

Values, Images, Identities: Cultural Influences in Public Participation

Jean Hillier
Curtin University *

In this paper I offer reflective consideration on the role of cultural perceptions and images of place, peoples and their values and how such perceptions are translated into town planning policy-making processes, by whom, and how they affect planning outcomes. I discuss the ways in which the various participants in policy-making processes (planners, members of different residents' community groups, members of other stakeholder organizations) perceive themselves, their values, their geographical places or areas and the other participants and their values respectively, revealing cultural differences of self- and place-identity, of discourse and of values. I attempt to explore how such differences and mindsets may affect planning processes, leading perhaps to participants talking past each other and to confrontation rather than to fully understanding each other and to processes of negotiation. The paper refers to current empirical research in the Perth metropolitan area of Western Australia.

Keywords: Culture, values, images, representation, planning, Western Australia.

Empirical patterns of urban land use in the 1990s are often the results of a complex interplay of actors' diverse cultural perceptions, images, values and mind-sets underlying the activity of local town planning policy-making. To divorce analysis of the output from the process amounts to divorcing analysis of action from discourse. Such a divorce misconstrues the nature of planning decision-making. As a result, we fail to understand the choices through which people become participants in processes and contribute to decisions.

In this paper, I discuss ways in which different planners and community groups perceive themselves, their, or others' geographical places and other groups respectively, revealing cultural differences of self- and place-identity, of discourses and values; in other words, situated knowledge. I disassemble conceptions of place to understand the incorporation of identity. I explore, with relation to actor-networks, ways in which different values and mind-sets may affect planning outcomes and relate to systemic power structures.

* Department of Urban and Regional Planning, Curtin University, Perth, Western Australia.

I tell stories from the Swan Valley in Perth, Western Australia; stories from various groups of people involved in the planning decision to urbanize a semi-rural area on the metropolitan fringe. I demonstrate how individuals and groups can reinterpret place, symbols and practices; how they can mobilize different logics to serve their purposes. As individuals, groups and organizations struggle to transform the social relations between them they produce new 'truths' by which to explain and understand themselves, their practices and their societies.

VALUES, IMAGES, IDENTITIES

As Massey (1991:278) writes, "There are indeed multiple meanings of places, held by different social groups, (and) the question of which identity is dominant will be the result of social negotiation and conflict." There can be no one reading of place. Planners have traditionally sought to 'balance' readings, but have often brought to the very act of 'balancing', particular mind-sets which have, perhaps unconsciously, biased the scales.

Planners may also underestimate the importance of residents' attachment to their local areas and how it comprises a vital component of their social identity. A threat to their physical environment thus becomes a threat to the self. Traditional forms of planning decision-making have tended to convey a message of place as identified and controlled by outsiders (the planners). Plans and policies are loaded with material, ideological and political content which may perpetuate injustices and do violence to those values, images and identities which have not been traditionally recognized. "Instead then of thinking of places as areas with particular boundaries around, they should be imagined as articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings" (Massey, 1991:28).

The social practices of discourse and communication are vital components of planning decision making. It is therefore important to consider how the discourse of planning functions ideologically to shape attention and rationalize policy decisions.

In addition to the discourse of planners we need to pay attention to the ways in which other people verbalize their places in the world, their values and identities. Meanings may become more important than facts in policy deliberation. The resulting plan is "a reworking of everyday narratives to find a potentially truer, more comprehensive one.... Planning commands time by taking the narratives we have in mind and refashioning them" (Krieger, 1981:141). It is this process of refashioning with which I am concerned, how "identifications emerge from the social relations we participate in and the discourses...that give them meaning" (Gibson-Graham, 1995:276). These social relations and discourses may serve as barriers or offer opportunities for identity building. The process of the planned transformation of place is thus both formative and disruptive of identity (see Crow, 1994).

CRITICAL THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF IDENTITY AND IMAGE

Critical theoretical approaches recognize the contingency of knowledge and understandings of self- and place-identity. Through recognition that "norms, beliefs, identity and practices are intersubjectively constituted and historically and contextually contingent" (Leonard, 1990:261), a critical theoretical approach enables exploration of different values, images and identities and how they relate in the planning process. It offers the opportunity to examine the "knowing from within" (Shotter, 1993) of various participants and how such knowing is placed within social, moral and political systems. We may then push forward to question those systems and to seek out other, more just, ways of working (Hillier, 1996). I offer below a brief understanding of Jurgen Habermas' concept of the lifeworld, Chantal Mouffe's ideas on identity and Michel Callon's and Bruno Latour's concept of an actor-network as theoretical contexts to the discussion.

In addressing influences on the formation and expression of participants' values, images and identities, Habermas' concept of the lifeworld provides us with a helpful starting point. In brief, participants' lifeworlds comprise their perspectives of the acting subject. The lifeworld is a product of both historical traditions surrounding people and the processes of socialization in which they are reared (Habermas, 1990). Lifeworlds are both situation and background, both conscious and unconscious (Love, 1995). Reproduction of both the cultural-linguistic background as well as the sociological components of the lifeworld occurs through communication and through the emergence of institutions specialized in the reproduction of culture, society and identity or personality (Habermas, 1987).

Participants' values, images and identities thus reflect and are reflected in their lifeworlds. Habermas accepts the plurality of participants' lifeworlds and of their voices and discourses, but retaining as he does a universal subject, he appears unable to translate such plurality into his consideration of the other, continuing to rely on a generalized other as I will elaborate below.

In contrast, Mouffe (1992) rejects an essentialism by which identity is conceived as hermeneutic, substantively structured and temporally fixed and emphasizes its contingent, differentiated and relational nature. Taking the two concepts of nodal points, or temporary fixations around which identities and politics are sutured, and also that of dialogic contestation of identities (Mouffe, 1992; Laclau and Mouffe, 1985), and putting the two together, a specific activity of dialogic contestation can become the nodal point. In other words, a communicative participation program can act as the nodal point or temporary fixation for the meaning and discussion of identities and values as different networks of actors come together.

We should note, however, as Massey (1995) reminds us, that power is intrinsic to the constitution and reconstitution of identity. Nodal points are thus power-full. In planning terms, they are powerful delineations of time-space in which conflicting identities are temporally and temporarily linked in discursive or dialogic contesta-

tion. As we shall see below, however, participation strategies which include hitherto excluded groups as an extension of pluralism in an attempt to achieve the public good through extending the sphere of individual rights tend to ignore the issue that some existing rights have been constituted on the subordination of others. The power structures inherent in the traditional planning system, for example, have favored elected representatives and officers of governance, who may have brought specific mind-sets and identities, both of place and local resident participants, to the discussion. Such fixed images lead to non-receptivity and result in participants talking past each other rather than engaging in open debate. These images and identities must be deconstructed if equivalence is to be achieved.

The locality itself can therefore be conceptualized as comprising layers of different outcomes over time, as actors have pursued their perceived subject positions and interests, often in competition with others. Place is a meeting point where sets of social relations (i.e. actor-networks) intersect (Marsden et al., 1993).

In an actor-network, actors in discrete situations become bound into wider sets of relations which alter the nature of their existing worlds (Murdoch and Marsden, 1995). Commitment to such networks provides forms of identity and the basis for action. In activities such as public participation, several different actor-networks (including those of non-human 'actors', such as aspects of nature, and non-human intermediaries between actors and networks, such as texts or money) will overlap and align with each other.

Constructing a new network(s) by drawing upon actors and intermediaries already in established networks, (e.g. the local authority planning system, residents' associations etc.), the actor-network approach thus combines aspects of economics, (it is things which draw actors into relationships), sociology, (actors come to define themselves, and others, through interaction), and politics (Murdoch, 1995). It allows us to begin to understand how certain actors/networks are able to impose their views over those of others.

Michel Callon's (1986, 1991) actor-network theory is based on the idea that as actors struggle with each other, they determine their existence, define their characteristics and attempt to exert themselves upon others through various human and non-human intermediaries. Callon (1986, 1991) terms the act of an actor exerting itself upon others as 'translation'. This process involves the following four, but not necessarily sequential nor mutually separate, stages:

- incorporation—actors join and are woven into networks;
- intersement—actors exert influence over others via persuasion that their position is the best one. Competing alliances are undermined;
- enrollment—actors lock others into their definitions and network so that their behavior is channeled in the direction desired by the enrolling actor(s);
- mobilization—the actor now speaks for/represents the others who have become 'redefined' and passive. The representations of interest made by the lead actors are accepted as legitimate by those ostensibly being represented.

The notion of power is central to the actor-network approach, developing, as it does, Foucauldian ideas of power/knowledge. Power is regarded as the outcome of collective action. "Those who are powerful are not those who 'hold' power but those who are able to enroll, convince and enlist others into associations on terms which allow these initial actors to 'represent' all the others" (Murdoch and Marsden, 1995:372). In so doing, they speak for the others whom they have deprived of a voice by imposing their definitions, images and perceptions upon them. A network is thus composed of representations of beliefs, values, images and identities of self, others and place. Debate and conflict occur if new representations challenge ('betray') the legitimacy of the old.

Actors will utilize whatever resources/intermediaries are available to them in order to persuade other actors to their representation or view in the pursuit of their goals. Inevitably, some actors will be able to mobilize a greater amount of resources than others. In addition, although representers claim to speak for those represented, "a representation cannot capture all there is to be represented" (Marsden et al., 1993:31). The represented, or non-present, (e.g. nature, people of lower socio-economic status who tend not to participate, those not yet moved into the area, the unborn etc.) may have other, unrepresented, values and aspirations. 'Translation', if left to its own devices, is seldom equitable or just.

Place is therefore 'shaped' by the representations of actor-networks. It is dynamic; a constructed representation by actors at a particular point in time, building upon the remains of previous rounds of representation and struggle.¹

My criticisms of actor-network theory are that, although it offers a useful tool for tracing and describing power relationships in decision-making processes, it lacks consideration of the actors' ethics in their acts of persuasion (interessement and enrollment). Similarly, the theory lacks both analysis as to why actors act and also of class, race and gender considerations. Finally, as Mouffe (1993) indicates, power should not be conceived as an external relation taking place between preconstituted identities, rather, it is power which itself constitutes those identities. Nevertheless, if used together with understandings of these issues above, actor-network theory has the potential to enhance our analysis of planning decision processes.

IMAGES AND IDENTITIES OF SPACE AND PLACE

In order to understand the behavior of actors in actor-networks, it is important to comprehend their images/identities of where, who, why and how they are. The late 1980s and 1990s have witnessed the intellectual meetings of what Agnew and Duncan (1989) term the geographical and sociological "imaginings" (see, for example, collections edited by Agnew and Duncan, 1989; Duncan and Ley, 1993; Keith and Pile, 1993.)

It is now generally accepted that space and place are socially constructed out of human interrelations and interactions. Several authors have rejuvenated Hagerstrand's

concept of space/time geography (e.g. Massey, 1993), whilst in debates around identity, space and place also figure prominently (e.g. Pred, 1984).

Space, Place and the State

Much has been written about the interrelationships between capital and locality and about the role of the state (see, for example, work by Harvey, 1985; 1989a,b,c; 1993; Massey and Allen, 1988; Massey, 1994; Smith, 1984; and Thrift, 1986; 1987; 1989). Corrigan and Sayer (1985:4) demonstrate how the ritual statements of the state define and regulate social activity. For instance, "state agencies attempt to give unitary and unifying expression to what are in reality multifaceted and differential historical experiences of groups within society, denying their particularity". The authors refer to the "politically organized subjection" (1985:7) of citizens by the state, invoking the Foucauldian concept of normalization.

A governmental preoccupation with economic growth has been imposed on the process of urban land development, and the state has tended to move beyond its traditional activities of land-use control and planning to become a major development actor engaging in urban entrepreneurialism (Harvey, 1989c).

Batten (1994) argues that governance actively uses the symbolic power of urban development to demonstrate and underline its claim to legitimacy. Governments, by demonstrating that they can 'get things done', show themselves to be resolute and committed to the development of their areas. Yet, as Batten (1994) points out, although such actions may legitimize governance in the view of the metropolitan-wide public and the development capitalists, the local public who will be directly affected by the particular project may be in complete disagreement with the discourses and strategies used.

Places become repackaged and re-imaged to become attractive to developers and their clients. Place is a saleable commodity. As such it is necessary to remove or decrease the influence of potential obstacles to development (such as public opposition). Sujic (1992:34–35) suggests that, increasingly, "it is the property developer, not the planner or the architect, who is primarily responsible for the current incarnation of the Western city", a situation which becomes particularly worrying when the property developer is an arm of governance.

There are conflicts over images and representations of the area by various levels of governance, developers, groups of local citizens and other interest groups. One or few imageries win out over others which are less acceptable to decision-makers and their target group. Clashes of imagery may include local residents' representations of their area as a place to live, home, a community, tradition, as opposed to governance's images of a space to develop, space to make profits, somewhere, in the future. (Such different images will be explored in detail below.) Development is thus out to work in one way or another for political ends (Sujic, 1992). In the process, local citizens may be losers, but few people care to look.

Can citizens resist the above and impose their own imagery? It is extremely difficult, but in the uncommon cases where local communities are not tamed and choose

to confront development capital, the involvement of risk-taking individuals with an awareness of lobbying tactics, access to inside information and an ability to construct an alternative future which meets local needs without eliminating profit possibilities, may lead to successful local resistance (See, for example, empirical research by Hillier, 1994; 1995; Hillier and Searle, 1995.)

The rise of the entrepreneurial state (Harvey, 1989c) has, however, complicated the picture. In instances where the state is both a major land/property holder and developer, the state is articulating its own needs and interests. As Howitt (1994:4) comments, "the channels of ideological power are dominated by developmentalist thinking and values in ways which discredit and marginalize alternative constructions and interpretations of emergent geographies".

Attitudes such as the above, characteristic of modernist development strategies, locate urban and regional planners outside and apart from the phenomena they seek to influence. From such a vantage point, planners obtain knowledge about the objects of their attention and then proceed to control, order and shape them as they deem appropriate. Thomas (1994:34) explains that a modernist approach is essentially impersonal in nature, with the knower inhabiting a position outside the phenomena being 'understood', and carrying with it an absolutizing emphasis on the alleged essential similarity of all human beings, as opposed to an emphasis on their differences.

RESPONSES TO PROPOSALS FOR URBAN CHANGE

The shaping of place is the outcome of power struggles between various cultures, aspirations, needs and fears within the existing social order. We need to go beyond identification of conflicts of interest to unpack the cultural differences which influence participants' ways of giving meaning, value and expression to tangibles and intangibles: to look not only at a culture's own interpretation of things, but its interpretation of other cultures and the different aspects of meaning which are formulated through such interpretations. We need to understand how the same sets of signs are read differently by different people and how people make connections between their interpretations of things and the overall ordering process of the planning system. It is this idea that meaning is a socio-cultural construction which foregrounds representational processes (such as public participation strategies) as being hermeneutic and ideological that underpins my debate.

It should not be surprising, then, that people react to proposals for urban change in a variety of ways, not all of which are comprehensible to others involved, yet which may well be patterns of action guided by deeply entrenched beliefs, norms and values. "Social space, therefore, is made up of a complex of individual feelings and images about and reactions towards the spatial symbolism which surrounds that individual" (Harvey, 1973:34). It should also not be surprising that many of these different images and values conflict with and counteract each other.

Other important aspects influencing outcomes include structural power differences between participants and their networks which may give some people more advantage or control over others; the history of relationships between participants, including previous experiences and prior attitudes and beliefs about each other which participants bring to the discussion; and also the social environment in which participation takes place. Planners' traditional 'external' and powerful location has important implications for the understanding and discussion of claims, values and identities. It has tended to obviate a truly participatory approach in which participants have the opportunity to enter into relationships of reciprocal respect. Instead, it has validated particular, specific forms of evidence, stressed the importance of a separation between the knower and the known, and treated personal characteristics of the knower as irrelevant. Observations are regarded as intellectual positions rather than as social constructs. Stories are irrelevant.

Planners fail to recognize that their own professional terms and definitions are themselves social constructs. Moreover, they deny themselves, as well as other participants, the opportunity to ensure that their stories are respectfully understood. Stories provide a link between private and public realms, they provide insights into meanings, behaviors, values, images and identities. "Communities cannot exist without stories" (Maines and Bridger, 1992:366).

I offer below some stories as illustrations of a range of different values, images and identities and their influences on actors' behaviors. The stories represent a small (and inevitably biased) sample of those told in the debate over government proposals for urbanization of a semi-rural area in the north-east of Perth, Western Australia.²

These stories offer insights into the various actors' socio-economic conceptions of themselves and their local areas, embedded as they are in the physical reality of geography. They indicate a nodal point around which different identities and images are dialogically contested, as participants' actor-networks attempt to engage in intersement and enrollment of others' perceptions and viewpoints.

From these stories we gain a snapshot of an entrepreneurial state actively using symbolic imagery of place and its statutory power to overcome resident opposition to urban development. We see clashes of values, images and identities between the varying cultural representations.

STORIES FROM THE NORTH EAST CORRIDOR, PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Perth is located in the south west of Western Australia on the Indian Ocean coast (see Fig. 1). Urban and regional planning began in Western Australia with white settlement of an Aboriginal-occupied country in 1829. Since that time, the Perth metropolitan region has grown from a small, isolated colonial outpost into a modern metropolis with a population forecast of some two million people by 2021.

Several local authorities, in particular those at the urban fringe, such as the Shire of Swan, are experiencing increases of up to 6% a year, while population densities remain notoriously low. In 1990 Perth's overall urban density was just 10.8 persons per hectare, a figure comparable with that for rural Europe. Perth thus represents a sprawling mass whose tentacles are reaching out to devour the green fringes of the built-up area. The Swan Valley represents one of these fringes in the north-east of the metropolitan area. The Valley is a delicate environment in an area of water shortage, relying on ground water reserves. It is low lying, with a high water table and is prone to flooding. White residents enjoying semi-rural lifestyles, engaging in viticulture, small holding farming and so on, live close to Aboriginal communities in an area of considerable Aboriginal and white settler heritage. The practice of settler communities living on the land, exploiting it for its natural resources and using it to grow crops and for building upon, contrasts starkly with the Aboriginal concept of living with the land, in sustainable harmony, a land alive with spirituality, rich with human sharing in the past and present. Yet what represents some 120,000 or so years of history and culture is in danger of disappearing under western-influenced 'civilization' and bureaucracy.

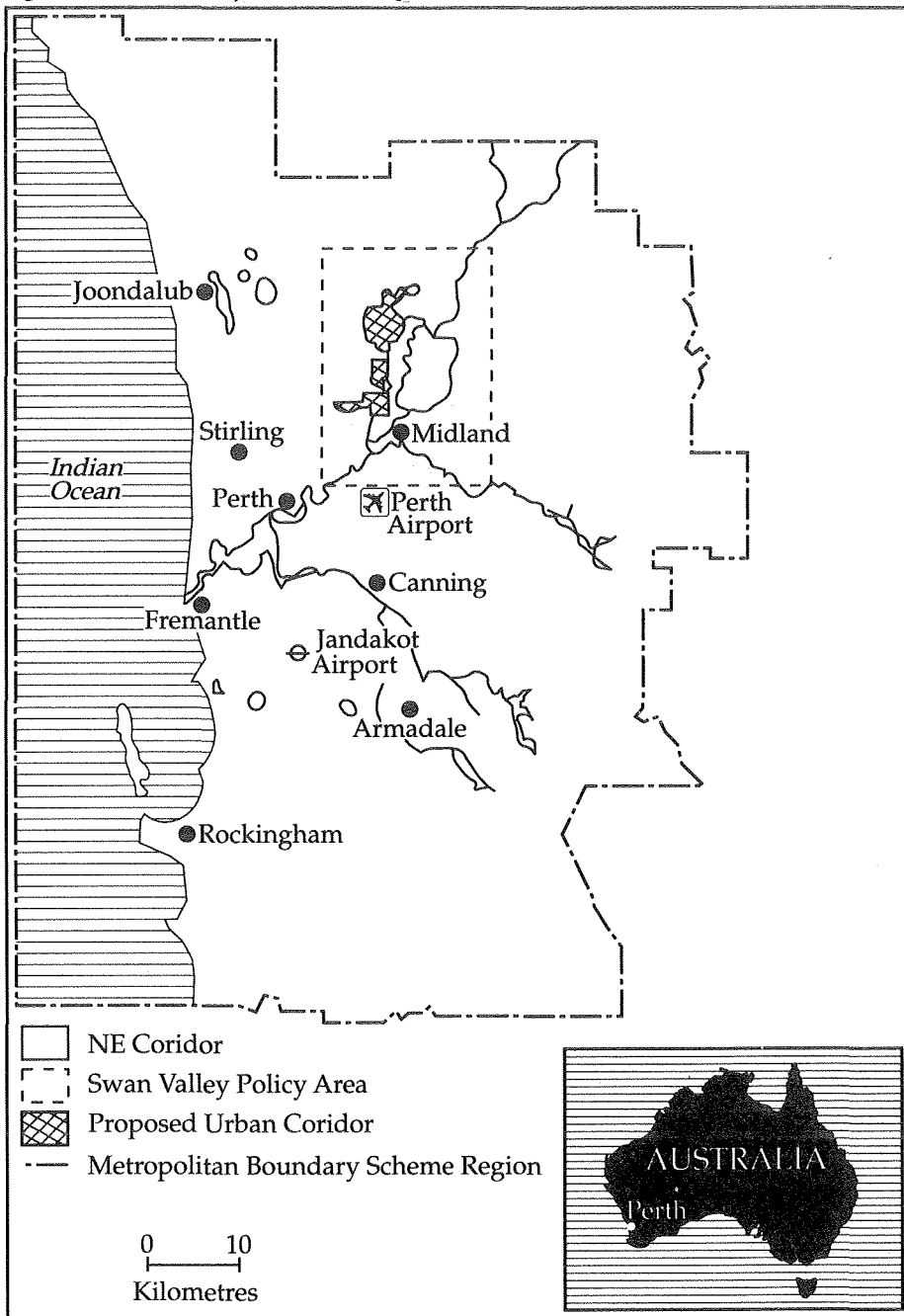
The Western Australian state government in 1990 identified a potential population for the North-East Corridor by 2021 of 225,000 people, an increase of some 220,000 over the existing total. Although planners adopted a 'participatory' approach to planning in the Corridor, in an attempt to reach consensus, tensions remained between the values, images and identities of the different participants, as indicated below.

Aboriginal Residents' Stories

"On a recent spring day, a group of 60 Nyungahs invited senior planning officers from the State Planning Commission to a 'very serious meeting' in the Swan Valley, to see important Nyungah sites and history, and how the sites relate to the adjoining settlement. Elders explained the Dreaming Track of the Waugal, sacred Avoidance Grounds, Religious Grounds, Ancient Meeting and Camping Places, bush foods, the inter-relatedness of everything in nature, and more modern cultural centers. In indigenous terms, this area is one of the richest in the world. Older generations, hand-in-hand with grandchildren, lectured on their heritage. That's how Nyungahs teach. Valuable lessons are taught and learnt for the future....

We moved on to where Nyungahs lived 40,000 years ago, a site of international importance, under threat by the widening of another highway. Nearby the headless body of Yagan lies in his grave, perhaps soon to be under a highway. Across the river from here the hero Yagan, 30 pound price on his head—dead or alive—confronted George Fletcher Moore in 1833, shortly before being shot and decapitated, to ask; 'You came to our country, you have driven us from our haunts, disturbed us in our occupations. As we walk upon our own country we are fired upon by white men; why should white men treat us so?'...

Figure 1: Swan Valley in the Metropolitan area of Perth.



'The whole land is our mother,' says an elder. 'Nyungah ancestors were watching, all around all of us. This is spirit-land. The heritage value extends far beyond what is visible to white eyes, or what is spoken..'

A senior planner was asked how he thought 80,000 people would impact on the Swan River downstream from the development. He looked puzzled, 'That's nothing to do with me, you'll have to take that up with another department.' He didn't think it necessary to hide his lack of interest. Nyungah religious belief and wisdom were as alien to him as the notion that straight rows of brick houses, highway pollution and removal of material bush are not progress....

Two invaluable days in ancient Swan Valley bushland, alive with the psychic and spiritual, rich with human sharing in past and present for the future, have indeed disappeared into the bureaucratic treatment plant" (Cunningham, 1994:7-8).

"It has taken us a long time to understand and find out about all that is planned and we still do not know if we have covered everything, such as only today did we know that a section of West Swan Road marked in blue meant that it would be widened which may disturb or completely destroy the Grave of our Ancestor, Yagan, whose head was chopped off his body and sent to England.

The Nyungah people are of a different culture and understand the land in their own way, not through white man's maps and plans" (excerpts from letter from the Nyungah Circle of Elders to the WA Minister for Planning, 24/4/93:3).

These two stories quoted above highlight the entirely different world in which Aboriginal people live as compared to the concerns of the planning system. We see the importance of cultural argument against technical argument, the perception as alien of paper, reports, maps and charts, and of the planning system as a whole. Memory and tradition are keys to beginning to understand Aboriginal attachment to the land. Memory is embodied in identity. There is little objective distinction between space and time.

In the tone, as well as the content of the stories, we recognize "issues, details, relationships and even people" (Forester, 1993:31) who have been ignored and unappreciated in the past. We recognize not only claims that Aboriginal people have over the land, but the importance of their self- and place-identity and "a history of betrayal and resulting fear, suspicion, distrust—which must be acknowledged, respected and addressed if working relationships are to be built" (Forester, 1993:31).

Memory is intrinsically bound up with the construction of Aboriginal identity. In the stories above, memory and traditional knowledge are being used politically. The Nyungah selected parts of their stories to tell the planners, who seemed unable to understand their importance. In similar fashion, planners select information to tell Aboriginal groups who, in turn, experience problems of being talked past rather than with.

The network of Aboriginal actors above has been completely unable to 'enroll' the planners into their actor-network. Despite a meeting of the two networks, Callon's stage of 'interessement' was not reached. Aboriginal people failed to persuade the

planners of the importance of their representation of the area. The two sets of actors failed to recognize and understand each others intermediaries; Aboriginal sacred sites and stories and the texts, maps and plans of the planners.

Non-indigenous Settler Residents

In the North East Corridor the Aboriginal communities live close to white settler residents who enjoy semi-rural lifestyles. Many engage in viticulture, small holding farming, horticulture and small-scale craft-related tourist ventures. Their images of, demands from and aspirations for the area are diverse, and so, therefore, are their stories.

“Our expectations (to a rural lifestyle, a green corridor) are being blighted and destroyed.”

“We’re concerned about water sources and wetlands.”

“We will suffer traffic impacts too.”

“Will we suffer financially?”

“Blight will lead to falling values; increasing poverty, crime.”

“Any value may be outweighed by increased rates. So we then won’t be able to afford to stay in the area.”

“We don’t know what ‘urban deferred’ means.”

“We’re not being given enough information.”

“We don’t all agree. Some welcome the chance to subdivide.”

“We’re not nimbys. We’re not saying ‘no’ to development. We want ‘appropriate development’ which can be managed within environmental constraints.”

“We all need to have one voice, as well as our separate voices.”

“There’s a different way of going about this. There must be a way of accommodating all these demands.”

(Quotations from public meeting, reproduced in Healey and Hillier, 1995.)

There seems to be a present agenda which the bureaucrats are forcing the community into accepting.... It seems as though the program of community consultation was not set up to succeed.... It seems that somewhere along the planning process the officers came to a box entitled ‘community consultation’ and they have run this program just so they can tick the box (Henley Brook Locality Group, letter to Minister for Planning, 26/2/92; reproduced in Hillier, 1995).

These stories indicate the range of images residents have of the Swan Valley and North East Corridor; as an area of history, of fragile environment, and offering a rural lifestyle, all of which need to be preserved as accessible to them. The identities of many are as property owners with a concern for the value of their investments. Local residents view their properties as much more than units of shelter. They are financial investments, lifestyle symbols, social settings and bases for leisure activities (Healey, 1995). Residents recognize the diversity of their identities and aspirations, however, and that each of their different voices is valid. They are not all anti-development *per se*, but want 'appropriate development' for the area, which would mean that the differing local aspirations could be satisfied.

Despite their different identities, value and images, the residents were united in terms of their view of the planning process as exclusive and incomprehensible and of planners as unreachable, with rigid mind-sets and an unwillingness to change. Residents see themselves as powerless despite the participation process. This has exacerbated feelings of alienation and distrust of both planners and the planning system. The social space of the local residents is seen to be complex, heterogeneous, discontinuous "and almost certainly different from the physical space in which the engineer and the planner typically work" (Harvey, 1973:35).

Within the overall network of non-indigenous residents in the Swan Valley there nested several smaller, often overlapping actor-networks (see Hillier, 1995, for identification of locality groups, interest groups, etc.) Even within the smaller networks there were often different representations of the Valley and a lack of complete agreement as to desired outcomes. Some networks were more successful than others in enrolling planners and persuading them of their points of view.³ The main reasons lie in their successful use of human intermediaries and the media with which they had connections.

In contrast with the Aboriginal stories above, where the planners lacked comprehension of Aboriginal texts, non-indigenous Swan Valley residents deliberately selected methods of representation (documents, public meetings etc.) with which the planners would be familiar (see Healey and Hillier, 1995;1996).

Planners

Like local residents, planners are also a non-homogeneous group of people, working at both Shire and State levels. Given development proposals affecting their own residential areas, many would probably become engaged in participation processes, yet in the North East Corridor, they find themselves sitting on the other side of the counter, as professionals with a task to complete. My selection of stories does not encompass the views of all planners involved in the North East Corridor strategy and is therefore somewhat biased, and has admittedly been chosen to illustrate the key arguments of this paper.

"The structure plan⁴ is an 'ideas plan' as opposed to the Metropolitan Region Scheme which is a statutory plan. The structure plan is not a legal document and has no legal force, such as the Metropolitan Region Scheme or local authority town

planning schemes. The structure plan is a policy guide for the new zones and reserves currently being created by way of the major amendment to the Metropolitan Region Scheme and which, in future, will be translated into the Shire of Swan Town Planning Scheme" (DPUD, 1994:4–5).

"It is in the nature of the planning process that by the time the Department of Planning and Urban Development puts out any strategic or structure plans for public comment, a great deal of homework has been done. Hopefully, in doing the homework, the Department has got its ideas right. Remembering that the Department has to take a wide range of competing interests into account in formulating its ideas, if the Department has got its ideas right by the time it publishes them for public comment there may be little room for change. If it so happens that the Department and the Government (and the local authority) believe that the Department has got its ideas almost right and the community is of the completely opposite view then it is very unlikely that the consultation process will yield a satisfactory outcome" (DPUD, 1994:20).

"Many within the community do not accept the basic proposition of a North East urban corridor for metropolitan expansion. Consequently, there has been very little common ground to debate any of the finer planning points or to make the most of any flexibilities which do exist in the plan. There has been a gulf between the community and the Department's respective points of view" (DPUD, 1994:20–21).

These three stories, published in a document for a lay public readership, give a clear indication not only of tortuous plannerspeak, but also of agency identity. Planners are identifying with the agency of governance, subsumed by their institutional and professional culture.

A planner's view of the North East Corridor tends to be Euclidean and instrumental. It regards the area in two-dimensional form on a map, geometrically divisible into discrete lots for the provision of housing and urban infrastructure, and as having no value in itself, "but rather its only value lies in its being 'put to work' as an instrument in the restless process of production: the 'being of things' is eclipsed by the 'doing of things'" (Hoggett, 1992:107). This is a view of 'physical space' which, Bauman (1993:145) suggests, is arrived at through the "phenomenological reduction of daily experience to pure quantity, during which distance is 'depopulated' and 'extemporalized'—that is, systematically cleansed of all contingent and transitory traits", which may include Aboriginal history and sacred sites.

Local citizens are regarded by the planners in the stories above as primarily motivated by a desire to preserve the status quo for themselves. They are seen as self-interested, focusing on short term gains and losses rather than the well-being of the future population of Perth as a whole. Citizens are uninformed, often wrong and act as a hindrance to an efficient planning process (see also, Tyler et al., 1986).

The difference between the views of the planners and local residents may be summarized as the difference between space and place. Even so, space is not merely a passive, abstract two-dimensional arena on which things can happen. Space and

place are both constructs—they are surfaces of inscription and identity, offering different meanings to different people. The inauguration of the planning system enabling the division of land into privately held and precisely demarcated lots has given planners more power/authority than local residents and therefore their interpretations of place and identity generally take precedence. Such interpretations may threaten places and identities as understood by local residents, manipulating, recognizing and re-constituting them anew.⁵

Planners are experts. As Giddens (1994) points out, the difference between experts and laypersons is often a difference in power, but essentially an imbalance in skills and/or information which makes one an 'authority' over the other. Laypersons' knowledge, as we have seen, embodies tradition and cultural values; it is local and de-centered. Planners' expertise, on the other hand, is disembedded, "evacuating" (Giddens, 1994) the traditional content of local contexts, and based on impersonal principles which can be set out without regard to context; a coded knowledge which professionals are at pains to protect.

Planners traditionally believe themselves to be neutral, rational, experts (see Hoch, 1994), offering objective and balanced appraisals rather than making value judgments. Yet planners must inevitably bring their own values into their work, making judgments as to the good versus the right; what is important, which interests should carry how much weight, what is possible to be achieved and so on. Planners and governance reserve the ultimate power to define, redefine, organize and re-organize space into a place of their choosing.

Planners, therefore, often seek to enroll other actors into their representations. Their goal is mobilization; acceptance of the planners' representations as legitimate by local residents. Public participation programs are often utilized as the means of persuasion, involving texts as intermediaries. Unfortunately, as indicated by the stories above, in the Swan Valley case, planners felt that several actors betrayed their representation. Rather than working to negotiate an outcome, the participation process degenerated into distrust and confrontation.

CONCLUSION

A basic tenet to my work is my belief that local planning decision-making processes cannot be understood separately from the socially constructed, subjective territorial identities, meanings and values of the local people and planners concerned. Planning cannot achieve empirical reality through the work of planners alone.

The shaping of place is the outcome of power struggles between actor-networks of planners and of other participants and their networks, each of whom bring to the process a variety of discourse types, lifeworlds, values, images, identities and representations. By unpacking the above to understand how the same sets of geographical signs are read and interpreted differently by different people, we may come to

see influences at work in decision-making processes that were previously invisible. We may thus come to a better understanding of such processes, their advantages and shortcomings, and the reasons why people react to proposals for urban change in a variety of ways.

By exploring how such differences of values, images and identities may affect planning processes, leading to participants talking past each other, we may be able to begin to open up new ways and processes of talking which lead to fuller understanding between all participants and to negotiation rather than confrontation.

NOTES

1. It is impossible to conceptualize a diagram of actor-networks over time. I offer the metaphor of an infinitely expanding Rubic cube, wherein each small segment represents an actor, interacting with the others it touches. Through time, the cube may be turned partially or entirely. The faces of some segments will remain touching in their previous 'networks', whilst others will form new networks. New patterns and relationships of networks are formed with every twist of the cube, while the sediments of some old patterns (or their influence) may still be retained.
2. For more detail of the debate, see Hillier, 1995; Healey and Hillier, 1995, 1996. Research into c200 such stories in the area is ongoing through Australian Research Council grant A79602576, 1996–7.
3. The 'Friends of the Valley', a group located on the east bank of the River Swan, has managed successfully to fend off virtually all proposals for urbanization in its area of representation.
4. Western Australia's planning system is based on a zoning form of land use regulation, with zoning ordinances set within the context of strategic 'structure plans'.
5. Whilst the above may often be true of some communities, there are, nevertheless, more outspoken communities whose members use manipulative stories to direct outcomes in favor of their values and identities. Noise and hassle may be sufficient for decision-makers to 'lose their nerve' and vote to appease their constituents, while long delays may cause applicants to withdraw proposals.

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