adult status.'

Historians today use the word 'Enlightenment' also as an adjective, as in 'the Enlightenment tradition', denoting a specific attitude of mind that gradually gained ascendancy among European intellectuals and bourgeoisie during this 100-year period. We might characterize this attitude of mind as 'dedication to human reason, science, and education as the best means of building a stable society of free men on earth'. Enlightenment thinkers were hostile to tradition, opposed to any authority based on custom and faith alone, and some (particularly the French philosophes) were anticlerical as well. This was an era that was intoxicated with the idea of progress through reason, of perfecting the good life on earth guided solely by the light of reason, which would free men's minds from the bonds of superstition and ignorance. Liberty, equality, and fraternity were its slogans. The Industrial Revolution combined the advances in science and technology since the seventeenth century with the new ideology of an individualist, rationalist, secularist belief in progress. In epistemology, the claim was that the world could be known objectively. The practice and logic of the physical sciences involved hypothesis-testing through experiment and careful measurement. Rigorously applying this 'scientific method' would result in the discovery of universal laws about the world of material facts.

Feminists (from whom we will hear more shortly) have critically described 'the ascent of mathematical man' (Wertheim 1995) and the rise and privileging of 'the science of measurement'. In his novel Hard Times Charles Dickens gives us, in Mr Gradgrind, a scathing portrait of the obsession with fact-finding and calculative power, a man always 'ready to weigh and measure each parcel of human nature, and tell you exactly what it comes to' (Nussbaum 1990: 77). By the time Dickens was writing, in the middle of the nineteenth century, the social sciences were well on their way to defining themselves by virtue of their capacity to imitate the methods of the physical sciences, and it is here that we must locate the impulse to plan, in the Enlightenment view that reason, leading to knowledge, is the most powerful basis for acting in the world in order to change it. As Auguste Comte
argued, society itself would be governed by scientific principles, which would ensure the rationality of decisions.

While the history of planning thought contains many streams (Friedmann 1987), all of them come from the same headwaters of Enlightenment epistemology, flowing through the social sciences, to produce what I have called in Chapter 1 the ‘heroic model’ of modernist planning. The five pillars of this heroic model, enumerated there, can be restated succinctly here as rationality; comprehensiveness; scientific method; faith in state-directed futures; and faith in planners’ ability to know what is good for people generally, ‘the public interest’. As planning emerged as a profession in the years after the Second World War, it consolidated itself around a social science core that emphasized its claims to rationality and objectivity. In such classics as Harvey Perloff’s Education for Planning: City, State, and Regional (1957) or Andreas Faludi’s Critical Rationalism and Planning Methodology (1986), the ideal planner appears as rational, detached, a-political; a servant of a benign state; confident in his own expertise, and in his ability to develop ‘general principles applicable not in one situation alone, but, with modifications, in any similar one’ (Perloff 1957: 140), confident, that is, in the universality of planning principles.

Planning involves the careful elaboration and integration of a series of projected actions to attain the desired goals. Planning thus centres on the making of decisions and scheduled effectuation of policies. It takes form in a number of closely integrated steps, from the analysis of problems, the setting of broad objectives and the survey of available resources, to the establishment of specific operating targets; and through various succeeding stages until the results can be checked against the targets established and needed adjustments proposed.

(Perloff 1957: 142)

Here speaks the voice of reason, in a detached, dispassionate tone. According to Perloff, planning is a kind of decision-technology, the science of society. In other words, planning was captured by a particular view of knowledge that privileges technical rationality and instrumental problem-solving ability over an array of what I will argue are equally important alternatives. But before I set out these alternatives, I want to listen to some recent voices that have been raised in opposition to what Herbert Marcuse, in a book of the same title, called so succinctly ‘one-dimensional man’ – the man of technical reason, Rational Man.

FRIEDMANN’S ‘MUTUAL LEARNING’

Critiques of Enlightenment epistemology have been swelling over the past two decades. Within planning, there are at least three internal critiques that must be acknowledged as chipping away at the heroic model of Rational Man that the profession diagnosed knowing. I and actors professional know planning to actors offer neither can forward is the gap between transactive relationship depending worth and of a necessary recognition inevitable a

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profession has aspired to. in retracing america (1973) john friedmann diagnosed a dual crisis in post-industrial society: a crisis of values and a crisis of knowing. describing the latter, he talked of the growing polarity between experts and actors (or planners and people), with experts confident in their science-based, professional knowledge. actors, on the other hand, possess a great deal of experiential knowledge which, however, is not acknowledged as having any validity in the planning process. further, experts tend to formulate problems in a language that actors often don’t understand, thereby widening the gap. in friedmann’s view, neither camp has all the answers necessary for problem solving, and the way forward is to bring the two together in a process of mutual learning. to bridge this gap between experts and client-actors, friedmann urged the adoption of a transactive style of planning which would place more emphasis on interpersonal relationships and skills. he described the new world of transactive planning as depending on, or revolving around, the life of dialogue, with its emphasis on human worth and reciprocity. he wrote of accepting the authenticity of the other person; of a necessary fusion of thinking, moral judgement, feeling, and empathy; of a recognition of the importance of the non-verbal; and the acceptance of conflict as inevitable and something that must be dealt with rather than denied.

schön’s ‘reflective practitioner’

ten years later, in the reflective practitioner (1983), donald schön also identified a ‘crisis of confidence in professional knowledge’, a crisis which he attributed in part to the way in which universities as institutions are committed to a particular epistemology, ‘a view of knowledge that fosters selective inattention to practical competence and professional artistry’ (schön 1983: vii). he contrasted the ‘hard knowledge of science and scholarship’ with the ‘soft knowledge of artistry’ and set out to inquire into the epistemology of practice, based on a close examination of what some practitioners actually do. practitioners, he argued, usually know more than they can say, possessing a complex ‘knowledge-in-practice’, most of which remains unarticulated. schön’s book then takes apart the ‘dominant epistemology of practice’, the model of technical rationality, a model of instrumental problem solving made rigorous by the application of scientific theory and technique. this model, which is embedded in the institutional context of professional life, emerged in the nineteenth century with the rise of science and technology as the social movement aimed at applying the achievements of science and technology to the wellbeing of humankind. with positivism then in the ascendant in the social sciences, technical rationality became ‘the positivist epistemology of practice’ (schön 1983: 40).

for schöhn, the main problem with this model is that it obscures or denies the difference between problem solving and problem setting. for problem solving, technical rationality is often the most appropriate model, but before a problem can
be solved it has to be defined. Problem setting is the process by which we define the decision that is to be made, the ends to be achieved, and the relevant or appropriate means. In order to convert a problematic situation to a problem, Schön explained, a practitioner must do a certain kind of work. He must make sense of an uncertain situation that initially makes no sense. For example, when a planner considers what road to build, he or she faces a complex and ill-defined situation in which geographic, social, political, topological, and financial issues are all mixed. Deciding what road to build, where, is so much harder than deciding how best to build it. And it is this sort of situation which is central to planning practice. Problem setting, which is a necessary condition for technical problem solving, is not itself a technical problem. When we set the problem, we impose upon it a coherence which allows us to say what is wrong and what needs changing. 'Problem setting is a process in which, interactively, we name the things to which we will attend and frame the context in which we’ll attend to them' (Schön 1983: 40).

The persistence today of the idea of technical rationality is obvious in the hunger of students for technique. Perhaps one of the most difficult tasks of planning educators is to teach the limits of technical rationality, to demonstrate that the scope of technical expertise is limited by situations of great uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and conflict. According to Schön, this means that the only real claim to expertise that a professional/planner can make is the claim to be well prepared to reflect in action. 'Professionals are best seen as participants in a larger societal conversation' (Schön 1983: 353). If we think about how the problem to be solved, the policies to be adopted, are constructed through these larger conversations – through the media, institutions, public debate – then we come to realize that descriptions of reality are themselves socially constructed. The reflective planner participates in these societal conversations; and in doing so, he or she helps to construct the problem to be solved. Schön’s work makes a very strong statement about the efficacy of technical and quantitative analyses. They are tools, no more and no less, frequently valuable, but incomplete without the richer study of human ends that they themselves cannot perform.

FORESTER’S ‘TALKING AND LISTENING’

The notion of a societal conversation leads us to the work of John Forester and others (Innes 1995; Healey 1992; Flyvbjerg 1992) who have been attracted to the work of the contemporary German social philosopher and political theorist Jürgen Habermas. Forester has spent a lot of time observing planners in situ, and talking with them about what it is that they are really doing. He concludes that planning is, more than anything, an interactive, communicative activity. As an emerging paradigm (Innes 1995), the idea of planning as communicative action turns its back on the model of technical rationality and systematic analysis in favour of a more qualitative and interpretive mode of inquiry, seeking to understand the
unique and the contextual rather than arriving at general rules for practice. These thinkers about planning are also attracted to the storytelling mode, and to seeking insights from such stories about practice (Peattie 1987, Throgmorton 1991, Mandelbaum 1991). Forester’s Planning in the Face of Power (1989) has become the classic exemplar in this emerging field. Surely influenced by Schön’s lead, Forester defines the planner’s key activities as focusing and shaping attention, talking and listening. Drawing on Habermas’ work, particularly his Theory of Communicative Action (1984) and his concept of communicative rationality, Forester and his colleagues who are shaping this new paradigm are proposing a new method of knowing. One element of it is self-reflection, designed to identify one’s own rationalizations and uncover what is hidden in the self. A second is that emancipatory knowledge comes from discourse and dialectic. A third way of knowing comes through praxis, through action in the world, through experience and practical know-how (Innes 1995: 186). Finally, Forester emphasizes the very political nature of all planning activity, in which relations of power are always involved and systemic inequalities influence outcomes. ‘To be rational, be political’, he advises (Forester 1989: 25). Be aware of systemic inequalities and work to redress them. Pay attention to imbalances of information, to lack of representation. Make sure all the major points of view are heard, and not only those of the most articulate or powerful.

Interestingly, the combined works of Friedmann, Schön, and Forester, which constitute a clear challenge to the hitherto hegemonic Enlightenment epistemology, can also be seen as drawing on a much older tradition, that of Aristotelian thinking about practical wisdom. This link has been made consciously in the recent work of Danish scholar Bent Flyvbjerg (1992), who proposes a synthesis of Aristotle and Foucault which he calls ‘progressive phronesis’ and ‘the science of the concrete’. But perhaps the most fundamental challenge of all to Enlightenment epistemology comes from a group of community-based activist planners whose work will take centre stage in Part 2 of this book. For action-researchers and community activists planners like Heskin (1991), Leavitt and Saegert (1990), Leavitt (1994), and King (1981), and in Friedmann’s most recent work (1992), the purpose of planning is the empowerment of those who have been systematically disempowered by structural inequalities of class, race and gender. In this radical planning paradigm, the role of the planner is seen neither as technical expert nor as mediator/negotiator, but as an enabler of community self-empowerment. This is best expressed in the Chinese folk wisdom, ‘give someone a fish, and they’ll eat for a day, teach them how to fish, and they’ll eat forever’.

CRITIQUES OF ENLIGHTENMENT EPISTEMOLOGY

Since there is now an array of individual challenges from within planning to its foundational epistemology, it may be appropriate to summarize some of the recent
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systematic critiques of that Enlightenment epistemology – feminist, postmodern and postcolonial – before drawing all these arguments together and outlining a possible post-Enlightenment epistemology for planning. But before launching into these recent critiques, it is important to briefly acknowledge their ‘prehistories’ – in the intellectual traditions of the sociology of knowledge, the Frankfurt School’s critical theory, in the history and philosophy of science, and in hermeneutics.

In the aftermath of the First World War three separate but complementary intellectual traditions began to challenge the core of Enlightenment epistemology. In *Ideology and Utopia* (1949) German–Hungarian sociologist Karl Mannheim outlined the need for a sociology of knowledge, which he defined as ‘the study of the varying ways in which objects present themselves to the subject according to the differences in social setting with the result that mental structures are inevitably differently formed in different social and historical settings’ (Mannheim 1949). Mannheim’s critical lens, like Marx’s, tended to notice the class-based origins of knowledge rather than its gender and racial bases, but the new field of study that he created had the potential to move in those directions, and his emphasis on historical context was a direct confrontation with the Enlightenment’s claims to the universality of its scientific methods.

Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse and Jürgen Habermas are the best known of the participants in the development of critical theory, often referred to as the Frankfurt School (Jay 1973). The Frankfurt School was critical of both capitalism and Marxism, although its political sympathies were closer to the latter. By identifying capitalism as the dominant ideology of the era, they created the intriguing possibility of being outside that ideology. They rejected the idea of objective knowledge. But they took the argument further, by challenging the possibility of the neutrality of the state – under any system – thereby raising dilemmas for activists which they themselves were reluctant to address, such as the feasibility of working for change from within the state. Mistrustful of most forms of authority, they were champions of the rights of ‘the people’ against the state, and as such provided inspiration for later critiques of state power and for empowerment models of social change. Adorno and Horkheimer’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (first published in 1944) remains a pathbreaking critique of the consequences of Enlightenment epistemology. ‘The fallen nature of modern man cannot be separated from social progress. On the one hand the growth of economic productivity furnishes the conditions for a world of greater justice; on the other hand it allows the technical apparatus and the social groups which administer it a disproportionate superiority to the rest of the population’ (Adorno and Horkheimer 1982: xiv). Instrumental rationality was one of their targets. ‘What men want to learn from nature is how to use it in order wholly to dominate it and other men’ (ibid.: 4). The science of measurement was another. ‘To the Enlightenment, that which does not reduce to numbers… becomes illusion; modern positivism writes it off as literature’ (ibid.: 7). And socialism, they note regretfully, held on to the legacy of bourgeois philosophy in its ‘degrading of spirit’ (ibid.: 41).
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In 1961 Thomas Kuhn shook the scientific and social scientific worlds to their foundations in his The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, in which his historical analysis of scientific discovery undermined the conventional wisdom of the rationality and objective methodology of science. He demonstrated that the history of science is a parade of passing paradigms and that science as it actually exists is a social institution that frequently operates in non-rational ways. Kuhn has perhaps had the greatest impact of any historian and philosopher of science. Others who have supported and extended his arguments include Paul Feyerabend (1975), Mary Hesse (1980), and Fritjof Capra (1975). Nobel physicist Werner Heisenberg put the matter as succinctly as anyone in his Physics and Philosophy (1959): 'What we observe is not nature itself, but nature exposed to our method of questioning.' More recently, feminists have weighed into arguments in the history and philosophy of science, noting the gender and race biases of scientific thought, practices, and institutions (Keller 1985a, b; Harding and Hintikka 1983; Harding 1986; Wertheim 1995).

Finally, there is a hermeneutic tradition which foreshadows some postmodern thinking. Hermeneutics has a long history as a methodology of biblical exegesis. During the second half of this century it rose from those ancient ashes, through the work of philosophers like Hans-Georg Gadamer, who transformed it into a theory and method of interpreting meaningful human action. Gadamer's starting point was his questioning of the applicability of natural science methods to the social sciences. He argued that to understand social behaviour we need to know the meaning attached to it by the participants themselves, and that the methods of the natural sciences offered us no way of arriving at such knowledge. He was interested in 'experiences of truth' other than those provided by the methods of the natural sciences - the kind of insights that art, for example, yields. And he came to believe that the much-valued objectivity of the natural sciences was no longer an unequivocal and obligatory ideal of knowledge' (Heffernan 1990: 14). Eventually he extended that position to an argument that hermeneutic understanding is fundamental to all understanding, not just to the human sciences, but to scientific understanding itself.\textsuperscript{1}

Each of these earlier traditions remain influential today, and each has helped shape contemporary feminist, postmodern and postcolonial critiques of Enlightenment epistemology, which I now review.

Feminist Critiques

An epistemology is both a theory of knowledge and a justificatory strategy (Harding 1987). It frames questions such as who can be a knower (can women, can non-experts?); what tests beliefs must pass in order to be validated as knowledge (tests from observation, experiment, calculation, only? Or tests based on experience, perception, imagination?); what kinds of things can be known (can subjective truths count as knowledge?); the nature of objectivity (does it require point-of-
viewlessness?); the appropriate relationship between the researcher and her subject's (must, can, the researcher be detached, dispassionate?); and what should be the purpose of the pursuit of knowledge?

From the early 1970s feminists' interest in epistemology was provoked by the apparent exclusion of women from the epistemology that has dominated the social sciences since their emergence in the nineteenth century — that of positivism. Feminists argue that positivist epistemology excludes women as 'knowers' or agents of knowledge and excludes women's life experiences as valid foot of study; that the voice of science is a masculine one; and that history has been written only from the point of view of men of the dominant class and race. Since the late 1970s feminists have been proposing alternative theories of knowledge that legitimate women's claims as knowers. Some of the labels given to these feminist theories have included 'feminist empiricist epistemology' and 'feminist standpoint epistemology' (Cook and Ponow 1986; Harding and Hintikka 1983; Westcott 1979; Jagger and Bordo 1989; Nielsen 1989), or more simply, 'women's ways of knowing' (Belenky et al. 1986). Most of the earlier feminist work began by wanting to make a better science by 'adding women' to traditional analyses and by acknowledging that women had been historically excluded from the institutions where knowledge is produced and validated, particularly with respect to scientific knowledge (Keller 1985; Harding 1986; Wertheim 1995).

Subsequently, feminists began to challenge the privileging of scientific and technical knowledge at the expense of other ways of knowing, such as knowledge based on experience, intuition, and imagination, and to outline a distinctively feminist epistemology, elements of which include the notions of connected knowing (Belenky et al. 1986), passionate knowledge, maternal thinking (Ruddick 1989), the importance of dialogue and the validity of emotions in the pursuit of knowledge and understanding (Collins 1990). Sandra Harding has argued that the masculine mode of knowing, which emphasizes rationality, abstraction and generalization, involves distortion, whereas the feminist conception of epistemology involves a hermeneutic mode that does not (Harding 1987).

Although the idea of a connected knowing (the head and the heart, reason and emotion) suggests an attempt to transcend the dualism at the heart of positivist epistemology, the very idea of a feminist epistemology reinforces all those Enlightenment dualisms, from male/female to rational/irrational, mind/body, culture/nature. This is a particular problem in the ecofeminist literature, which first accepts these dualisms, and then tries to reverse the value placed on them. In other words, ecofeminists agree with Enlightenment arguments that identify women with (mother) nature, suggesting that women's superiority lies in their innate peace-loving and nurturing qualities (compared with man the aggressor and destroyer). This essentialist position concerning women's nature has come under much scrutiny (Spelman 1988). Indeed, the danger in discussing 'the feminist epistemological project', and the problem inherent in much of the feminist literature of the mid-1970s to mid-1980s, was precisely the tendency to imply that
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there is a feminist social science, a feminist epistemology, a feminist research method. Disagreement is now widespread on these questions. Challenges to the very notion of a feminist epistemology have come from three directions: from women of colour; from non-Western feminists; and from postmodern feminist philosophy. These will be further discussed in the next sections on postcolonial and postmodern critiques. Before we move on to these critiques, however, it is important to summarize broad areas of feminists’ agreement with respect to theories of knowledge.

Feminists insist on the importance of discussing the politics of theory and method and the origins and implications of our theoretical hierarchies. We insist on paying attention to the political content of knowledge creation, to the ways in which knowledges are institutionalized, and to who benefits from the production of which knowledges. We argue that knowledge is not, has never been, gender-neutral and that knowledge in planning, for example, is loaded with assumptions about the appropriate relations (of subordination and domination) between the sexes, as well as with assumptions about who is a legitimate knower. We argue that knowledge is above all, a social construction and as such will always be an unfinished business. Still, differences between modernist feminists and postmodern feminism with regard to theories of knowledge remain significant.

POSTMODERN CRITIQUES

The most familiar names in the postmodern pantheon, Lyotard, Derrida and Foucault, have each mounted formidable attacks on Enlightenment epistemology, which have in turn come under scrutiny from feminists and people of colour writing from what has come to be called a postcolonial perspective. Postmodern critiques begin with an attack on the very idea of a possible theory of knowledge (or justice or beauty), arguing that the pursuit of such theories rests upon the modernist conception of a transcendent reason, a reason able to separate itself not only from historical time and place but also from the body. ‘There is no reason; only reasons’ (Lyotard 1988, in Yeatman, 1994). The critique of the Enlightenment concept of rationality and its unitary definition of truth forms the basis of postmodern thought. The postmoderns claim that the Enlightenment privileged rational discourse by identifying it as the sole avenue to truth, and by defining that discourse in terms of its abstraction from social context. Postmodernism rejects this privileging of rational discourse, arguing that there cannot be one such privileged discourse.

Postmodern thinkers also reject the Enlightenment position that unless knowledge has an absolute ground, an unshakeable foundation (Reason, Nature, God) it cannot qualify as truth. In opposition to this tradition, they advocate what Richard Rorty has called ‘a continuing conversation rather than discovering truth’ (Rorty 1979: 373). For Lyotard, Derrida and Foucault, grand narratives of legitimation (metanarratives) are no longer credible for they are all based on unitary definitions of truth. Whether the metanarrative be that of the Enlightenment’s story of the progress of reason, in the lam shuffle of the hidden in the hidden son love – For the proletarian it makes us cr ever behi modern the modern the modern re po degree and the power takes the cap suite agents of the social work of the inter nalizatio

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progress and triumph of reason, or the marxian drama of class conflict culminating in proletarian revolution; the liberal/capitalist story of material progress through the hidden hand of the market, or the freudian plots of father-son rivalry, mother-son love — all commit the epistemological sin of assuming one overarching truth. for the postmoderns, these metanarratives are imprisoning, totalizing discourses, and they are intimately linked to structures of power.

foucault explored the ways in which particular discourses create their own definitions of truth. in drawing attention to the more sinister connections between knowledge and power, foucault exposed a dark side of enlightenment thought which has necessarily transformed our understanding of the role of institutionalized knowledges. in retrospect, foucault's overall project seems to have been to provide a critique of the way modern societies control and discipline their populations by sanctioning the knowledge claims and practices of the human sciences — medicine, psychiatry, psychology, criminology, sociology. his analysis makes us critical of the presumed rationality of our discourses and practices, taking us behind the facade of universality and objectivity to reveal the operation of modern techniques of domination — of which the modern, self-examining, self-policing, self-disciplining, 'normal' individual is a product. he asks us to look carefully at how the familiar objects of our everyday experience, from the self and our bodies to our social institutions and scientific norms, are 'objects produced in historically variable relations of power' — that is, neither 'natural' nor 'scientific'. in foucault's analysis, modern power is, above all, disciplinary. its goal is normalization and the production of docile and useful bodies. the particular form modern power takes is centreless, it is capillary. rather than located in the state, or in capital, power is a moving substratum of force relations, local and unstable. and the agents of this distinctively modern form of normalizing/disciplinary power include social workers, teachers, doctors, social scientists, and ordinary citizens who internalize the categories and values of the power regime.

foucault's analysis of the role of the professions in power regimes should surely be extended to the planning profession.² if the rise of the professions created the possibility for new forms of domination (an insight as old at least as adorno and horkheimer's dialectic of enlightenment), then each new profession carries within it the possibility and techniques for controlling others. i have already noted in chapter 2 how foucault's work provides a new basis for exploration and interpretation of planning's history, an unveiling of its disciplinary and oppressive aspects. but there is also a liberatory side of foucault's thinking which is potentially useful to planners. for if power is anchored in the micropractices of everyday life, then that is also where oppositional politics needs to begin, with a deconstruction of the power relationships built into everyday practices, and a reconstructed, political planning.

the preceding discussion of the postmoderns has deliberately focused on the names most commonly associated with the discourse. but, as noted at the outset, these writers have been challenged both by feminists and by those who do not
accept the privileging of Western thought and thinkers. Feminists have pointed to the gender-blindness of the writers just discussed (significantly, all male), and have extended their analyses to incorporate a gender perspective into the critique of Enlightenment epistemology. From Locke to Rousseau, Hegel to Freud, from Newton to Boyle, the Enlightenment message about the inferiority of women was clear. John Locke asserted 'woman cannot know; therefore she must believe'. Rousseau proclaimed that 'never has a people perished from excess of wine; all perish from the disorder of women'. Freud argued in *Civilisation and its Discontents* (Chapter 4) that women are hostile to and in opposition to civilization. And the German philosopher Hegel wrote that the community 'creates its enemy for itself within its own gates' in 'womankind in general' (Patai 1989: 17).

The fact that women have been identified historically with the irrational and men with the rational is a symptom of the underlying problem that all dualisms of Enlightenment thought (reason/emotion, mind/body, culture/nature, order/disorder ...) are defined by the basic masculine/feminine dualism. More specifically, feminists have pointed out that this dualism is not symmetrical; that woman is always defined as that which is not man, she is a 'minus male', identified by the qualities she lacks (Spender 1980: 23). Language establishes and maintains the basic gender identity that creates female inferiority. The consequences of linguistic domination have been extensively documented in the feminist literature, emphasizing how linguistic practices in the knowledge-creating institutions have been structured along gendered lines since their inception with the Greeks, and how both the real and the rational are defined in exclusively male terms, rendering women's experiences invisible (Helkman 1990: 33).

Feminists remain divided about the appropriate response to this historically based gendering of knowledge. Modernist feminists argue that we should accept the Enlightenment definition of rationality, but open it up to include women, thereby completing the Enlightenment project of liberation through knowledge. Women are every bit as rational as men, so this argument goes. Other feminists, particularly those associated with ecofeminism (Merchant 1980; Shiva 1988) and radical feminists like Mary Daly, are prepared to accept the rational/irrational dichotomy as an accurate reflection of the 'true nature' of men and women, but argue for revalorising the feminine side of the dichotomy, asserting its superiority. Postmodern feminists, on the other hand, attack rationality itself, at least in its Enlightenment form, based on scientific reason and belief in objectivity, and reject the dichotomy rational/irrational of modernist thought. They also reject the universalism and essentialism implicit in the positing of an a-historical feminine nature (Nicholson 1990). In particular, women of colour, lesbians, and non-Western women have disputed the assumption that the category 'women' is or can be a unifying category capable of transcending differences in class, race, ethnicity, and sexual preference. They remind us that feminist theory has for the most part been written by white, Western, middle-class, straight women, unconscious of their own position and special interests as members of a dominant culture (Collins 1990; Anzaldúa has pointed to the privileging of Western thought and thinkers. Feminists have pointed to the gender-blindness of the writers just discussed (significantly, all male), and have extended their analyses to incorporate a gender perspective into the critique of Enlightenment epistemology. From Locke to Rousseau, Hegel to Freud, from Newton to Boyle, the Enlightenment message about the inferiority of women was clear. John Locke asserted 'woman cannot know; therefore she must believe'. Rousseau proclaimed that 'never has a people perished from excess of wine; all perish from the disorder of women'. Freud argued in *Civilisation and its Discontents* (Chapter 4) that women are hostile to and in opposition to civilization. And the German philosopher Hegel wrote that the community 'creates its enemy for itself within its own gates' in 'womankind in general' (Patai 1989: 17).

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Anzaldúa 1990; hooks 1984, 1989; Narayan 1989). Indeed, the issue of difference has preoccupied feminists for the past decade, and is at the heart of postmodern feminist theorizing. The point here is not to deny the epistemological issues that divide feminists, but to clarify them.

Summarizing the epistemological orientation of postmodern feminist thought then, we can list the following characteristics: a deconstructive approach to the modernist theoretical traditions we have inherited; the disruptive assertion of ‘minority’ voices in the face of universalist theorizing; a refusal of the logic of the binary constructions that divide (as in ‘either reason or emotion’) in favour of an inclusive logic (as in ‘both reason and emotion’); a conception of knowledge as historically contingent and possessing an embodied subjectivity (rejecting the mind/body dualism that is inscribed in modern social science); a critique of the gendered production of knowledge; a recognition of the power relations embedded in being a knower/theorist; and an acknowledgement of the determinative influence of language as a ‘material, active, production system’ (Grosz 1988; Pateman 1988; Yeatman 1994).

POSTCOLONIAL CRITIQUES

Postmodernism is a contested zone. Nevertheless, most commentators agree that it represents a crisis of authority for the Western knowing subject, posed by the refusal to stay silenced on the part of those whom this subject had cast as Others: natives, colonials, women, and all who are placed in a client relationship to expert, professional authority (Yeatman 1994: 27). By insisting on their own voice and status as subjects, these former objects of modern Western knowledge have disrupted the dominant relations of knowledge and power which have existed since the Enlightenment’s privileging of scientific and technical knowledge and since the imperialist activities of the Western powers had imposed a relationship of domination/subordination based on the material superiority of Western science and technology. From the standpoint of those who are contesting their status as Other, the project of seeking acceptance and assimilation within hegemonic discourse is no longer acceptable. It has been replaced by a politics of difference, informed by a post-foundationalist epistemology.

The postcolonial critique of Enlightenment epistemology begins with an epistemological politics of representation in which two strategic questions are posed: whose representations of reality prevail? And who has the authority to represent reality? (Or, who must be silenced for these representations to prevail? Whose voice is deprived of authority so that they may prevail?) ‘This is a politics of representation which insists on the material effects of discursive power . . . and which refuses legitimacy to the consensual community of rational scientists which both Karl Popper and Jürgen Habermas invoke in their respective conceptions of science and rational discourse’ (Yeatman 1994: 31).
Postcolonial discourse is clearly attempting to open up contested epistemological spaces, as bell hooks explains in a much-quoted passage, 'Spaces can be real and imagined. Spaces can tell stories and unfold histories... The appropriation and use of space are political acts' (hooks 1990: 152). And Barbara Christian identifies in the Black narrative tradition a unique form of theoretical resistance to power:

our theorizing... is often in narrative forms, in the stories we create, in riddles and proverbs, in play with language... And women, at least the women I grew up around, continuously speculated about the nature of life through pithy language that unmasked the power relations of their world.

(Christian 1988: 68)

Clyde Woods has made a similar argument with respect to the importance of the Blues in African American culture and its history of resistance. He identifies a 'Blues epistemology' – a system of social explanation that has informed daily life, social institutions, and social movements, affirming the value of the culture and its ability to deal with chaos and repression. 'The essential motive behind the best blues songs is the acquisition of insight, wisdom' (Larry Neal, in Woods 1995: 57).

The works of Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Trinh Minh-ha, Chinua Achebe, and Ngugi wa Thiong'o, along with Christian, Woods, Anzaldúa and hooks, are challenging not only Enlightenment epistemology but eurocentrism itself, insofar as Western thought has worked as a colonizer of other cultures and sought to impose its own rationality and language. 'The bullet was the means of physical subjugation. Language was the means of the spiritual subjugation' (Thiong'o 1986). The voices of postcolonial critics offer and defend new/old ways of knowing, including the right to speak one's own language.

If we accept what is common to all of the above critiques – that all knowledge is embodied, historically situated, shaped by language, and embedded in power relations, institutionalized or not – then the very idea of the expert planner able to arrive at an understanding of 'the public interest' through rational deliberation will have to be revised in favour of a notion of planning for multiple publics, based on an epistemology of multiplicity. It is towards that new epistemology for planning that we are moving in the next and final sections of this chapter.

**Epistemological Politics**

In the corridors of epistemological power, mathematics is king.


There's nothing more political than epistemological struggles. From the debates about how best to arrive at truth to all of the critiques of Enlightenment epistemology,
the wars of words and philosophies have enormous practical consequences. They are debates about what counts as knowledge and who counts as a knower. Wittgenstein's observation in *On Certainty* that 'knowledge is in the end based on acknowledgement' (Wittgenstein 1971: 378), captures a central theme of this chapter. All knowledge is a social construction, and as such requires the validation of a community of knoers. But socio-political processes are at work in constituting that community (actually, multiple communities), and personal and political struggles take place around both the process and the price of admission. As feminist philosopher Lorraine Code has argued, the capacity to gain acknowledgement as a knower is gender-related in ways that Wittgenstein never envisaged. Like any other knower, a female knowledge claimant has to claim acknowledgement from other participants in a field, or process, or institution. But before she can begin to seek this acknowledgement, a woman has to free herself from stereotyped conceptions of her 'underclass' epistemic status, her cognitive incapacity, and her ever-threatening irrationality (Code 1991: 215). And she has to achieve this freedom not only in the eyes of other people (the relevant community of knoers), who have historically denied her capacity by refusing to listen to or to value what she had to say, but also in her own eyes, trained as they may be to looking through stereotype-informed spectacles which tell her that neither her experiences nor her deliberative capacities are trustworthy sources of knowledge. For women to be released from these prisons of insecurity and lack of epistemic confidence, spaces have to be created where a woman's knowledge can be judged sufficiently authoritative to deserve acknowledgement, and these spaces need to be responsive to differences between and among women. The creation of such spaces must be a collective effort.

There is no more effective way to create epistemic dependence than systematically to withhold acknowledgement; no more effective way of maintaining structures of epistemic privilege and vulnerability than evoking a persistent distrust in someone's claims to cognitive authority; no surer demonstration of a refusal to know what a person's experiences are than observing her 'objectively' without taking her first person reports seriously.

(Code 1991: 218)

While Code's work is an inquiry into the gender-related dimensions of knowledge construction, (reflected in the title, *What Can She Know?*), her concept of 'underclass epistemic status' is an evocative one, and clearly applicable to other groups of knowledge claimants, as we have seen in the postcolonial critique of Western or Eurocentric thought. What can planners learn from the feminist, postcolonial, and postmodern critiques reported above?

As the previous pages have shown, there are serious problems with the model of knowing that planners have adopted as their reigning epistemology. These problems stem, first, from the limited applicability of (and sometimes totally inapplicable) scientific method to the study of human society in general, and to planning in particular. Problems in planning have been described by Rittel and Webber (1973)
as 'wicked', by Friedmann (1973) as the challenge of mutual learning, and by Schön (1983) as the task of distinguishing between problem setting and problem solving, where technical rationality is appropriate only for the latter. Second, there is the problem of what is excluded in the epistemic privileging of the scientific method at the expense of the many other ways of knowing that might be drawn on in practice (and that will be elaborated below). And third, there are problems with the exclusionary definition of legitimate knowers explicit in this scientific model, which only validates professional experts. From the above array of critiques we can conclude that: all knowledge is embodied; it is historically situated; it is shaped by language; and it is embedded in power relations. Clearly we can no longer hold on to the idea of the expert planner knowing the public interest through rational deliberation. How then might we revise our dominant epistemology of planning to better reflect these new understandings of planning?

TOWARDS AN EPISTEMOLOGY OF MULTIPLICITY FOR PLANNING PRACTICE

The hunger of students for skills, about which Donald Schön has written so well, is reflected in the pride of place given to courses on quantitative methods in most planning programmes (Friedmann 1996). These courses reinforce the centrality of Enlightenment epistemology in planning education at the expense of equally important alternatives – experiential, intuitive, and local knowledges; knowledges based on practices of talking, listening, seeing, contemplating, sharing, and knowledges expressed in visual and other symbolic, ritual, and artistic ways. Without discarding these scientific and technical ways of knowing, we need to acknowledge, as well, the many other ways of knowing that exist; to understand their importance to culturally diverse populations; and to discern which ways of knowing are most useful in what circumstances. Such an epistemology of multiplicity for planning would consist of at least six different ways of knowing, in addition to what is usually taught in planning schools: knowing through dialogue; from experience; through gaining local knowledge of the specific and concrete; through learning to read symbolic, non-verbal evidence; through contemplation; and through action planning.

1. KNOWING THROUGH DIALOGUE

Earlier in this chapter I touched on the emergence of a new paradigm of communicative action, advocated by John Forester, Judith Innes, Larry Susskind and others in the United States, and Patsy Healey in the UK. Best elaborated in Forester’s Planning in the Face of Power (1989), and Healey’s Collaborative Planning (1997), this paradigm defines planners’ key activity as focusing and shaping wonderethoven everyday reason al fear are financial much w: how to c must be requires of listen respond We e what we lis being or fail

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shaping attention, and their most important skills as talking and listening. In a wonderful chapter on 'Listening', which he describes as 'the social policy of everyday life', Forester begins with the acknowledgement that in planning practice, reason and emotion, fact and feeling, are usually tightly entwined, and anger and fear are always close at hand because people have large stakes, emotional and financial, in the built environment. In many situations, planners are dealing as much with people's passions as with their own earnest technical predictions. But how do they deal with passion? 'Planners must not only be able to hear words; they also must be able to listen to others carefully and critically. Such careful listening requires sensitivity, self-possession, and judgment.' Forester talks about the 'work of listening', not only in planning but in everyday life as well, noting that how we respond, or fail to do so, makes up the politics of our everyday lives.

We can hear words, but miss what is meant. We can hear what is intended, but miss what is important. We can hear what is important, but neglect the person speaking. As we listen, though, we can learn and nurture relationships as well. Listening is an act of being attentive, a way of being in a moral world. We can make a difference by listening or failing to do so, and we can be held responsible as a result.

(Forrester 1989: 108)

To listen well also means to be able to ask good questions about deeper interests, about what others care about, hope for, and fear. Listening is a deeply hermeneutic activity. When we listen well, we integrate hermeneutics and critical theory, phenomenology and the critique of ideology, and put them into practice together. Listening necessarily addresses questions of possible actions, of 'what can be done'? If planners do not listen carefully to members of the public, they lose any reputation for responsiveness or fairness. They send signals to the community that what they (the community) have to say is not really important, or valid. 'Listening well, we can act to nurture dialogue and criticism, to make genuine presence possible, to question and explore all that we may yet do and yet become' (Forrester 1989: 118).

In thinking about listening, the question arises, to whom and to what should we listen? The advocates of the communicative action paradigm would answer the first part of the question - to whom should we listen - with: the relevant stakeholders. Identifying the relevant stakeholders is itself a deeply political question, which can only be answered in the particulars of a situation, but clearly implies something like 'all those affected', and not only those affected financially but also those affected emotionally, like about-to-be-displaced tenants. And to what should we listen? Beyond the obvious structured situations of formal dialogue between planners and communities of interest, I suggest that we need to tune in to oral traditions, such as storytelling.

The work of planners in multicultural societies is taking place in situations of increasing cultural diversity in which some groups, historically and/or culturally, have relied exclusively or semi-exclusively on oral traditions. The most important, sometimes the only, way of acquiring knowledge, for some groups is through stories
Towards cosmopolis

and the art of storytelling. African tribes, Australian Aboriginals, Native Americans are obvious examples. As these groups become a more acknowledged part of planning processes and decision making, it would seem that planners must be able to listen to their stories if they really want to understand people's cares, hopes, and fears, and if they want to be able to learn from such peoples - to tap into local knowledges. To return to the story with which I opened this chapter, how can the planners for the community of Broome in the remote north-west of Australia imagine that they are planning for the whole community, 40% of whom are Aboriginal people, unless they listen to and understand the songlines of the local people? African American Zora Neale Hurston collected stories from poor black folks for her novel Their Eyes Were Watching God (1937), a classic tale of empowerment. Might not planners' attention to peoples' stories be equally empowering, in terms of validating their knowledge and moving forward to a situation of mutual learning through respect for that knowledge?

2. Knowing from Experience

Tact knowledge can be defined as that which people know but cannot say. As the philosopher Michael Polanyi (1962) observed, people usually know more than they can say. When that is so in a planning situation, it must be the responsibility of the planner to try to tap into people's tacit knowing. Particularly when they are working with disempowered communities who have always received messages about their ignorance and/or inferiority, planners need to begin the process of communication by helping people to articulate what they already know. This can be as simple as sitting at someone's kitchen table and saying 'Tell me about your street/village/neighbourhood'. A wealth of information and understanding is likely to tumble out, though not in a form that planners are used to digesting. In more structured participatory situations, planners can adopt the same approach. A social planning consultant who has been hired by a local council or planning agency to bring local residents into the discussion about a controversial development proposal might call a public meeting, to which five hundred people show up. How such a meeting is run determines whether it is an empty public relations exercise or a genuine attempt to work with the community to find a solution. If the council or planning agency is genuine in its desire to reach a solution with the community rather than imposing one on them, then the meeting of five hundred people needs to be broken up into small groups for meaningful discussion. The social planner needs to hire a team of facilitators, one for each table of small group discussion, and the first question such a facilitator might pose, to get dialogue going, could be 'Tell me about this community' (see Sarkissian and Perlégut 1995). In this way, the planning process begins to tap into people's tacit knowledge.

Intuitive knowledge is harder to describe. It is a kind of informed guesswork. To intuit that a problem exists usually means that we are using our senses to interpret
EXPLORING PLANNING’S KNOWLEDGES

signs, in the environment, in people’s behaviour, in a situation. The intuition comes not out of the blue, but precisely because we are immersed in something and are paying close attention to detail (like Barbara McClintock ‘listening’ to the ears of corn that were the subject of her research, as described in Keller 1983, or like Aboriginal people knowing where to find water in an apparently desert landscape). Good intuitive skills are also an important part of good interpersonal skills, which are now being recognized as a vital part of a planner’s repertoire.3

Tacit and intuitive knowledge are each part of something larger that we describe as experiential knowing, a knowing that comes from living, from simply being, as well as from doing. Planners who have been around for a while are constantly drawing on their fund of experiential knowledge, often without consciously acknowledging that they are doing so. Besides drawing on their own experiential knowing, planners need to draw more consciously on the experiences of others. How better to learn about the social and urban impacts of, say, immigration policy, than to ask those who are living it, both immigrants and host communities. How better to design a playground than by working with children, a senior citizens’ centre than by working with seniors. And the very idea of an apprenticeship is an acknowledgement of the value – to an aspiring doctor, sculptor, planner, chef – of learning at the side of someone who has more experience. But in urging planners to be more receptive to experiential knowledge, I have in mind something much broader than professional experience. And that is, simply, the collective experiential knowledge of those who dwell in the place in question – whether street, village, city or region, ethnic enclave or red-light district.

3. LEARNING FROM LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

Wisdom, as an African proverb has it, comes out of an ant heap. Practical wisdom, in Aristotelian thought, is concerned with the concrete, with particulars. To know a city is to know its streets, we might say. And who knows those streets better than those who live in them and use them? Who knows the needs of a village better than the villagers? A planner from Washington, DC (or Paris or Geneva) flies into Quito, Ecuador, with a solution to ‘underdevelopment’ in her briefcase, a solution which is in ‘the public interest’ because it was generated by consultation with objective data files and through familiarity with economists’ models of economic growth. Why be surprised if the solution is rejected by either the local politicians or the people of the villages, or both? Should planners be surprised if, despite substantial financial backing, the plan falters in implementation?

If it seems so obvious today that we need to draw on local knowledge in the planning process, whether the locale is south-central Los Angeles or an Andean village, why then is it still the exception rather than the rule, the world over? In part, it is because planners believe that ‘uncertified’ people can’t understand ‘the complexities’ (but see Abera 1998). It is also because of the lingering belief –
the all-too-pervasive influence of Enlightenment epistemology – that local knowledge is ‘tainted’ by self-interest: that is, by the passions, whether greed, love, attachment, anger, faith, power, prestige, beauty. I believe that many planners, because of their positivist training, are afraid of the presence of these emotions in the community, do not know how to deal with their eruption in the midst of what is meant to be rational deliberation, and therefore choose to hide behind the apparent safety and alleged objectivity of data. We are a profession in a state of arrested emotional development.

4. Learning to Read Symbolic and Non-verbal Evidence

There are many forms in which knowledge can be expressed. I have already mentioned stories and storytelling as ways of knowing which might be explored by planners in particular cultural and class settings. We might also pay attention to music, painting, poetry, and theatre. We might think of music as including rap, folk songs, the blues, reggae, and more; of painting as including murals, graffiti, aboriginal bark paintings, chalk drawings on pavements; of theatre as street demonstrations, performance art, rituals of all sorts. Once we pay attention to these symbolic forms of expression, and learn how to ‘read’ them, we can learn from them about what’s on people’s minds, their hopes and anxieties. So, tuning in, getting a better understanding of particular groups (like youth) or marginalized peoples (Aboriginal, Native American) is one reason for paying attention to symbolic forms. Another is that we may be able to use such alternative ways of communicating in the planning process, as part of community consultation, or as a tool of community organizing. Two examples follow.

In the Watts neighbourhood of Los Angeles, African American performance artist James Woods uses chalk drawings on a pavement as part of his community organizing and educating work. He gathers people together, young and old, supplies chalk, occupies public space, and asks people to draw what’s on their mind concerning a particular topic. I know of other social planners and urban designers who use this technique when they’re working with children. Woods’ approach is part of a broader interest in the way in which the arts can be used as part of community organizing and place making.

In the township of Hastings on Westernport Bay, 70 kilometres south-east of Melbourne, Australia, industrial development, recreational boating, tourism and real estate investment were, by the 1980s, beginning to threaten an area of immense ecological value, including a landscape of mudflats, salt marsh, and white mangroves. Dredging, swamp draining, the human waste created by large settlements on the Bay, and the industrial waste from steel mills, gas and oil refineries which were the area’s large employers, were devastating the delicate environment. Residents became concerned, and arguments raged with industry and a pro-development council about the future of the area. A group called the Westernport
and Peninsula Protection Council (WPPC) was formed and decided to raise local awareness by entering a float in the annual Hastings parade. Using his theatre and puppetry skills, one of the local residents, Ian Cumming, constructed an elaborate display – The Seagrass Story – which pointed to the unexplained disappearance from the bay of large tracts of seagrass, the basis of the food chain. The sensational appearance of this float in the parade precipitated a three-year campaign which involved many parts of the community (Winikoff 1995: 69).

This community participated in workshops on biological research, oral history, puppetry, costume-making, acting and music. The result was the Seagrass Project, a three-year environmental theatre project which developed annual dramatizations of the story of the Bay in all its environmental and industrial complexity, and which brought together councillors, artists, scientists, business people, conservationists and residents. The theatre performances, which were held at twilight on a park adjacent to the bay which had formerly been a garbage tip, attracted huge audiences. The Seagrass Project helped people to see the problem from a different perspective, helped them to connect emotionally to a particular environment, and to come together in a non-confrontational way to explore solutions to a complex set of problems.

5. Learning through Contemplative or Appreciative Knowledge

In the Enlightenment tradition, the truth of the world as it emerges from scientific inquiries is validated by becoming the basis for the mastery of the world. Learning the secrets of nature, we learn to fly, to harness the sun’s energy, to transmit signals over vast distances. The social validation of knowledge through mastery of the world puts the emphasis on manipulative knowledge. But knowledge can also serve another purpose: the construction of satisfying and meaningful images of the world. Such knowledge, which we pursue primarily for the world view it opens up, may be called appreciative knowledge. Contemplation, and the creation of symbolic forms expressing that contemplation, continue to be pursued as ways of knowing about the world, but because they are not immediately useful (what is the use value of a painting, or of the story of an Aboriginal songline?), they are not validated or respected socially.

In Native American and other indigenous cultures, knowledge was not acquired through anything remotely resembling the scientific method, or even the question-and-answer mode. Rather, knowing was founded on suggestion, example, divining, drawing out, showing, and storytelling. The ‘product’ of such knowledge is that these cultures have a very different attitude towards nature and their place within it. Native Americans think in terms of the Seventh Generation. Australian Aborignals see themselves as custodians of the land, which they are merely passing through. They do not ‘see’ any qualitative difference, any separation, between nature and themselves. ‘We all make up the Living Country’, says Frans, who has
learned this from the Aboriginal elder, Paddy (Sinatra and Murphy, unpublished). 'See, you are that land, and the land is you.' The celebrated American landscape architect Dan Kiley shares this world view and designs from it. He begins each project, he says, by 'listening' to the site. 'It's not man and nature. It's not even man with nature. Man is nature, just like the trees' (Tomkins 1995: 136).

This kind of appreciative, contemplative knowledge is very much at odds with the instrumental knowledge of the Enlightenment tradition. That instrumental knowledge has contributed to what Max Weber called the 'disenchantment of the world', a feeling of profound alienation. Perhaps, if we are interested in re-enchanting the world, in re-enchanting our life spaces in cities and regions rather than having to escape from them in order to 'experience nature' or spirituality, then the way forward is to re valorize contemplative knowledge and to follow where it takes us.

6. Learning by Doing, or Action Planning

Acting in the world, and continuously and critically reflecting on that action, is the only workable way of knowing according to John Dewey and the philosophy of pragmatism, and a number of other sources that constitute this 'social learning tradition' (Friedmann 1987). From Jane Addams' founding of the activist Settlement House movement to Miles Horton and the Highlander School's approach to popular education, the argument is that our knowledge comes from our practice, and returns to it. The social learning approach has, historically, been strongest, in the world of community organizing, particularly among practitioners whose goal is community empowerment. Those ideas have in turn infiltrated into planning, through concepts of 'action planning' (see Hamdi and Goethert 1997), and through the community-based approaches practised by Leavitt, King, Heskins, Haas and others (see Chapters 4 and 6), in which the planner works with, and from the perspective of, the poor and the disempowered rather than from the perspective of state-directed, or expert-centered planning practices. As opposed to the advocacy model, in which professionals work on behalf of poor communities, in the empowerment model (see Chapter 4) the role of the professional planner is to enable communities to do things for themselves.

In this chapter I have asked what constitutes valid knowledge in planning, and who counts (that is, who is recognized) as a legitimate knower. I have examined mainstream planning's answer to these questions by exploring the Enlightenment epistemology on which planning has been founded. That epistemology has been shown to have serious weaknesses, as reflected in the range of critiques discussed. I have argued that we need to revise our dominant epistemology, to better reflect these new understandings of knowledge. And, finally, I have proposed an epistemology of multiplicity, which recognizes at least six different ways of knowing.
In principle, there should be no hierarchy between the ways of knowing that I have outlined. They are all potentially valuable. A good planner will be sensitive to them all, without a priori privileging any particular one. And part of the skill of the good planner will be her perception of when to use which way, or ways, of knowing, and to see them all as context-dependent. This is the artistry of planning.