

Articulating virtue: planning ethics within and beyond post politics

Dr Katie McClymont,
University of the West of England, Bristol

Post foundationalist political theories have provided some of the most radical tools of critique in recent years. As well as challenging the dominant orthodoxy of achieving consensus in decision-making, they give voice to claims that the world can be conceived differently than how it is expressed in contemporary neoliberal hegemony. However, conflict itself is a means not an ends: it provides the intellectual tools to dissemble the dominant *qua* hegemonic version of contemporary society and its concomitant framing of values, but it does not provide an ethical framework in which to assess the validity of any counterclaims to the contemporary hegemony. Post-foundationalist approach can critique the status quo for its practice and epistemology, but not offer substantive conceptual grounds for an alternative. This is of particular importance if planning is to be conceived as 'the art of situated ethical judgement' (Campbell, 2006); a stance which opens up planning decisions as spaces for value based articulations, potentially against the grain of contemporary market-led hegemonies.

Specifically, this paper explores the interstitial spaces of these value judgements by considering the contribution that virtue ethics, as articulated by MacIntyre (1981), could make to this debate. Positioned conceptually between conflict- for its own sake- and consensus- as a necessarily universal state, the paper uses the idea of virtues to explore the possibility of situated shared grounds for substantive notions of good and bad. By engaging with this concept of teleological values, the paper aims to overcome the moral void of some post foundationalist thought whilst equally demonstrating that conflict and agonism are necessary for any articulation of virtue to be voiced in contemporary planning debates. Moreover, it is through dissensus that dominant rationalities can be splintered, opening the possibility for spaces- intellectual as well as physical- of substantive ethical action.

Campbell, H. (2006) Just planning: the art of situated ethical judgement, *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 26(1), pp 92-106.

MacIntyre, A. [2001(1981)], *After Virtue*, London, Bloomsbury