Stuck in the process, facilitating nothing? Justice, capabilities, and planning for value led outcomes.

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The role of a planner as collaborative facilitator has come under renewed criticism, from both planning theory and planning practice. This paper explores how placing values of equity and justice at the centre of planning practice offers practitioners a valuable voice in the debate over urban outcomes. It draws on Nussbaum's capabilities approach to provide a situationally flexible, yet universally grounded, version of the planning profession to judging better or worse outcomes. Case study research from an area based regeneration initiative in England is used to illustrate how changing planners' views of their aims, could provide more socially just outcomes.

Keywords: planning profession, values, justice, regeneration

Introduction

Recent trends in planning academia have brought renewed criticism to ideas grouped under the heading of the 'collaborative turn'. Once hailed as the dominant paradigm, the notion that planners should take the role of facilitator, someone who draws together disparate voices to try to achieve 'communicative rationality' has been firmly challenged both on its intellectual basis and its practical implications (Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger, 1998, Huxley & Yiftachel, 2000). Following this demise, the notion of justice is emerging as a key concept in redefining the purpose and value of planning (Campbell 2006, Fainstein 2010, McKay, Murray & Macintyre 2012). Justice as a concept offers planners a normative framework for action which deals with substantive outcomes, rather than process-only goals; a major criticism of the collaborative turn in planning.

This paper first outlines a notion of values, and a framework for making judgements about better or worse outcomes which are neither hopelessly relativist nor culturally imperialist. These illustrate that it is possible to employ notions such as justice and equity in planning practice without having to return to 'blueprint' or determinist ideals; 'the fact that we cannot specify *ex ante* the most progressive policies does not mean that we cannot establish bases of judgement' (Fainstein, 2010, p85). Further, the paper suggests how using these judgements through a reconceptualisation of professionalism in planning offers a way to connect these ideas with the daily judgements and arguments of planning officers. The idea of the profession in planning still remains an area in which there is little research or debate (Campbell and Marshall, 2005, Inch 2009, Upton, 2002 being amongst the notable exceptions), much of which focuses on the notion of professional ethics and the professional institute. This paper's focus is broader: on the meaning of professionalism, professional judgement and professional practice rather than a critique of Utilitarian versus deontological frameworks.

To illustrate the potential of this approach, research from an area based regeneration project in England is examined. This further highlights the problem outlined above. Although planning academia has fundamentally critiqued the collaborative turn, planning practice is yet to find a new paradigm to justify and defend its actions within. Reconceptualising the planning profession as a *just profession* offers the possibility of doing this.

The Value(s) of the profession or the profession of values?

To argue for planning to promote normative substantive values does not necessarily claim that planners have the blueprint for a universally better place. Decisions over better and worse outcomes, and more or less just places, can be situational, without being relativist. It is possible to have a framework of good/bad, better/worse, more/less equitable which can be applied in a given context but does not state a set version of a good place. Nussbaum's (2000) capabilities approach is useful here. She argues that 'in a time of rapid globalisation, where non-moral interests are bringing us all together across national boundaries, we have an especially urgent need to reflect about the moral norms that can also, and more appropriately, unite us' (Nussbaum, 2000; p32). On this basis, she outlines ten central capabilities which are of fundamental importance for human life; therefore action taken in any given situation should promote rather than inhibit these capabilities. These are summarised in figure 1 below.

Figure 1-Central Human Functional Capabilities

Life	To live a life of normal human length which is worth living
Bodily Health	To be healthy: including reproductive health, nourishment and shelter
Bodily Integrity	To have your bodily boundaries respected
Senses, Imagination, and Thought	To be educated to fully use your senses and have freedom of expression
Emotions	To be able to love and give care
Practical Reason	To think and reflect about what is good in life
Affiliation	To live with and respect others, and not to be discriminated against, for example on grounds of sex or religion
Other Species	To live with concern for nature

Play	To enjoy recreation
Control Over One's Environment	To be able to be politically active **and** able to hold property

Adapted from Nussbaum (2000) p78-80

As these all should be judged on an individual basis they avoid some of the problems with Utilitarian-based frameworks of decision making in which minorities can be legitimately adversely affected in the interests of majority interest. It presents a practical approach to judge outcomes and interventions in a range of places and times, and to see if action results in increasing individuals' capabilities or hampering them. It allows judgements to be situated in local contexts, without becoming relativist, and has a universalising foundation without becoming inflexible or imperialist. It 'requires both generality and particularity: both some overarching benchmarks and detailed knowledge of variety of circumstances and cultures in which people are striving to do well' (Nussbaum, 2000; p69). This allows for assessment on a variety of scales and for different actors, and therefore is particularly useful in planning, because planning decisions impact beyond immediate neighbours, and is necessarily context specific.

This approach liberates planners from the supposed neutrality of a mediator, or facilitator role. It does not place the planner into the role of all-powerful expert, able to know what is best for a community without having to ask them. However, it validates planners' ability to make substantive judgements rather than only deliberate between other interests. Nussbaum's approach is targeted to international development, but can be refined and used in other contexts. Olsen and Sayer (2009) draw upon this approach to develop the idea of human flourishing: something that comes out of promotion of individual's capabilities, and something both development practices and geographical commentators should, in their

opinion, be promoting. Directly relevant to planning, Fainstein (2010) also draws upon the capabilities approach in developing the idea of equity and the just city. She uses it to 'seek to identify the kinds of policies available to local decision makers that are likely to increase justice' (p166). As with Martha Nussbaum's capabilities, this approach provides positive values for better and more just outcomes rather than a blue print for a better place. They support affordable housing, small scale economic development, accessible transport and social diversity. Like Nussbaum's capabilities, they are adaptable to different situations.

The capabilities approach and its derivatives allow for situated judgement about better and worse outcomes; rather than grand, universalising claims of the right way to act or live. They may not provide overarching critique of injustice in capitalist economies, nor provide abstracted philosophical moral frameworks, but this increases their *applicability* in the practice, and particularly the profession, of planning. The first step of reconceptualising the profession is to claim that professional judgements should be reasoned value judgements. The second step is to outline the values on which these reasoned judgements are to be made. These two approaches develop situationally flexible better outcomes, but are more limited when it come to arguing for how this should be done. Fainstein (2010) comments 'planners should take an active role in deliberative settings in pressing for egalitarian solutions and blocking ones that disproportionately benefit the already well-off' (p173). It is this idea of values in practice that leads to the need to reconceptualise the planning profession. Professional planning could be reframed as decision making on the basis of whether a decision increases flourishing or equity, with *professional* judgement enabling planners to distinguish between better or worse proposed outcomes. This would allow

planning to challenge to the dominant discourse of competitiveness as the prime goal of cities, and hence the rationale for urban planning decision making. This notion of justice is a situationally based concept, centring on the possibility of each individual person to be able to live their lives to the best of their abilities. It considers impacts of changes and policies on human wellbeing in a disaggregated way, and goes beyond solely economic considerations. Although capabilities approaches have been commandeered by some organisations to produce 'tick-list' approaches to judging outcomes, this is no reason to abandon the concept outright. Moreover, if this frame of reasoning is adopted as means of professional judgement, it should mitigate against its adaptation into tick lists. Professionals should consider each option in any scenario and consider what outcome would enable the most flourishing, or equity and therefore the best outcome. It is now necessary to consider to consider what is meant by a profession in contemporary society, and why this concept provides a possibility to put the ideas of substantive justice into practice; giving practitioners a foundation for rejecting the dominance of the discourse of competitiveness.

Just a profession, or a just profession?

To consider the role of the contemporary planning profession, and its potential to promote substantive values and judge better or worse outcomes, it is necessary to explore a brief history of ideas about professions (see for example Kirkpatrick et al, 2005, Campbell & Marshall, 2005 for more detailed overviews). Most traditional sociological concepts of the professions centre on the idea of educated individuals working altruistically for a greater good (Durkheim, 1957, Parsons, 1954, and Millerson, 1964) - health for doctors, justice for lawyers for example. Professions were regarded as 'the morals of society' (Durkheim,

1957), providing collective values in a modernity which was marked by increasing individualism. Professions, with varying degrees of autonomy (Johnson 1972), were sanctioned by the state, giving them powers of both problem setting and problem solving. They therefore had the power both to define what was wrong and how to treat it (MacDonald 1995). This necessitates judgements of better and worse outcomes, as although professionals should have certain specialist skills and knowledge to draw on to make these decisions, the importance was their application in society. Hence professional practice was about both specialist decision-making (by a qualified individual who took decisions for laypersons) and better outcomes (notions of solutions to achieve better states; better health, a more just society).

However, academic developments in the 1970s challenged the notion of a profession itself. Inspired by neo Marxist and Weberian critiques, authors such as Johnson (1972) and Larson (1977) claimed that a profession was a means of controlling an occupation for the interests of its members. They dismissed claims of altruistic service for the greater good of society, stating that professions were occupations, like any other, which just maintained a firmer control of who could enter them, and how the role they had in society; and hence the power and financial reward of their members. By attacking the *process* of professional work, these critiques obscured the substantive values served by professions.

Debate about the professionalisation of the town planning largely fits this general history. With its establishment as an activity of the state, 'good planning was assumed to be simultaneously in the general interest, and guarded by experts' (Fainstein, 2005; p122). Whether conceptualised as physical design or a rational scientific process, it was assumed that planners could find the correct solutions to society's (urban) problems (Taylor, 1998).

However, when this failed to achieve its desired outcomes, the expert-led process of planning was open to criticisms of self serving control (Jacobs, 1961, Reade, 1997, Evans, 1993). The profession of planning could not be regarded as the technical means of spatially implementing a unified ideal of the public interest. Further, professional action had been seen as attempting to sever rational decisions and value judgements, seeing the former as the remit of the professional planners, the latter of politicians. This lead to the dual assumption that planning decisions could be technical, scientific value-free decisions, and that judgements of better and worse outcomes were therefore beyond the remit of the rational professional. This division is problematic: it is not always universally apparent what is a fact and what is a judgement. For example, describing degraded and damaged environmental conditions is both a description and a judgement. If something seems poor and run down, this necessarily implies that it is not desirable and therefore a better state of affairs is possible. These are the sorts of analyses made by those who work in the built and natural environment, including planners (Olsen and Sayer, 2009).

However, the dominant critique assumed that planning, by assuming professional status, not only ignored differences in the public (Sandercock, 1998, 2003), but the values it was now (indirectly) promoting were those of the state, and therefore capitalism (Ambrose, 1986, Fogelsong, 1986) as it needed to satisfy their interests to retain its sanction to operate. This saw the planning profession only in terms of process: as a means of occupational control, eclipsing values and hence its potential to promote better substantive spatial outcomes.

The late 1990s and 2000s have seen a renewed interest in profession, in planning and beyond. Professionals' work changed vastly in recent decades, with erosions of trust and

loss of guaranteed legitimacy to practice (Dent and Whitehead, 2003). Specifically in the public sector, assumptions of paternalistic profession practice for an assumed greater good or public interest has been undermined by what is broadly referred to as managerialism, or the New Public Management [NPM] (Kirkpatrick et al, 2005, Clarke & Newman, 1997 Newman, 2001) Kirkpatrick et al (2005), sum up the impacts on public sector professions as a: 'move from administered services in which the professionals are basically in control (and decide on what to do for patients and clients on the basis of their professional judgement), to managed ones (in which professional priorities may be overridden on grounds of inefficiency and/or cost)' (p6). This further challenge to professionalism once again focuses on procedural not substantive issues, and has important implications in the relationship between the two.

In response to this context, there has been a resurgence of interest in reconceptualising professions, particularly within the public sector (for example, Furbey et al, 2001, Casey & Allen, 2004, Causer & Exworthy, 1999, Halford & Exworthy, 1999, Dent and Whitehead, 2003). This work largely focuses the role of the professional can now play in a context of decreasing trust and increasing managerialism and argues that a new form of professional is seen as emerging from this context. In this conception, the role of a public sector professional is no longer to make (technical) decisions on behalf of the public in any given area (for example, planning, housing), but to facilitate discussion amongst interested parties: other public sector officers, private and voluntary sector 'partners', and members of the public. The specific form of facilitation varies between professions, professionals and context, but this form of 'new' professional (Dent & Whitehead, 2003) as facilitator is

argued to be the most suitable response to the context of NPM, and accusations of occupational control.

This complements the 'collaborative turn' (Healey, 1997) in planning academia, which sees the planner as bringing together different voices in planning debate, but does not offer the voice for a profession's substantive aims or values. Facilitation, or collaboration, is an end itself rather than being a means to a particular substantive aim. Although certain substantive values may be implicit in collaborative approaches, unless they are made *explicit* they can be subsumed by dominant, less progressive, ones (Fainstein, 2005, Sager, 2009, Purcell, 2009). As already mentioned, this theoretical perspective has come under renewed criticism in planning academia but has not been adequately replaced in a way which offers practitioners a theoretical underpinning for their role.

Facilitation, as a re-theorisation of professional practice, does not circumvent decision making, nor can it operate beyond the realm of substantive values. Instead, it allows for other goals, such as bureaucratic efficiency or economic competitiveness to displace values of achieving better, or more just, places. As Olsen and Sayer (2009) argue 'when we have ceased to make explicit the normative aims of development, goals such as economic growth have taken priority over human well being' (p190). This is the same problem that critics have levied against communicative planning. Communicative planning is not explicit about the normative *outcomes* which it seeks- it is a process-focused perspective which promotes facilitative planning, and therefore can be used to legitimise serving dominant interests as they can shape the agenda for discussion (Purcell, 2009). For planners be able to actively challenge the implicit values of NPM or competitiveness, they need to be able to articulate an alternative set of values: normative reasoning about what better and worse spatial

outcomes would look like rather than striving solely for the inclusion of divergent voices, and objectivity in decision making.

As already stated, the critique of the collaborative turn has become well established in planning academic, but within practice, a new concept has not yet been established. The notion of a collaborative planner is so well established that this was even the term used by the UK Conservative party in their policy paper for changes to the planning system (Conservatives, 2010). It is therefore necessary to look at practice to see whether the concept of practice as facilitation is problematic and whether the capabilities approach to professional practice could help address this. To do so, the process and substance of practice need to be examined. Planning practice is, in the most general terms, about managing change- the relationship between the natural or established environment, and development. It is done in a relationship between the planner and various other actors, situated within variables of context; laws, polices, economy, culture, personalities for example. However, the way practice, or the professional's role, is conceived is what needs to be examined further here. This is illustrated in figure 2

Figure 2 Two conceptions of professional planners

	Planner as facilitator	*Planner as just professional*
Understanding of Self	A neutral actor aiming to enable others to have their voice heard in debate (potentially focusing on the	A skilled reasoned, making judgements about the world, about better and worse places/situations with the

	marginalised).	desired aim to achieve better outcomes.
Understanding of Others	Needing to be listened to, and disparate voices brought together; but opinions not necessarily having a direct link to outcomes.	Needing to be engaged with in substantive debate about better or worse outcomes. Seeing many publics with differing access to power and resources.
Understanding of Development	Offering solutions which may need ameliorating through facilitated discussion. Development and financial considerations can be allowed to shape all debate as the planner does not have a role in the substance of development.	To be judged on a wider basis (flourishing/equity) that own terms (i.e. economic competitiveness). This allows for consideration of aspects of places which do not have financial value (e.g. green space).

So, whether practitioners work as facilitators, or just professionals impacts on how they view themselves, and others; and what grounds they feel they have for judging the impact of development. These ideas are explored further in the following section.

Professional work- facilitating nothing?

To explore the implications of these ideas, this paper now draws on a case study of the Somersmeade Partnership[1], a publically funded regeneration partnership based in a deprived part of Greater Manchester in northern England. The research involved observations of both the daily work of the office, meetings and events, and qualitative interviews with a range of stakeholder in the regeneration project, including public, private and voluntary sector officers, both planners and others. As Flyvbjerg (2001, 2006) eloquently argues, case studies are valuable tools of social science research, not because they prove 'facts' about a place or case, but because they offer a different sort of interpretation: described as 'phronesis'. The case study offers an in-depth example to challenge accepted values and practice. In this paper, the case study presents the work and associated judgements of planners to argue that more explicit reference to a framework of values would allow them voice in debates over substantive outcomes, beginning to re-establish a purpose for the planning *profession*.

 The geographic area it covered was one of extreme deprivation lying on the edge of the city. Although part of Manchester City Council's jurisdiction, it claimed the identity of a separate small town. It comprised almost entirely of 1930s low-rise social housing and had a small town centre offering a limited range of shops and other services. The Partnership were working on their Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) a document aimed to steer to direction of development in the area for the next twenty years, and was to become part of the City Council's Local Development Framework; the statutory development plan for the

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[1] All the names in the case study have been changed to protect the anonymity of participants

area. This involved a range of consultation events, both with the public, local businesses, large scale employers, health services, education services and established voluntary groups.

The paper next outlines how the idea of facilitation has become embedded in professional practice and illustrates how this is problematic in terms of decision making. It posits alternate versions of the scenarios of the case study, in which planners act on the basis of professional judgement framed within a notion of just outcomes. Their role in urban decision making is crucial, and by taking a framework of just outcomes as a guide to action, planners are offered scope to both listen to divergent and often marginalised voices, and to argue for better places on the basis of these views, without losing sight of the broader implications of local actions.

It draws on the categories outline in figure 2 to present this.

Understanding of Self

This section considers the role played by professionals in this case; both how they saw themselves, and how they were seen by the public. The Somersmeade Partnership described itself bringing together those who lived and worked in the area. In presenting the SRF to the public an officer commented that 'agencies are on board to work with local residents'. Moreover, the partnership co-ordinator described the SP as 'a dedicated team with expertise and experience, … because we do not have any particular axe to grind, we can often play an honest broker in terms of pulling together organisations to deliver particular themes or initiates on the ground for regenerating Somersmeade'. This approach and attitude was shared by all SP officers, at least publically. The work of the SP was

presented as legitimate because it aimed to bring all voices together, and facilitate discussion about the future of the area, rather than have substantive ideas about what should happen in the area. Despite the fact that Somersmeade contained areas classified in the top 1% of deprivation in all of the UK, and that it was because of this that public money was being used to fund the SP, staff did not describe their role in social justice terms. The work of the SP was not articulated in term of countering deprivation, enabling marginalised people to have better lives, or even enabling marginalised voiced to be brought into the debate. Their focus was purely on being neutral facilitators, and of bringing parties together to achieve for the area. The problems with this approach are illustrated by the following examples.

 Two examples from the SRF open day, illustrate this especially well. The open day was a large scale event in the programme of SRF consultation in which the SP had hired a hall in the leisure centre and all partners including the local NHS, adult education colleges, schools, local charities and voluntary organisations ran stalls with the aim of speaking directly to members of the public. The SP officers were largely engaged in two activities. Firstly, they were giving out 'bank of Somersmeade' £20 notes and asking members of the public where they would spend the money in the local area- offering baskets with topics such as 'arts', 'sport' and 'education' on them. Secondly, an officer was displaying an electronic map of the area and attempting to ask people what the area meant to them and how they identified with the neighbourhood. It was here that the issues with the officers' identity as facilitators arose. A member of the public came up to a SP officer to ask him if houses were going to be built on the park, this was a rumour that was going around her estate and she had been sent to find out if this is the case. The officer replied that there are no plans to do

so. Secondly, when asked 'are you planning a cinema or a hotel?' by a member of the public, the officer replied that they were not planning anything. In both these instances, the public expect the professionals to be taking decisions which protect or promote their interests and quality of life, they do not want to be doing it all themselves.

Instead of illustrating how decision making could be different if a capabilities approach was used as grounds for decision making, these incidents tentatively illustrate public support for professional decision making, rather than complete devolution of power to the community. In many of the SRF events, members of the public looked to officers for both reassurance and ideas, rather than themselves wanting to come up with the solutions for their neighbourhood.

Understanding of Others

The role of a facilitator has been shown to be problematic with regards to professionals views of themselves. The case study illustrates how this alone is also the case in their relationship with others. This is on two levels; their relationship with other officers and their relationship with the public. In terms of the public, the SP officers saw listening to their views and facilitating debate as central to their job. After a meeting at a family centre, the officer who had lead the discussion said that there were local activists and community representatives present, but also eight local parents, which was really good as they were not easy to get to. She also said it was excellent to hear people really engaging with some of the issues as this was very rare. She did not comment on the content of this engagement, which had been highly critical of much of the SRF, it was the engagement itself that was

important. On the one hand it is important that the voices of local (many single) parents are heard in the debate of regenerating the area in which they live, and taking the debate to the family centre where people had gone for a toddlers' group was an innovative and inclusive way to get their views. However, there was no indication that anything that people raised was going to be listened to, or incorporated in the SRF, such as the need for more socially rented family housing, and sustained funding, rather than short term grants, of clubs and activities that people relied upon for their children. The debate about housing need is taken further in the next section. Although the officers noted that people had different access to the debate- hence being pleased about talking to *real* parents rather than just community activists- this did not follow through to a consideration of power differentials in society, and their role in challenging existing inequalities.

In considering their work with others, the SP's view of themselves as 'honest brokers' was further problematised and challenged. In a meeting for all the official partners of the SP, a disagreement emerged between the SP and the city council's planning officer about the use of GIS. The SP officer was explaining how useful it was in mapping many things in Somersmeade, and how it could positively relate to their service delivery. In turn, the city council officer expressed fears of bits getting done here and there over the city, and the overall picture being fragmented. He replied 'I'm sure most people involved in this sort of work, spatial planning work' will have GIS and therefore be able to link up. The chair was not convinced, saying "forward planning, which is not a million miles away from what you're doing there" does not have this sort of technology, and again emphasised fear of fragmentation. The officer replied that he is still convinced of its usefulness for their work

as 'we can concentrate on Somersmeade, what's relevant to Somersmeade', but admitted it was 'a complex…bureaucratic challenge'.

Although relatively minor in terms of substantive issues, the exchange highlights some interesting and relevant points. The focus of the discussion is about the technological incompatibility of the SP and the city council, rather than what benefit or disbenefit, in substantive terms, can be achieved by the use of GIS. Instead, the officers focus on the procedural problems cause by varying budgets and priorities. It challenges the notion that facilitation can bring together different interests. It also raised the questions of the different scales which planning practices have impacts upon. If the focus of the discussion had been the impact of GIS in enabling or harming flourishing, both in Somersmeade and in the city as a whole it could have been seen as something more than 'a complex bureaucratic challenge'

Further, the council's planning officer did not see the SP as neutral facilitators. Whilst waiting for the taxi back to the City council offices, the chair talked about 'bringing in the centre' to the Somersmeade partnership, saying that it was a problem with area based teams, that they get too much of their own culture and needed to be realigned to corporate issues. This illustrates the impossibility of neutral facilitation in practices such as planning and regeneration: although SP officers can solicit the views of various parts of the public in Somersmeade, by working on an area basis some voices are heard, and some are not. This difference of perspectives highlights the importance of considering issues beyond just their immediate neighbourhoods. Questions of the relative impacts of local initiatives on areas of acute deprivation and on their wider surrounding need to be thought through more fully.

Using a capabilities approach would allow for this to be developed more deeply, and for city council (if not national government) to be making judgement on the same basis.

The approach to the public illustrate that although facilitating the most powerless to have a voice is a valuable activity; this is only the case if something is done with this voice that may address that powerlessness. The approach to other officers illustrates that facilitation cannot always overcome institutional barriers, and that shared explicit goals may be more useful in this matter. Together, they illustrate further problems with a planning practice based on facilitation; the latter illustrates practical problems, the former more fundamental, value centred ones.

Understanding of Development

The previous two sections about the case study have illustrated problems with the role of facilitator. This section goes further, to indicate how this role leaves planners voiceless when it comes to substantive issues of development. It then suggests how a reengagement with professional values could deal with this differently.

Working with the community brought up several conflicts over whether decisions which had been taken, or were proposed, were beneficial to the community of Somersmeade. Three specific issues are outlined below; namely shopping and service provision, housing development and tenure, and airport expansion and the national environment.

The first concern was raised in a meeting with a church based group. The officer presenting the framework talked about a certain shopping parade and how it had changed over the years, to clarify an idea within the framework; that of a service cluster. He described this as

a node within a neighbourhood where all services can be found; shops, doctors, access to public transport for example. Underlying this was an assumption that in economically poor areas such as Somersmeade, services should be grouped; meaning that some would be shut down and relocated. A member of the group asked 'if you're going to take away other ones…where are the people that live there, especially the elderly, going to shop?' The officer explained that the aim was to have one service cluster in walking distance of all households, but acknowledged that there are different levels of walking distance. He said that this would come out in a detailed plan, and this was not what the framework was there to provide, again assuming a role of facilitation, rather than decision making. This is relevant to the discussion in two different ways. First, the idea of a service clusters emerges from interpretations of economic ideas of the footfall needed to keep shops and services open. This judgement does not consider the human effect of closing down facilities in terms of the impact this has on an already disadvantage minority: those too elderly or disabled to be able to physically meet the standard definition of walking distance, and without other support mechanisms such as friend or relatives who can either get them to more distant services or bring back necessary food or medication for example. Although because of limited financial resources, the decision may not necessarily have been altered by adopting this approach, taking this as a starting point would shift the focus from economic efficiency to human flourishing. It may add support to putting public services in locations nearest the most vulnerable rather than making these decision on cost based terms, blind to different sorts of disadvantage.

Secondly, the officer's response that the SRF was not about making decisions on where services were to be located, is problematic. If concerns about the inequitable outcomes of

proposed policies were not deemed relevant to this level of discussion, this assumes that questions about impact, and the potential for regeneration plans to promote equity would not be dealt with explicitly. This is underpinned by the idea that as neutral facilitators, the SP were working in the interests of all of Somersmeade. As already discussed, assuming neutrality can simply allow for decisions to be dominated by the values of the market, and managerialist efficiency. Taking a just professional approach even at this strategic level would give the professionals the basis to make judgements about the (in)equitable impacts of any proposals, however strategic they may be.

The issue of housing arose at both the family centre meeting and an elderly women's social group. A member of the public at the family centre asked why all the houses that were being built were for sale saying 'the reason we're in Somersmeade is that we can't buy houses'. There was general nodding of agreement to this point. Another person added that they are all in low paid jobs, and the benefits system does not help asking 'who said build for sale; I've not heard local people say this?' The officer replied by stressing the diversity of the housing being built calling it 'mixed housing development' and saying it was necessary because of changing sizes of families. There followed a general discussion about how market based solutions were inappropriate to their needs from housing to health. Similar questions about the need for market housing were raised by many elderly women at the second mentioned meeting. One asked directly why so many new private houses were being built in Somersmeade. It was supported by a comment from another audience member saying that there were not enough houses to rent in the area. To respond to this whilst trying not to say the audience member is wrong, the officer stated that the average

ratio of bought to rented houses in the North West region in 60:40, whereas in Somersmeade it is 40:60, so it needed to be at least levelled.

Again, this professional planning judgement is based on an assumption that mixed tenures, especially housing for private sale, is necessarily good because it allow 'the market' into an area where it has not previously been. This judgement does not begin to unpack the social and equity implications of this proposed policy; it does not adequately argue that more market housing will improve the well being for residents of Somersmeade. It may or it may not, but the important point here is to change the terms of debate to see whether there is relationship between increased market housing and equity. Nussbaum (2001) argues, '(e)conomic growth…does not by itself improve the situation…(o)n the other hand, we should not demonise the pursuit of economic growth which does play a role in well being of the citizen'(p32-33). Changing the mix of housing in Somersmeade may have positive impacts on the well being of residents. It may offer those wishing to buy this possibility in the area, hence retaining locally based friendships, it may bring more money into the area hence improving the retail and leisure offer, it may increase aspiration and subsequently increase schools' educational performance. It is also possible that it could further marginalise those already in poverty and with very little opportunity, by creating a divided area, or reduce government funding for the area by pushing deprivation statistics down without changing the lives of those who are most deprived. Further, it may have no impact whatsoever on the wellbeing of current Somersmeade residents, which in itself, is problematic as the purpose of the SP, and area-based regeneration more widely, is to enhance the lives of people in deprived neighbourhoods. If the introduction of market

housing into an area of large scale social housing was thought through in terms of equity or flourishing, these are the sorts of questions with which the professional should wrestle.

The final issue to consider here is that of the airport and loss of green space. Amongst most of the public there was a feeling of anger at the airport taking advantage of the local environment, one person stated 'as a child this was my greenbelt'. It was seen as bringing economic benefit to the wider area, but having little positive impact on Somersmeade. By taking a just professional approach to issues of airport expansion, considerations can be on a global scale, as the impacts of air travel go beyond any neighbourhood or region. Debates about whether increasing air travel increases the capacity for human flourishing, across a range of spatial scales, potentially considerably reframe the debate. Aviation is argued to provide vital economic growth in the dominant discourse, but whether this growth equitably impacts on human wellbeing is rarely, if ever, mentioned.

Although less easily framed in terms of equity, further negative feelings continued to be expressed throughout the public consultation of the SRF, bringing in disgruntlement about the loss of green space, especially school playing fields, to housing development. Again, the dominant discourse of economic growth assumes that development brings benefits, beyond any harm it causes. By judging better and worse outcomes in terms of flourishing, issues such as attachment to place, non-financial values and people's relationship with nature as part of their full human development could be explicitly considered. At the same time as this, the issue of need for housing must be assessed, as access to decent housing is fundamental to moves towards equity for wider population than just one already located within an area. The approach advocated in this paper rejects trading off one group's (or individual's) wellbeing for the wellbeing of another group (or individual). Instead, the

judgement of the 'just' professional planner should be one which works towards enhancing the flourishing of all. This does not produce easy solutions, but should alter the conceptual framing of a problem and subsequent basis for decision-making and show local residents that their concerns mattered and were part of the planning process.

Conclusion

The idea of professional planning as normative reasoning about places which encourage flourishing, as just professionals, aims to offer a framework for debate about the values planning should be promoting. This paper has illustrated the potential for the *profession* of planning to do this as it enables a link between the academic concept of justice and on the ground decision making.

The activity of town planning has the potential to have a powerful impact of the daily life of many people; this impact could improve or degrade quality of life and the natural environment. By reconceptualising the activity as debate about the quality of built environment outcomes, this impact is brought into focus as the crux of decision making. This is not to dismiss the importance of processes which consider how to operate with other stakeholders, experts and politicians, or that engage the public, nor does it conflict with the need for planners to be aware of the wishes of the local community. However, simply by giving the community voice does not get over issues of disagreement between different members of the community, or the impact of decision on different scales of the public. Further, adopting a capabilities based approach to professional judgement does not

necessitate a return to top-down decision-making, with a professional knowing what is the in the best interests of a community or an individual without having to ask them. It alters the framing of planning decision-making from those based on managerial efficiency or neo-liberal ideas of economic growth to one with a substantive value-driven concern.

Empowering the underrepresented does not conflict with substantive notions of equity of outcome: they are clearly complementary. Promoting planners as just professionals does not argue that the public should not have a say in the process, but that there is also a substantive role for professional planners; beyond just democratic facilitation. Further, professional judgement based on a capabilities based approach should shift debate to consider the distributive effects of planning decisions, therefore aiming at equitably redistributing power and advantage. Having a planning profession with this as its substantive aim gives it more value, voice and validity that mere process management; facilitating nothing.

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