

Toward a New Conversation: Agonism and the Emancipatory Limits of Planning Practice

By

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Abstract

The role of politics in planning practice is an enduring normative question in the history of planning thought. Over the course of the past twenty years, a debate has been developing that is centred on political conflict and the ethics of overcoming it in the planning process. In an effort to reimagine planning ethics along the lines of agonistic pluralism, this research seeks to identify and draw out the implications of the emancipatory potential of planning practice. By conducting a discourse analysis on the interview transcripts of practicing planners in Winnipeg, Manitoba, this research shows how the normative commitments of mainstream planning practice actualize the immanent potential for antagonism and conflict. I argue that the means of establishing an agonistic ethics must occur as part of a planning-disciplinary wide conversation about reimagining the constitution of planning activity.

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Contents

Abstract.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii
Contents	iii
List of Figures.....	iv
1.0 Introduction.....	1
2.0 The Contemporary Debate and the Spectre of Rationalism.....	8
2.1 The Intellectual Terrain.....	8
2.2 The Contemporary Debate	11
2.3 Rationalism, Power, and Incommensurability	16
3.0 Cracks and Fissures in the Foundation of Collaborative Planning	20
3.1 The Limits of Communicative Rationality	22
3.2 Collaborative Planning, Agonism, and Incommensurability: Much Ado about Nothing?	29
4.0 A New Normative Architecture for Collaborative Planning Theory	38
4.1 Différance, Undecidability and Pragmatic Normative Theory	39
5.0 Research Design: Discourse, Conflict, and Deconstruction	47
5.1 Methodological Considerations: Discourse, Practice, and Conflict.....	48
5.2 Data Collection: Semi-Structured Interviews	55
5.3 Method of Analysis: Discourse Analysis.....	57
5.4 Biases, Assumptions, and Limitations	62
6.0 Analysis and Discussion	64
6.1 On the Commitments of the Planning Practitioner	70
6.1.1 Communicative Power.....	70
6.1.2 Epistemic Mediation	75
6.2 The Overdetermination of Planning and the Immanent Potential for Antagonism.....	81
6.3 Politics and the Political – On the Emancipatory Limits of Planning Practice.....	88
6.4 The Heuristics of Conflict, the Ethical Imperative, and a New Conversation	96
7.0 Conclusion	106
Bibliography	110
Appendix A: Interview Schedule.....	116
Appendix B: Ethics Approval Certificate	119
Appendix C: Background Information and Consent Form.....	120
Appendix D: CIP Code of Professional Conduct.....	124

List of Figures

Figure 1: The Discourse of Communicative Power – Most Prominent Elements found in the Text	75
Figure 2: Discourse of Epistemic Mediation – Most Prominent Elements found in the Text.....	80
Figure 3: Element Adjacency Matrix.....	82

1.0 Introduction

Politics are a ubiquitous and highly visible part of planning practice. “Stakeholder engagement” is an integral part of the planning profession, with the outputs going on to constitute the key raw ingredients of plan-making, the selection of alternatives, permitting, visioning – the list goes on. The cultivation of these outputs often leads to punctuated conflict or protracted campaigns of opposition. Tense stakeholder meetings, vocal protests, and heated exchanges at public hearings are par-for-the-course for many planning professionals. Planners are expected to play a pivotal role in these processes, managing these politics by actively shaping and directing deliberation and decision-making toward specific ends. As such, planners have been characterized as “selective organizers of attention to the real possibilities of action” through the framing of agendas for discussion and the strategic delivery of information (Forester, 1989, p. 14). Rather than the merely disinterested observers or facilitators they were once thought of, planners are powerful actors implicated in the political dramas of planning practice, which has garnered a significant disciplinary focus on the responsibility to use this position and influence over planning processes ethically.

Professional ethics are an integral component of contemporary planning practice. Virtually everywhere planners operate in a professional capacity, they are ostensibly bound to some degree to follow a code of conduct or code of ethics, such as the Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP) Code of Professional Conduct (2016), or the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct (2016). These codes typically contain multiple overlapping or competing commitments and obligations: to the profession, to the client, to the science or craft, to independence and autonomy and, perhaps most enigmatically, to the “Public Interest”. This final

commitment is a peculiar one both for its historical significance as an “essential ingredient” throughout the history of planning codes of ethics and for its lack of specificity or form as a guide for determining right from wrong (Marcuse, 1976, p. 270). More importantly, however, this overriding commitment implicates a broader dimension of ethics - one that forces the discipline to ask about what constitutes the public interest and what its proper role might be in attending to it. It is to ask about the social value and public utility of the profession – about why ‘planning’, as a whole, is or is not ethical as a service to the Public. To attend to this broader dimension, one must look to planning theory.

Tracing the intellectual history of the discipline, John Friedmann builds a story of planning as we know it today as emerging from seeds sown in the eighteenth century, which “bequeathed to us a dual legacy of reason and democracy” and the “discovery of a public domain” (Friedmann, 1987, p. 3). In this time, “the public” became a primary category of social and historical consciousness through the establishment of the press, the legitimation of a popular democratic politics, and rapid urbanization, particularly in Europe and North America. The “multiplication” of planning began with the birth of the “public” and was increasingly used as an instrument of the state to attend to the full range of problems that arise in the “public domain”, from the physical and environmental to the social and economic (Friedmann, 1987, p. 24). Reason, and the ability to use knowledge of *facts* to solve society’s problems, and democracy, referring to emancipatory change through the management of competing *values* in society, are inexorably connected to the discipline’s role and orientation to the Public Interest.

Reason and democracy are also enduring hallmarks of inquiry in political theory. As a discipline self-consciously embedded in the intellectual, social, and political revolutions of history,

planning theorists have turned to Political Theory to make sense of its competing commitments, to bring meaning to its public utility and social value to society, and to legitimate its role in undertaking *societal guidance* and produce authoritative decisions about the ordering of the public domain. Historically, a key driver of this interdisciplinary cross-fertilization has been the phenomenon of political conflict in planning – punctuated moments in planning practice where planners’ ethics are most scrutinized (Friedmann, 1987, pp. 311-314). The discourse surrounding these moments and the planners’ role in attending to them tend to do with some mix of facts or constraints about the project in question, and with meaningful and respectful consideration of individual values and perspectives.

Today, the proper understanding and management of political conflict is the subject of a paradigmatic debate in the discipline between two competing visions of democracy. The “deliberative” model, which serves as the political-theoretical foundation for the assemblage of practices referred to as Collaborative Planning, is the dominant perspective. It is premised on the view that political conflict can be managed through carefully designed processes directed toward the achievement of a “reasoned consensus” through the deliberation of “free and equal citizens” (Gualini, 2015, p. 6). Planning practitioners, and the institutions that inform their practice, are responsible for facilitating this consensus, and the success of their practice is judged on the quality of this facilitation. The challenging perspective is known as “agonistic pluralism”, or simply “agonism”, and it views consensus-seeking practices or any “management” of conflict to be tantamount to democracy and emancipatory change, serving to prematurely shut down politics, and to perpetuate “hegemonic” modes of understanding and valuing in society (Bylund, 2012). For the agonistic pluralist, political conflict is the site of counter-hegemonic resistance – where space is opened up for the continuous disarticulation and rearticulation of hierarchy. Here, democracy is

understood not as a set of institutions or procedures, but as a condition of political openness and indefinite revisability.

This debate is a source of anxiety in the discipline because it casts doubt upon the central institutions of planning practice (Innes & Booher, 2015; Gualini, 2015, 14-15;). The idea that the elaborate processes, deliberations, and the convictions about the good that they provide the Public are called into question by the agonistic-pluralist critique. This critique posits that the illusion of democracy embedded in the pursuit of consensus has precipitated a condition of “post-politics” or “post-democracy” in which the spaces for real political contestation have been made so small as to resemble a “rigged game of sycophancy” where no real change – let alone emancipatory change – is possible (Bylund, 2012). To make matters worse, it is not at all clear what is at stake in this debate. Agonistic-pluralists’ most direct prescription is a call for “space” for conflict, but planning theorists have only been able to speculate about what that could mean in practice (Bäcklund & Mäntysalo, 2010). Efforts at combining the two perspectives and salvage some semblance of contemporary practice have been similarly fraught with difficulty (Gürsözlü, 2009), leading to a call for scholars to move beyond the “incommensurable differences” between the perspectives (Bond, 2011). This state of affairs has brought questions to the fore about whether planning practice can be democratic at all (Swyngedouw, 2009) – a prospect that could bring crisis the discipline as confidence in its practices to secure the public interest threatens to dissolve. If this is the case, what does this mean for the “good” of the practice? How are our practices to be judged?

Toward a New Conversation

This research takes as its starting point that the challenge of agonism has exposed important questions about how we conceive of the good and the democratic in planning practice. It applies

the theoretical framework of agonistic pluralism to understand the emancipatory limits of *mainstream* contemporary planning practice and to explore what these limits might mean for planning ethics. Key to this framework is the recognition that conflict is both an immanently possible and necessary consequence of planning activity, on the one hand, and the key opportunity for emancipatory change on the other. At the centre of this study are interviews with practicing planners in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Discourse is recognized to be the fundamental building-block of social reality, and planners, who occupy a unique and relatively powerful position in planning activity, provide key insight into the discursive commitments that shape the dynamics of conflict and contestation in practice. To explore these commitments and what they might mean for the possibilities for planning ethics, the following research questions are posed:

1. What are the commitments of planning practitioners and how are they discursively constituted?
2. What tensions and contradictions exist in the employment of these discourses? How do these tensions actualize the potential for antagonism?
3. Are there limits to the emancipatory potential of planning practice? How can they be characterized and what consequences does this have for our understanding of ethics?

This thesis argues that the emancipatory limits of planning practice are defined by the boundaries of the discourses available to constitute it. To put it more simply, the ability for planners to understand and respond to antagonism in ways that contribute to the emancipation of the marginalized in planning activity is limited to the conventional ‘vocabulary’ of planning. To exceed these conventions is to exceed the activity recognizable as mainstream contemporary planning – it becomes *something else*. This boundary is not merely conceptual; discourse is

intersubjectively mediated, meaning it is always implicitly tested against a community of judging individuals (Healey, 2009, p. 283). Consequently, an agonistic planning ethics must target the flexibility of these discursive boundaries to make mainstream contemporary planning a more productive partner of conflict and antagonism – what some scholars have called an *ethos* of planning practice (Pløger, 2015). Using the findings of this research, this ethos is styled as a ‘new conversation’ – one characterized by *openness, reconciliation, and modesty*.

This research is developed in three stages. The first stage reviews the relevant literature to orient the reader toward the central issues of the contemporary debate. Chapter 2 will introduce the contemporary debate by tracing its intellectual bases to the present day. It will show that the fundamental disagreement concerns the question of the proper conceptualization of power in decision-making processes as it pertains to the achievement of democratic ends. Each ‘side’ of the debate occupies incommensurable positions – a relation in which no fundamental authority exists to “choose” one perspective over the other on the basis of “truth” or “falsity”. Chapter Three explores the theoretical inconsistencies in the ‘communicative’ variants of Collaborative Planning to suggest that the issue of commensurability is not something that should concern the discipline.

The second stage is focused on the developing and executing the research strategy for this thesis. This begins in Chapter 4 with the exploration of the methodological intuitions of agonistic pluralism, namely, post-structuralism. I contend that this is a superior basis for planning ethics because it presents a *pragmatic*, rather than *idealistic* normative theory as is the argued to be the case for the communicative approaches to Collaborative Planning. Chapter 5 discusses the research design for this thesis.

The third stage concerns the analysis of findings of this research. Chapter 6 reviews the results of the discourse analysis conducted on the interview data obtained from practicing planners. I argue that two discourses are dominant as they relate to planners' commitments: communicative power and epistemic mediation. These serve to *overdetermine* the planner subject position – a constitutive tension that limits the opportunity for antagonized entities to identify common symbolic resources in planning activity. Chapter 6 closes by exploring the possibilities for planning ethics under agonism, manifested in what is termed “a new conversation”. Finally, the research concludes with notes about the key limitations of this study, as well as opportunities for further research.

2.0 The Contemporary Debate and the Spectre of Rationalism

This chapter will develop a narrative of the Contemporary Debate by tracing the history of the planning discipline as it relates to its intellectual orientation to the concepts of democracy and ethical decision-making. Rationalism is a key part of this narrative, as contestation over its role and proper conception are shown to be key driving forces in normative planning theory. In the past, rationalism is understood to be a key resource for deciding the appropriate processes and outputs of decision-making – one that made planning decision-making a straightforwardly procedural and technical activity. Over time, however, these theoretical bases have shifted, blurring the lines between the technical and the political in planning decision-making. The contemporary debate continues this key thread, and is centred upon the proper conceptualization of power and its relationship to shifting conceptions of rationalism. This is a key component informing the incommensurability of the two perspectives, and helps to show why so little progress has been made in integrating the concerns and insights of agonism.

2.1 The Intellectual Terrain

The state of contemporary planning cannot be understood without reference to the intellectual terrain of the history of planning and political thought. John Friedmann builds a story of planning as we know it today, tracing such a history from seeds sown in the eighteenth century, which “bequeathed to us a dual legacy of reason and democracy” and the “discovery of a public domain” (Friedmann, 1987, p. 3). As was discussed in Chapter 1, over this timeframe, “the public” became a primary category of social and historical consciousness through the establishment of the press, the legitimation of a popular democratic politics, and rapid urbanization, particularly in

Europe and North America. The “multiplication” of planning began with the birth of the “public” and was increasingly used as an instrument of the state to attend to the full range of problems that arise in the “public domain”, from the physical and environmental to the social and economic (Friedmann, 1987, p. 24). Reason, and the ability to use knowledge of *facts* to solve society’s problems, and democracy, emancipatory change through the management of competing *values* in society, are inexorably connected to the legacy of planning in the service in the “Public Interest”.

Rationalism has been a prominent concept employed by throughout the history of political thought in the study of democracy. Whereas ‘democracy’ has to do with “a method of group decision-making characterized by a kind of equality among the participants at an essential stage of the collective decision making”, rationalism has to do with the idea that reason is the ultimate authority for the determination of truth, and that knowledge should be deduced from transcendental *a priori* axioms or principles (Christiano, 2006, para. 1). As it pertains to democracy, rationalism has been employed, particularly by philosophers of the analytic persuasion and particularly before mid-twentieth century, as a foundation for determining how one collective decision-making process can be more or less *ethical* than another (Bird, 2010, p. 21). From Plato and Aristotle, to Hobbes and Locke, political philosophy had accepted the idea that it was both possible and desirable to design ethically ideal political arrangements from some ‘instrumentally rational’ viewpoint (Bird, 2010, p. 18).

This view firmly established planning as a technical instrument of the state to achieve separately politically defined goals and objectives. Henri de Saint Simon, who wrote in the early 19th century, drew on the analogy of the human body to develop his ideas about the city (Friedmann, 1987, p. 52). Its physicians would be scientists and engineers (and eventually,

planners) who worked in the service of humanity to cure its ills, while politics and democracy were the province of the politician, who merely needed to represent the aggregated interests of society through the popular vote. Planning evolved in response to this “aggregative-representative” model of democracy¹, where the ‘rational-comprehensive’ approach to planning was employed as a field of expertise functionally isolated from the political sphere (Bäcklund & Mäntysalo, 2010, p. 339). The aggregative-representative model found its clearest expression in 1947 with the publication of Joseph Schumpeter’s *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, which extolled the virtues and economic parsimony of the socio-political structure and institutions it propagated. By this point, however, the seeds of the undoing of the faith in the aggregative-representative model had already been sown.

It became increasingly clear to many political theorists that instrumentally rational bases for democracy and the functional isolation of planning under the rational-comprehensive model were unable to attend or bring meaning to the rapid upheavals of the twentieth century, including wars, social justice movements, and globalizing forces of international migration, trade, and culture (Friedmann, *Planning in the Public Domain*, 1987, pp. 312 - 313). Robert Dahl, Charles Lindblom, and Herbert Simon emerge as key figures over the period from 1957 to well into 1960s, where new innovations in theory were developed to attend to a more sophisticated understanding of rationality as “bounded” by the limitations of information, time, and intellect (Friedmann, 1987, pp. 127-129). Planning scholarship was very active during this period as most remained committed

¹ The *aggregative-representative* moniker is derived from (Gualini, *Conflict in the City: Democratic, Emancipatory - and Transformative? In Search of the Political in Planning Conflicts*, 2015)

to the idea that new “technologies” of decision-making like game theory and cybernetics could serve to make the profession more effective in responding to the increasingly important values of the Public (Friedmann, 1987, p. 2). Despite these innovations, this slow and steady ‘discovery’ of politics and the “wickedness” (see Rittel & Webber, 1973) it brings to planning led to the widespread loss of faith in the possibility of realizing the public good in any instrumentally rational way. By the 1970s, the discipline and practice of planning was in crisis, a state precipitated in part by the forceful implication of politics and the social as primary ontological categories over the rational ordering of the city, as if it were still some organism in need of medical attention (Friedmann, 1987, pp. 312-313). This paradigm shift was not painless for the profession to endure. During this time period, planners were likely to call their work a “failure” or “of little use” as a result of the loss of recognition that instrumental planning knowledge could serve as a legitimate basis for decisions affecting the public (Friedmann, 1987, p. 311).

An alternative conception of planning eventually emerged and became dominant that sought to ground ideas about political value, justice, and truth, among others, in locally-generative conceptions increasingly independent of transcendental rational foundations (Bird, 2010, pp. 23-26). It is at this point in this brief narrative that the contemporary debate in planning theory is set. The following section will review how contemporary planning practice has oriented itself to the task of developing this locally-generative conception of democracy, as well as introduce the agonistic-pluralist critique and its theoretical underpinnings.

2.2 The Contemporary Debate

The intellectual machinery employed to replace the aggregate-representative model was drawn primarily from theories with ‘post-modern’ leanings – in general, a dissatisfaction and

skepticism of grand narratives, first principles, and foundationalism. A key target for the post-modern wave of theorizing was the simplistic view of the democratic process – one derived from the rationalization of its procedures of interest aggregation and ostensible value neutrality of society’s ‘experts’. This is not to suggest, however, that there is anything uniting these theories beyond this skepticism. The two post-modern approaches that make up the contemporary debate feature fundamental ontological and epistemological differences, particularly as they pertain to the notion of power.

The model of *deliberative democracy* can be said to have been popularized with the publication of John Rawls’ 1971 work, *A Theory of Justice* (Bird, 2010, p. 22); but perhaps the most significant thinker, at least in relation to planning scholarship, has been Jürgen Habermas and his *Theory of Communicative Action* (Harris, 2002, p. 25). While there are significant differences between Rawls and Habermas, both are united in their pursuit of a kind of non-foundational normative rationality – one that is simultaneously “epistemic, practical, and intersubjective” (Bohman & Rehg, 2014). For Rawls, this meant that human beings have an inherent ‘sense of justice’ – a moral psychology that constituted “a desire to act rightly, to cooperate on reasonable terms with others, and to resent conduct that offends their understanding of how important social goods, responsibilities, and entitlements should be allocated” (Bird, 2010, p. 23). Crucially, however, the content of this “sense” is not predetermined. The content emerges because human agents *owe* something to one another when arguing about what is right – they owe each other *reasons*. This fundamentally social dimension of rationality was shared by Habermas, who focused specifically on its theorization through the lens of speech and language.

For Habermas, the inherent goal or *telos* of communication is to understand one another – to use one’s inherent capacity for speech, or “communicative rationality”, to coordinate each other’s thinking so that each party is able to engage in ‘meaning-making’ on the same common ground. On its own, this communicative rationality did not constitute the validity of the reasons for competing ethical principles, but the capacity to possess and share them in the first place. Habermas believed it was possible for each party to recognize competing interests and points of view as merit-worthy and capable of coming to a *reasoned consensus* about the best course of action, itself containing the democratic promise of individual autonomy and interpersonal equality (Bohman & Rehg, 2014). The key challenge was achieving a state of procedural equality whereby human agents could undertake truly unconstrained communication. To achieve such a status, procedures that facilitate the production of the “ideal speech situation” are necessary: an idealized social context in which i) every relevant voice has been included, ii) participants have an equal voice, iii) they are free to speak without interpersonal deception or self-deception, and iv) differences in power have been neutralized (Bohman & Rehg, 2014). This is intended to provide conditions of moral and ethical impartiality – a state of communication that is, in an ideal world, *free from the effects of power*. Immediately, observers of planning theory and practice will be familiar with these principles, as they constitute the normative basis for a variety of ‘communicative’ (Innes, 1995), ‘argumentative’ (Forester, 1999), and ‘collaborative’ (Healey, 1997) approaches, which see pluralism and competing conceptions of the good as a pre-condition for ethical planning activity. As such, contemporary planning institutions have evolved to promote practices that are directed toward the ideal of free and unconstrained communication (Gualini, 2015, p. 7).

Habermas' work was taken up quickly in planning for its role in "rescuing" rationality from the disinterested value-neutral "expert" and reconceptualising it as a valuable emancipatory resource for democratic engagement (Healey, 1997, p. 50; Harris, 2002, p. 25). One scholar had even proclaimed that such communicative approaches had reached "paradigmatic" status in the discipline, leaving only the task of designing more conducive institutions and public engagement processes to approximate the ideal speech situation (Innes, 1995). This proclamation had the effect of emboldening a concurrently developing undercurrent of critique rooted in Foucauldian and historical materialist theory (Fainstein, 2000, pp. 455-461; Flyvbjerg & Richardson, 2002; Huxley & Yiftachel, 2000, p. 339). A key target for these approaches was the continued implication of rationalism as a foundational concept, regardless of its ambivalence to content and emphasis on process. In the past ten to fifteen years, the perspective of *agonistic pluralism* has grown in prominence in the face of mounting doubts about the deliberative model of democracy (Gualini, 2015, p. 6). Although it is an active body of research with competing conceptions and manifestations, political theorists Chantal Mouffe (2000; 2013), Ernesto Laclau (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985) and, to a lesser extent, Jacques Rancière (1999) and Jacques Lacan (2006) have been by far the most influential intellectual resources drawn on by planning theorists in the contemporary debate (Hillier, 2003; Pløger, 2015; Gualini, 2015; Legacy, 2015).

To be clear, 'agonistic pluralists' are united with the deliberative democrats in attending to the aggregative-representative model's impoverished understanding of democratic legitimacy and the problem of instrumental rationality in decision-making (Mouffe, 2000). Contrary to the claims of the deliberative democrats, however, agonistic pluralists argue that the pursuit of a communicatively rationally mediated consensus cannot produce the emancipatory ideal it claims. The key sticking point is the idea of 'the political' used in this democratic model. For agonistic

pluralists, the ‘field’ of politics is characterised by intrinsically irreducible potential for conflict, or *antagonism*. Deliberation is constituted through relations of power and the identities, social facts, rationalisms, and logics that are implicated in deliberative practices cannot be truly reconciled, only rejected, repressed or assimilated by the most powerful *hegemonic* modes of understanding (Gualini, 2015, p. 9). As such, they argue that deliberative processes that terminate in consensus constitute a form of political organization that coopts or shuts out counter-hegemonic social forces, resulting in the perpetuation of a certain distribution of power that favours some at the expense of others.

This argument comes amid claims that the patterns of political organization inspired by deliberative model of democracy have produced a contemporary condition of “post-politics”: a “rigged game of sycophancy...in which decision-making space is made so narrow as to allow only a miniscule debate in a highly restricted discourse” (Bylund, 2012, p. 321). This is argued to have led to the alienation and consolidation of groups of individuals who struggle to identify with any conception of citizenship (Mouffe, 2000, p. 96). For the agonistic pluralist, this is a dangerous state of affairs that produces insurgent identity-based conflicts between groups that have been constructed to have little in common. Instead, the creation and preservation of *agonistic* public space is advocated for, which is intended to “[multiply] the institutions, the discourses, [and] the forms of life that foster identification with democratic values” (Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*, 2000, p. 96). This is a space where confrontation between irreconcilable subject-positions can be freely articulated without any expectation of a final consensus (Gualini, 2015, p. 14). Under this model, democracy is a *condition* that emerges not from a certain institutional arrangement, government, or juridico-political form, but in the practices of contestation, of actively drawing and redrawing the borders of inclusion and exclusion (Gualini, 2015, p. 12).

2.3 Rationalism, Power, and Incommensurability

The narrative developed in the preceding sections recounts the shifting relationship between rationalism and democracy as it pertains to the contemporary debate. In the early twentieth century, the hierarchy between planning knowledge and politics was pronounced and neatly ordered, a result of the dominant role of instrumental rationality in the aggregative-representative model of decision-making. Over time, we see instrumental rationalism capitulating to politics as the legitimate basis for ordering society – either through its ontological reformulation so that it is normatively defined by a community of deliberators, or altogether rejected in the case of a fundamentally irreconcilable pluralism of views. Although it is clear that both deliberative democrats and agonistic pluralists see the entry of rationalism/knowledge into decision-making processes as a source of power and inequality and as an impediment to democracy, each view the relationship between knowledge and power differently. This is significant for two reasons: first, because each view informs the normative prescriptions of each theory, and second, because it is the core reason for the two perspectives' *incommensurability*.

Taking each of these points in turn, deliberative democracy (at least in the Habermasian sense focused on in this research) derives its understanding of power from its attention to the role of speech and language. Habermas' notion of "communicative power" is the ultimate aim of actors engaged in *communicative action*, where a locally-generative and intersubjective definition of truth is arrived at through a process of genuine mutual understanding and which is *free from power*. This intersubjective 'truth' is the only ethical source of power in deliberative processes, serving to uphold the concept of popular sovereignty. Conversely, *strategic action* refers to communicative acts characterized by the appeal to desires and gains or fears and threat of loss, and may be couched in rhetorical "disguise" (Bohman & Rehg, 2014, sec. 3.1). This is to say that power enters into

deliberation through some form of coercion that may be overt, but could also be covert. Although power is recognized by Habermas to be a property of language, the distinction between communicative action and strategic action significantly narrows its definition to the *intention-process* for which speech is deployed. In this way, speech, and the “ground” on which it takes place, is absent from power until actors communicate in ways that are either consensus-seeking, which builds communicative power, or coercive, which *distorts* the communicative process and introduces inequality (Flyvbjerg & Richardson, 2002). Any substantive “rationalism” or pre-determined knowledge is understood to be “infused with biases reflecting particular interpretive predilections and normative values” (Healey, 1992, p. 9). Knowledge is not valid until a community of uncoerced deliberators have agreed on its validity or incorporated it into a different conglomerative and emergent form of knowledge, assuming power is absent from the deliberation through the approximation of the ideal speech situation, and communicative power – the ethical, intersubjective power – reigns supreme.

Agonistic pluralists also derive their understanding of power from language, a key element of post-structuralism, and particularly from Michel Foucault. For Foucault, knowledge *is* power in the same sense that power is knowledge. This is not to only to suggest that those who have knowledge are powerful (a property of the individual) but, more critically, that power exists as a force that governs *relations* between facts and values. Here, what makes sense in the social world is not something intrinsic to that fact or thing, but the culmination of historically contingent relations of power. In his *Discipline and Punish* (1977), Foucault uses the example of a Panopticon – a design for a prison in which prisoners are induced to believe they are always being watched, which informs how they think, act, and make sense of their predicament (Foucault, 1977). Crucially, this is due to the structure of the facility, itself a metaphor for social reality, in which a

system of power relations is as *productive* of experience as it is *restrictive*. For the agonistic pluralist then, it is impossible for a “speech situation” to be absent of power – actors must draw on intersubjective social knowledge in order to make sense of what each other is saying – and entailed in this knowledge are rules about the relationship of one fact to another. This *chain of signification* between facts is by no means inevitable, but it tends to have the appearance as such through *dominant* or *hegemonic* modes of understanding. Here, rationalism enters into debate as one of these dominant or hegemonic modes. This is not a “problem” for democracy; it is a fact of social life. What is a problem for democracy is the indisputability of certain social knowledge, or rationalisms, which is what agonistic pluralism is purported to attend to.

These competing conceptions inform the normative commitments of each theory, and are therefore fundamental to their respective understandings of democracy and how best to pursue it. Crucially, these ontologies of knowledge and power are not easily comparable – they are *incommensurable*. Definitions of incommensurability abound in the philosophy of science literature. Thomas Kuhn is perhaps the most famous author to discuss the term in recent memory, referring to the differing ‘taxonomical structures’ of successive revolutions in scientific theory (Oberheim, 2013). Other philosophers have also pointed out that incommensurability has to do with competing worldviews – ontological, epistemological, and methodological bases for theory. Suffice it to say, deliberative democracy and agonistic pluralism speak in different languages that tend to result in them ‘talking past one another’. A key reason for this is that power is itself a contested, abstract, and *transfactual* phenomenon (Bhaskar, 1975). Its effects are visible, but not without reference to some prior conceptualization of what it *is*, how to *know* it, and how to *access* it. This debate has tended to take the form of repeated appeals to evidence that, from the

perspective of the other, is very strange or impossible to understand. These are nothing more than wagers about the way the world works – a bet that is not likely to be settled any time soon.

As will be explored in the next chapter, planning scholarship has wrestled with this incommensurability for some time, developing important critiques of ‘collaborative’ approaches to planning. The next chapter will briefly explore these critiques and explore the serious ‘cracks and fissures’ in the theoretical foundations of the Collaborative Planning paradigm where it is premised upon Communicative Action.

3.0 Cracks and Fissures in the Foundation of Collaborative Planning

In the late 1990s, the term ‘Collaborative Planning’ established itself as a nearly ubiquitous term in mainstream planning scholarship, and anecdotally, seems to be a fashionable term for professional planners to use to characterize certain approaches to public engagement. Although once presented in the literature as a singular, coherent research programme (Healey, 1997), it is today a highly diverse body of thought with eclectic theoretical underpinnings. As explained by Neil Harris, “The principal difficulty arising from such widespread use of terms and phrases is that popular and ill-defined usage tends to distort understanding of the central aspects of its original formulations” (Harris, 2002, p. 22). The most prominent ostensible foundation is Habermas’ Theory of Communicative Action and its operative concept, communicative rationality. It is so dominant that scholars critical of Collaborative Planning will sometimes use Habermas’ communicative theory interchangeably with its various manifestations in planning, including ‘communicative’ (Innes J. , 1995), ‘argumentative’ (Forester, 1999), and ‘collaborative’ (Healey, 1997) approaches, among others. In truth, the “communicative turn” (Healey, 1992) is largely indebted to Habermas as a breakthrough in “a longer-term program of research and theoretical development focused upon a concern with the democratic management and control of urban and regional environments and the design of less oppressive planning mechanisms” (Harris, 2002, p. 22). That said, to say Collaborative Planning and communicative rationality are one in the same is to greatly misrepresent what is a complex intellectual relationship.

The Collaborative Planning research programme includes a number of interconnected foci, including: “notions of community; relations of power; global economic restructuring and regional impact; environmentalism; cultures and systems of governance; institutional design; technocratic

control and the nature of expertise; mediation and conflict resolution; and spatial planning” (Harris, 2002, p. 23). To further complicate matters, Collaborative Planning is both an analytical and normative body of thought, providing tools to analysts to critically assess the ways that power manipulates Collaborative Planning processes, as well as serving as a guide for developing ethical planning practices. As such, Collaborative Planning has informed both scholarly critical-analytic methods as well as professional-reflective practices and codes of conduct around the world.

To clarify terminology, this research will adopt the view that “Collaborative Planning” refers to the broad ensemble of diverse, contemporary, and *mainstream* commitments to a diversity of theories and practices, while “communicative rationality” or “communicative approaches” to planning theory will refer more specifically to the subset of Collaborative Planning approaches that explicitly ground ideas about democratic legitimacy in Habermas’ Theory of Communicative Action. This characterization is specifically intended to *exclude* those modes of Collaborative Planning practice that rest outside the bounds of the ‘mainstream’, such as “radical”, “insurgent”, or “advocacy” practice (Friedmann, 1987). These approaches are grounded in the view that the state is essentially repressive, and they stand in necessary opposition to established powers, institutions, and structures in pursuit of transformational change, sometimes with emphases on specific outcomes or agendas (for example, insurgent environmental planning) (Friedmann, 1987, p. 407). Notwithstanding the obvious problems with discretely partitioning between and defining bodies of practice, this exclusion is intended to limit the scope of this research on the “everyday planner” – an individual who is employed in the public, private, or (perhaps less congruously) non-profit sectors while also respecting that there are margins of radical planning practice that exist.

This discussion about the relationship between communicative rationality and Collaborative Planning practice is intended to introduce the main argument of this chapter: that the problems arising from the incommensurability of the contemporary debate begin to dissolve when one interrogates the *practiced* relationship between the central tenets of Communicative Action and Collaborative Planning. This chapter will review the polemics generated by the critical contributions to the contemporary debate and the associated stalemate produced with respect to generating actionable guidance for planning practice. It is suggested that communicative rationality is ill-suited to the task of informing the normative architecture of Collaborative Planning because the latter is committed to extra-deliberative sources of legitimacy that are beyond the scope of the central tenets of the theory of Communicative Action.

3.1 The Limits of Communicative Rationality

The rise of Collaborative Planning and its core theoretical precept, Communicative Action, has been matched by a growing body of critical scholarship that explores the limits of communicative rationality. This section takes its name from a 2000 planning symposium in the *Journal of Planning Education and Research* in which a wide range of critiques were levied against the “Communicative Turn” in planning thought (Healey, 1992). Although there have been numerous waves of productive critique prior to the publication of this symposium, it represents a concerted response to the claim that the Communicative Turn had become a “dominant paradigm” in the discipline (Innes, 1995), and could be thought of as the beginning of the contemporary debate. Shortly thereafter, scholars began to explore the potential of agonistic pluralism in planning practice.

A key characteristic of much of the critical literature is that it is focused on what communicative rationality *misses* in its approach to power. Some have levied this critique from a critical structural-institutionalist perspective, arguing that communicative rationality may have influenced a variety of planning practices to some degree, but that much of planning is informed by unexamined institutional structures that serve to reaffirm the ‘taken-for-grantedness’ of technical and instrumental-rational knowledge. For these neo-Marxian and Gramscian scholars, communicative approaches are insensitive to the role that planning has in upholding these institutional structures as “strategies of the state” to secure its hegemony over the public production of space (Abram, 2000; Huxley, 2000; Huxley & Yiftachel, 2000, pp. 338-339). Others focus on how communicative approaches begin with planning as the taken-for-granted point of departure for inquiry, making them blind to the ways that the structural situation of the profession make possible, or more importantly *impossible*, spaces for genuine deliberation (Brand & Gaffikin, 2007; Neuman, 2000). These Foucauldian approaches are diverse, but are typically directed toward unsettling the claims about the possibility of consensus in the sense propagated by Habermas (Flyvbjerg & Richardson, Planning and Foucault: In Search of the Dark Side of Planning Theory, 2002), or on the historic role of planning as a system of governmentality (Fischler, 2000). Given the narrow and overriding focus of analysis on the micropolitics of power, these scholars argue that it is impossible to see the proverbial ‘forest for the trees’ when it comes to communicative understandings of inequality, domination, and coercion that the theory is ostensibly directed toward eliminating from decision-making.

Responses to these critiques have been somewhat muted. At least part of this has to do with the fact that Collaborative Planning theorists appear to see their communicative understanding of power to be effective and illuminating in ways that elude its critics’ – a product

of misunderstanding the communicative approach and its potential to overcome the shortcomings of its detractors' perspectives. This is embodied in the responses of Collaborative Planning theorists like Charlie Hoch (2007) and Patsy Healey (1999). Healey responds to the claim that communicative approaches are insensitive to institutionalist perspectives by invoking the Giddensian structuration thesis. She argues that this framework analytically connects agency and structure as a mutually constitutive phenomenon amenable to the critical assessment of institutional power (1999, pp. 1131-1132). She concludes by arguing that, though illuminating, a post-structuralist understanding of power is too amorphous to be of practical use to a policy analyst, which is the key contribution of communicative approaches. Hoch, on the other hand, responds to the institutional-structural critique by attacking the epistemological bases of the approaches by pointing to their use of a priori beliefs and concepts to root their analysis of causal relationships – what he calls the “Epistemological Trump” (Hoch C. J., 2007, pp. 275-276). For him, the “critical pragmatism” embodied in Habermas’ approach avoids such bias, widening the analytical and normative potential of the perspective and overcoming the limited applicability of other strictly institutional-structural perspectives.

In each case of critique and counter-critique, little progress appears to have been made in the way of productive knowledge exchange or theoretical innovation. In general, this early phase of the debate can be characterized by each side ‘talking past one another’. The debate could be said to have entered a second phase that focuses more explicitly on the phenomena of political conflict and strife – a development largely indebted to the emergence of the concept of “agonism” in the critical literature (Pløger, 2004). Agonistic pluralism, as has already been indicated, marries the structural-institutionalist critique of hegemony and analytical focus on the neoliberal state, with post-structuralist understandings of power. It also shifted the critical focus to the more explicitly

empirical concept of consensus. Whereas the first phase of critique appears to have been more focused on the communicative underpinnings of Collaborative Planning, the second is directed towards its institutions and the quality of the connection between theory and practice. Jean Hillier, for example, remarks that despite an ostensible overriding focus on the pursuit of consensus, “many planning strategies and/or disputes about development applications do not end in harmonious consensus” (Hillier, 2003). More directly highlighting the transition from an abstract focus on communicative theory to the disjuncture between that understanding and its empirical payout, Libby Porter reviews John Forester’s *Planning in the Face of Conflict*, exploring how facilitative leadership can resolve intractable disputes in planning. Although Porter notes that Forester has taken significant steps toward framing the book as a response to some of the key criticisms of the communicative turn, he is still charged with ‘missing the forest for the trees’. Her words are worth quoting at length:

Neither Forester nor perhaps any other practitioner or author in this field is suggesting that facilitative leadership or mediation sets out to address the *conditions* under which conflict arises... they are designed (sometimes quite beautifully) to address conflicts far down the line from the conditions that might have inculcated those conflicts in the first place.

(Porter, 2015, p. 220)

She goes on to differentiate between two orders of conflict, the first of which Collaborative Planning and its communicative underpinnings have been blind to:

The kinds of contexts that make facilitative leadership possible are the ones where identifiable parties are to some extent “ready” for facilitation, where there is a sufficiently enlightened person or connection between people that sparks the will to a better process, and who has the resources

to make it a reality. To the kinds of first-order conflicts that planning needs urgently now to turn its attention – the scale and brutality of dispossession in the name of development; the neoliberalization of city life; gross and deepening socio-economic disparity, structures, and tendencies that are moving ever more quickly through crisis toward environmental degradation; and uneven development...

(Porter, 2015, pp. 220-221)

Based on the character of responses to agonistic pluralism, it appears that scholars see this second phase of critique as grounded in the lenses of conflict and consensus to be more compelling. The greatest theoretical innovation in this phase has taken the form of synthesis between communicative approaches and agonistic ones. Hillier's work, for example, argues for the retention of some of Habermas' psychological foundations directed *toward* consensus, and the self-conscious recognition of Jacques Lacan's understanding of the Void. Here, Hillier uses Lacan to distinguish between an ideal consensus as the *resolution* of conflict, and the practical consensus as a *settlement* between conflicting parties – a distinction that would contribute to a more agonistic culture of planning practice (Hillier, 2003). Sophie Bond, dissatisfied with the polemical nature of the debate, has taken to developing a similar middle-ground by privileging the agonistic-pluralist ontology in which "the realm of the political, its radical contingency, and its inherent antagonism is foregrounded" (Bond, 2011, p. 171). Bond identifies a key issue with the agonistic approach, however, that relates to the possibility of democratic decisions ("decisions" being a pivotal part of planning practice). As already indicated, agonistic pluralists conceive of democracy as a condition of society – it is nonsense to say whether a decision, criss-crossed with antagonism and contingency as it is, was "democratic" (Bond, 2011, pp. 174-177). She argues that it is necessary to privilege the epistemic proceduralism of Habermas to make the "leap" from condition to

decision. Here, decisions can be judged on their observance of liberty, equality, and reciprocity, standards defined by the context of deliberation (Bond, 2011, p. 177).

Though thought provoking, these contributions are unlikely to sway ardent adherents to agonism. Fuat Gürsözlü's *Debate: Agonism and Deliberation – Recognizing the Difference* argues that attempts to reconcile deliberative democracy with agonistic pluralism fail to fully grasp how different the two approaches are (Gürsözlü, 2009). Gürsözlü focuses on two strategies typically used to assimilate the two perspectives. The first way is reminiscent of the second phase of the contemporary debate, and is rooted in the notion that agonism is compatible with deliberative democracy, assimilating its components into some epistemic proceduralism similar to that suggested by Bond (Gürsözlü, 2009, pp. 357-361). The second way is reminiscent of the first phase of the contemporary debate, and is premised on the notion that communicative rationality is misunderstood by its critics, leading them to underestimate the critical value of the perspective as both a normative guide to practice and analytical framework for the assessment of power (Gürsözlü, 2009, pp. 361 - 364).

Thus far, the debate has served to reaffirmed the depth and significance of the problem of incommensurability between communicative approaches and agonistic pluralism, and the growing critique of consensus-oriented planning practice has led some to argue that participatory planning (interpreted here as Collaborative Planning as defined herein) practices are in a state of crisis (Monno & Khakee, 2012). Without assessing the accuracy of this claim, it is at least clear that scholars have recognized the gravity of the polemics generated by this debate (Innes & Booher, 2015). The stakes for planning theory are high, calling into question the constitution of democratic legitimacy and the possibility of ethical decision-making in planning practice (Gualini, 2015, pp.

13-15; Swyngedouw, 2009). At the same time, the stakes for planning practice have never been more unclear. Short of a simultaneously complex and vague call for recognition of “strife”, promotion of the expression of conflict, and the all but complete abandonment of consensus, it is unclear what needs to change in mainstream planning practice if it is absent a collaborative basis for making decisions. John Pløger echoes this sentiment, explaining that:

The challenge [collaborative] planning faces concerns *how* political and institutional regimes can act responsively from an administrative and democratic capacity while being sensitive to, and doing justice to, diverse interests, values, and fields of knowledge ... It is hard to find debates on what the institutional and pragmatic consequences of this will be – for instance considerations on how to plan with provisional means and interests, including the need to change previous decisions and plans.

(Pløger, 2015, p. 107)

A solution to the problem of designing agonistic pluralist institutions for planning is not likely to be forthcoming. The agonistic pluralist “...project recognizes that the specificity of modern pluralist democracy – even a well ordered one – does not reside in the absence of domination and violence but in the establishment of a set of institutions through which they can be limited and contested” (Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*, 2000, p. 22). Despite this commitment, Mouffe does not articulate what this set of institutions could look like, instead arguing that agonistic democracy is only possible “...by multiplying the institutions, the discourses, the forms of life that foster identification with democratic values” (Mouffe, 2000, p. 96). Ed Wingebach, who ‘wrote the book’ on the problem of institutionalizing agonistic pluralism, elaborates on this comment by explaining that “Agonism precludes the assertion of any

telos for political life and challenges all consensual answers to the institutional questions of politics”; “... the contestability of the constitution of political formations may never be obfuscated to generate stability and order” (Wingenbach, 2011, p. 22). This suggests that *a priori* democratic institutions are tantamount to the agonistic pluralist project – it is the challengeable character of those institutions, their fallibility, and an underlying commitment to shared symbolic spaces for democratic identification. This is a critical point, because it suggests there is *nothing* intrinsic to contemporary Collaborative Planning institutions that make them ‘non-agonistic’ per se, apart from those that explicitly ascribe or rely upon a formal (that is, comprehensive) or procedural definition of democracy in planning – including its communicative bases. The practical consequences to contemporary planning practice are therefore limited to the degree to which the communicative approaches inform the normative structure of planning practice.

3.2 Collaborative Planning, Agonism, and Incommensurability: Much Ado about Nothing?

The polemics of the contemporary debate rest on the assumption that the concept of communicative action is fundamental to informing the ethical commitments of Collaborative Planning practice. As put by Michael Bacon describing John Dewey’s “therapeutic” pragmatism about intractable intellectual disagreements, “philosophical problems only press upon us if we accept their premises” (Bacon, 2012, p. 50). Although planning theory has a great many “uses” in the discipline, it shapes and influences planning practice in complex, indirect, and emergent ways (Friedmann, 2008). Where the target of a debate is the improvement of practice, a pragmatic view would be highly suspicious of the assumption that theoretical incommensurability has anything to do with practical incommensurability. This section will begin by reviewing what planning scholars

believe planners are doing, and then compare that to what Habermas intends with the normative aspects of his Theory of Communicative Action. It will be suggested that Communicative Action may have served a pivotal role as a legitimate democratic basis for the early development of Collaborative Planning practice, but that it sits uneasily with the practiced normative commitments of professional planners. Planning scholars appear to have been highly selective when drawing from Habermas in building a communicative theoretical basis for Collaborative Planning.

In *A Planner's Day: Knowledge and Action in Communicative Practice* (1992), Patsy Healey reviews the kinds of knowledge used in planning processes and explicitly couches the analysis of this knowledge in Habermas' Communicative Action. She is particularly interested here in how various types of 'expert' planning knowledges are validated and how power relations are embodied in their possession and deployment through communicative acts (Healey, 1992, p. 10). She explains that planning experts are expected to "have both substantive knowledge of such areas as urban and regional change, development processes, and environmental systems, and procedural knowledge of their political and institutional settings and the necessary administrative and legal processes" (Healey, 1992, p. 15). Using Habermas' typology, Healey observes that, although "rational-technical" and "aesthetic-expressive" forms were important in the communicative acts of planners that she studied, it was the "moral-practical" forms of knowledge that were most evident, emphasizing the ways that planners mediated *across* knowledge forms in their daily work (Healey, 1992, p. 17). Planners undertook their communicative work by drawing on each of these kinds of knowledge in practices of "offering information", "structuring the agenda", "developing strategies", and providing "images" (metaphors, analogies, etc.) (Healey, 1992, pp. 17-18). Similarly, Forester's *Planning in the Face of Power* explores the ways that planners navigate the complex power relations, intersecting interests, policies, actors, and other

phenomena. As he explains, however, planners play a much more pivotal role in planning practice than merely charting a course to navigate these pressures, “They are necessarily involved in formulating that course” (Forester, 1989, p. 16). To this end, Forester is drawing attention to the agency that planners have in defining the conditions on which planning practice takes place – his most famous description of the planning analyst being that they are “selective organizers of attention to the real possibilities for action” (Forester, 1989, p. 14).

These accounts highlight a particularly interesting thread in Collaborative Planning research that has to do with the manipulative role that planners have in Communicative Action. To be sure, this is usually couched in ethical-normative terms about how planners *ought* to manipulate the process to achieve ‘democratic ends’, to ‘balance the playing field’, or to ‘give voice to the voiceless’ (Krumholz & Forester, 1990). Indeed, these activities are heavily informed by Habermas’ *Discourse Theory*, the normative political theoretic implementation of his Theory of Communicative Action. Here, Habermas reformulates Kant’s deontological ethics, which were premised on the instrumentally rational conditions of moral validity, into discursive conditions of moral validity, which is premised upon communicative rationality (Bohman & Rehg, 2014).

Bruce Goldstein (2010) provides a nuanced look at how this is accomplished in planning practice, and speaks to the ways that planners serve as “epistemic mediators” to use forms of knowledge as “boundary objects”. For Goldstein, planners assist “knowledge communities to bridge their different ways of knowing ‘backstage’ while erasing contingencies in knowledge claims to provide a unified and authoritative scientific voice ‘on-stage’” (Goldstein, 2010, pp. 543-544). Here, the emphasis is placed on the ways that planners mediate difference to “create” truth definitions through collaboration that have authority over its participants because of their invested

agency – to become a reference ‘boundary object’ for all participants. Most importantly, the failure of this boundary object to stand up to singular scientific peer review in the case studied by Goldstein shows how planners’ communication practices are not directed to overtly imposing or asserting the knowledge claims they bring into planning processes so much as they are interested in using it to produce such common boundary objects. In other words, planning knowledge becomes the latticework on which emergent solutions and forms of collective knowledge are based. In a certain light, this phenomenon bears a close resemblance to Foucauldian notions of governmentality; it identifies planning knowledge as an interface between hegemonic sources of power on the one hand and the public on the other (Leffers, 2015, p. 143).

Habermas’ concept of the system-lifeworld is complex, but it is clear that he has significant concerns about modern society and the implication of professionals and experts (including planners) in its ongoing modernization. Recognizing what follows is sure to be a significant oversimplification, Habermas’ lifeworld is a kind of discursive, cultural, and communicative realm based on deep consensus about meaning, folk knowledge, and understanding about the world. “We can think of the lifeworld as represented by a culturally transmitted and linguistically organized stock of interpretive patterns”; an intersubjective “horizon” in which communicative actors must always move (Habermas, 1984, p. 126). *System*, by contrast, is an outsider’s perspective in which “...society can be conceived only as a *system of actions* such that each action has a functional significance according to its contribution to the maintenance of the system” (Habermas, 1984, p. 117). To put it simply, institutionalized, bureaucratized, or otherwise far-removed agents observing the lifeworld lack the kind of interpretive grammar for communicating transparently or cogently as part of a given lifeworld – they must use their own institutionalized, bureaucratized, or otherwise far-removed grammars instead. Habermas explains that the system has increasingly

colonized the lifeworld through processes of modernization in which ‘natural’ patterns of meaning are disrupted by the diversification and segregation of symbolic-communicative resources for ‘productive’, ‘efficient’, and ‘technical’ ends that support the system (Habermas, 1984, pp. 192-197). In other words, the ‘natural’ processes of symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld become replaced by formally organized domains of action – what serves to simultaneously decouple the lifeworld from the system and make the former dependent upon the latter (Habermas, 1984, p. 305). Crucially, experts are key vectors for this colonization, serving as “steering mechanisms”, whose reasoning and culture are incommensurable with the lifeworld (Habermas, 1984, pp. 149-151).

What are we to make of this for planning practice as has been described by Collaborative Planning theorists like Healey and Forester? It’s clear that the emphasis on deliberation and communicative action is intended to support the expression of the multiple lifeworlds of the multiple publics, to reach deep consensus on planning issues among diverse groups and peoples, and to encourage locally-generative solutions to development problems; but the practices of “organizing attention” or “setting the agenda”, among others, are problematic. As we have already explored, planners are forced to structure deliberation on the basis of what is pragmatically possible; their considerations include: policy and legislation, technical constraint, progressive discourses about desirable planning outcomes, and others. Even the concept of making authoritative plans for the future is dubious, given that the language for these plans, regardless of the quality of a given deliberative engagement, must be made to be commensurate with existing institutions, such as zoning regulations and development controls or variances and other appeals processes.

Seyla Benhabib, a political theorist and proponent of deliberative democracy, anticipates these issues by arguing that

...legitimacy and rationality can be attained with regard to collective decision-making processes in a polity if and only if the institutions of this polity and their interlocking relationship are so arranged that what is considered in the common interest of all results from processes of collective deliberation conducted rationally and fairly among free and equal individuals.

(Benhabib, S., 1994 *as cited in* Mouffe, C., 2000. p. 46)

Following Habermas, for normative claims in deliberation to be valid, ‘planning knowledge’, including its institutions and practices, must be subordinated to a community of deliberators and must, in principle, be fully revisable. In the context of planning, it is clear that, despite their preponderance in shaping the terms of deliberation and engagement, their capacity for such revision is severely limited. Indeed, many of these things may make up the *constitutive rules* of planning, without which it would be impossible to recognize planning as such in the first place (see Searle, 1995, pp. 41-53). This poses significant problems for the utility of the Theory of Communicative Action to provide ethical or democratic meaning to practices that bear a very close family resemblance to Habermas’ “steering mechanisms” that serve to colonize the lifeworld. While the margins may be celebrated for their contingency, the hard constraints of what is constitutive of planning in the first place may be effectively non-negotiable.

This points to a contradictory tension in planning between its constitutive rules, on the one hand, and the normative means for justification the other – the classic political theory dilemma of reconciling the rational and the legitimate. Taking Habermas’ lead, Collaborative Planning

theorists' answer to these issues has overwhelmingly focused on critical reflection – an ethical responsibility, also enshrined within many professional ethical codes – to bring a critical dialectic to deliberation intended to expose the unintended, structurally embedded consequences of planning activity and to learn from it (Schön, 1983; Forester, 2012; Healey, 1997). While it is undoubtedly a helpfully cathartic practice, it is unclear how any amount of reflection and knowledge of unforeseen structural or “system” oppression could be brought to bear in future planning engagements *unless the constitutive rules of planning are themselves revisable*. Planning deliberation may be doomed to “colonize the lifeworld” because planners cannot be fully true participants of Communicative Action; there are boundary conditions that the practice imposes upon deliberation.

The key problem with normative theory in the discipline at present is precisely that it cannot simultaneously value the “intrinsic” properties of planning (its constitutive institutions and practices) and the ethical need to ground collective decisions in the authority of the public. To be absolutely clear, this statement is not meant to introduce the effort to elucidate the substantive content of the “intrinsic properties” of planning. It is to suggest that that which makes planning “planning” is insulated from its ethical commitments. None of this is to suggest that Collaborative Planning practice is unethical or that it cannot be democratic, nor is it to suggest that the Theory of Communicative Action is as flawed as its critics contend. Instead, it is to suggest that the *Theory of Communicative Action is ill-suited to providing normative guidance on these questions in the context of planning practice*. Mouffe has argued that these troubles with respect to the practical coherence of Habermas' theories are related his conceptual collapse of politics into ethics (Mouffe, 2000, p. 99). Consideration of the structure of the political is an analytical blind spot because the good is indistinguishable from the kinds of politics promoted to secure a democratic consensus.

This state of affairs suggests that planning scholars have selected certain elements of Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action and Discourse Ethics having to do with the processes pertaining to ideal speech and communicative rationality, while overlooking much of what Habermas has to say about the distinctions and challenges associated with the system-lifeworld distinction. Among other things, this has the dual effect of reducing the persuasiveness of the prototypical Collaborative Planning theorist's claim that 'good' process alone can overcome the distorting effects of power in deliberation, as well as vindicating much of Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action with respect to its stance on the 'taken-for-granted' institutions and structures that precede deliberation. Much to his credit, Habermas himself would likely be suspicious of the communicative theoretical project that supposedly underpins Collaborative Planning, particularly without the normative commitment to continuously take repeated serious, public, and accountable assessments and revisions of the constitutive rules of planning as part of deliberation – an act that could very well be incompatible with planning.

This exercise is meant to demonstrate that there are more pressing issues at hand than the incommensurability of the two perspectives. Although the theoretical incommensurability is real and it is probably not possible to "combine" the two perspectives, the Theory of Communicative Action does not appear to have been applied very faithfully or completely to the tasks and problems of planning. A key hangover from this intellectual cross-fertilization for Collaborative Planning has been the collapse of politics into ethics. As such, it would seem that the question of whether the normative condition of consensus is desirable or possible in planning is secondary to whether it is a useful organizing concept for normative planning theory in the first place, given the apparent tensions in practiced commitments of the discipline reviewed in the literature. The real question, I argue, is how to conceive of a normative theoretical framework that can make sense of both of the

central, practiced commitments of planning: its technical-rational “planning knowledges” on the one hand and its emancipatory commitments on the other.

4.0 A New Normative Architecture for Collaborative Planning Theory

Throughout this literature review, an effort has been made to be agnostic about the favouring one ‘side’ of the debate over the other. Indeed, it should be clear that a more comprehensive Habermasian lifeworld-systems critique of Collaborative Planning practice would likely yield similarly insightful conclusions as those raised by the agonistic pluralists, particularly as it relates to the possibility of deep consensus in planning and the oppressive potential of planning institutions and socio-political structures that characterize the profession, though this task is beyond the scope of this research. It is at this point, however, that this agnosticism is abandoned. This chapter will argue that agonistic pluralism is very well positioned to make sense of these varied commitments of planning practice.

The normative ethics of Habermasian deliberative democracy are understood here to be *idealistic*. This is not meant to refer to the concept of ideal speech, or, at least directly, the goal of consensus. It references the affirmation of the *potential* for fully justified, and therefore fully legitimate, collective action, at least in theory. Habermas recognizes the idealism of his operative concept of deep consensus between a community of free and equal deliberators, recognizing that “... for many, if not most, of our moral rules and choices, the best we can achieve are partial justifications: arguments that are not conclusively convincing for all, but also are not conclusively defeated, in limited discourses with interlocutors we regard as reasonable” (Bohman & Rehg, 2014). That said, there is still a key issue with this approach in that Habermas’ conditions for justification are unidimensional; the normative quality of a collective decision is solely dependent upon the quality of that collective’s consensus. Because Habermas’ approach to normative ethics are procedural, there is always only one answer – and it is always the only right answer – to

improve the procedures to achieve consensus. The dogmatic mantra is familiar in Collaborative Planning Theory that does something like, “*if only* people were a little bit more facilitative, or more governments and more practitioners and more developers knew about the ‘surprising possibilities of facilitative leadership’” (Porter, 2015, p. 220). Notwithstanding the practical difficulties of obtaining a fully justified and fully legitimate collective decision, the ability to describe the shape and form of such a decision, even at the theoretical level, makes it an idealistic position for the purposes of this research.

Agonistic pluralism, on the other hand, does not posit the possibility of such a decision. The root of this orientation to this key question of normative theory is the post-structuralist concepts of *différance* and *undecidability* (explained in greater detail below). Among other things, these concepts are responsible for agonistic pluralism’s unique theoretical positions on antagonism, identity, and politics, and they have important implications for normative theory, chief among them, that there is *never* a completely normatively justifiable collective decision. This perspective informs the methodological intuitions of this research (discussed in Chapter 5), and for purposes that will become clear below, is considered herein to be a *pragmatic* basis for normative theory, rather than an idealistic one.

4.1 Différance, Undecidability and Pragmatic Normative Theory

For post-structuralists, reality as it is accessible to a human agent is constituted *entirely* by language, as already touched on earlier in the discussion of power in Chapter 2. This is not to say that reality does not exist outside of language, but to say that there is no way of bringing meaning to it without its use. As such, the study of language as a social and political practice has the

potential to reveal the structures that hold together meaning and knowledge of the world, and in particular, the forces that perpetuate those constructions through time.

This approach to language is premised on the idea that the architecture of meaning is constituted not by an ‘essence’ but by ‘*différance*’. Here, the meaning of a *sign* (a symbol, such as a word, that signifies *something*) is constituted by an intrinsically *relational* structure, that is, its meaning is not contained within itself, but in the play of a relationship. *Différance* refers to two simultaneous arguments about this relation, and is best understood when one considers that it is derived from the French verb ‘*différer*’, which means both to differ and to defer (Allen, 2010, p. 64). In the first sense, meaning is constituted by that which it is *not* – its binary opposition. Simple examples include good/bad, inside/outside, right/wrong, brave/cowardly. In the second sense, the possibility of a fixed meaning is always *put off* or *just out of reach*. As such, opposition plays a critical role in post-structuralist analyses because it is simultaneously what makes a definition of a concept possible (in that it is given meaning through difference) and impossible (in the sense that its meaning is always deferred, rather than contained within itself).

Discourse features heavily in post-structuralists’ approach to language because it refers to the practical deployment of this architecture of language. Here, the process of meaning-making necessarily produces a hierarchy by drawing a boundary line between the two concepts whereby one side is privileged over the other. Crucially, this line is said to be “undecidable”, that is, that there is no “natural” or “essential” place where one part of the binary ends and the other begins; yet these boundaries must be drawn routinely to produce comprehensibility in discourse (Lawlor, 2006). To be clear, there is no way to “transcend” the arbitrariness of decision –an undecidable line *must* be drawn in order to make any comprehensible meaning – it is a fundamental property

of the human experience of reality. As the structuralist Ferdinand de Saussure wrote, “it is mysterious that... language works out its units while taking shape between two shapeless masses (de Saussure, 1959, p. 112)”. Similarly, Derrida wrote that to make this decision and place a line is always *madness*, an hyperbole intended to draw attention to what constitutes a *sane* decision – to be wholly justified in a choice or way of being (Derrida, 1995, p. 65). For want of a better term, this decision is always arbitrary in the sense that it has no transcendental, fundamentally “right”, or “true” basis. That said, it is also not correct to conclude that this decision is arbitrary in the sense that it is a random “leap of faith”. These decisions are acted upon *as if* they have final justifications, setting the horizon for permissible or acceptable courses of action. Discourses are therefore necessarily reductive – they reduce and attempt to *fix* the number of ways that its signs can be arranged in relation to one another (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, pp. 26-27).

A confounding issue with these situations of *articulation* is that there is never only one discourse attempting to establish *closure* through the fixation of meaning. In cases where competing discourses mutually exclude one another, an *antagonism* is formed in which the discourses attempt to block one another – to nullify their ‘final justifications’ and logical or normative coherence (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, pp. 47-48). *Hegemony* refers to a discourse that is predominant, and it intervenes in antagonism by rearticulating the elements of the object of the antagonism (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 48). Through such rearticulation, an hegemonic intervention is able to dissolve antagonism by assimilating parts of the challenging discourse that do not threaten the core, constitutive features of the dominant discourse. This is why agonistic pluralists are so vehemently opposed to so-called “third-way” politics of resolving conflict through consensus – it is a mode of politics that is, for them, essentially assimilatory and directed toward

redrawing lines in undecidable terrain in such a way that placates challenging discourses and preserves the status quo.

The linguistic theoretical concepts of *différance* and undecidability are together manifested in Derrida's political ethics through the concept of the *constitutive outside* to show the intrinsically contingent nature of identity and social relations. Social objectivity (i.e. the way the social world seems to 'work' or 'fit together') is constructed through power relations, working to constitute identities along the lines of a hegemonic definition of inclusion (the 'inside') and exclusion (the 'outside') (Mouffe, 2000, pp. 12-13). Crucially, what is 'included' is privileged in such a way as to seem inevitable – that the margins are not there – the inside is always predicated upon the existence of the outside. As such, where an identity is premised upon a given hegemonic definition, the 'outside' is necessarily an ever-present possibility – an 'empty', marginal subject position that can always be readily occupied. Here, the idea of a "stakeholder" is illustrative. Stakeholders are constituted in planning discourse in various contingent ways, but they are always rooted in some definition of inclusion – perhaps on the basis of property rights, access rights, or as a member of the general public. Even if a definition of a "stakeholder" seems practically universal, the principle of *différance* guarantees that a margin exists and can be readily occupied – perhaps by those who seek recognition that is not predicated on the basis of property, access, and cannot properly be seen to be merely a member of the public. It is the immanent potential for antagonism from the pursuit of a 'place where there is no space'.

For Mouffe, when this occurs, it produces an antagonistic 'us'/'them' distinction between enemies (Mouffe, 2000, pp. 12-13). This antagonism is a conflict about the undecidable frontier between the inside and the outside – it is, as she puts it, *the political* manifest in social relations.

At this point in our discussion of linguistic and socio-political aspects of post-structuralist theory, several elements should be emphasized:

1. There are no final (that is, transcendental) justifications. To justify is to draw an undecidable line that has been constituted by social and political relations of power. *True* justification is always deferred: a symbol of its own impossibility.
2. Discourses are exclusionary – they reduce the possible ways that signs can relate to one another by attempting the *closure* of the contingency of meaning.
3. The constitutive outside is the key reason for the incommensurability of binary social entities. Antagonism is necessarily an immanent possibility as a product of the constitution of *any* identity.
4. Political conflict (i.e. antagonism) is the process of struggle to rearticulate the undecidable frontier of a given social objectivity.

Where there are no ultimate justifications for decisions, where does this leave us with respect to the possibilities for normative planning theory? As has already been intimated, planning practice depends on its ability to produce *legitimate* decisions - a quality that has, thus far, been predicated upon the fulfillment of the democratically-defined public good. More tangibly, the legitimacy of planning activity is typically judged on the basis of, for example, the comprehensiveness of engagement, including things like the breadth and diversity of stakeholders consulted, the meaningful consideration of feedback, and mitigation of conflict through deliberation – all cornerstone democratic practices of Collaborative Planning and collective decision-making. If we lose faith in these practices, how can planning secure such legitimacy? Mouffe's answer to this question is worth quoting at length:

Democracy requires ... that the purely constructed nature of social relations finds its complement in the purely pragmatic grounds of the claims to power legitimacy. This implies that there is no unbridgeable gap between power and legitimacy - not obviously in the sense that all power is automatically legitimate, but in the sense that: (a) if any power has been able to impose itself, it is because it has been recognized as legitimate in some quarters: and (b) if legitimacy is not based in an aprioristic ground, it is because it is based in some form of successful power.

(Mouffe, 2000, p. 100)

Here, the “purely pragmatic grounds of the claims to power and legitimacy” refers to the practices of social objectivity. As such, Mouffe is suggesting that the emancipatory possibilities underpinning ‘the political’ are wholly contained within a given context of the practices in question. By understanding and making explicit the practical *conditions* of the potential emergence of an antagonism, an opportunity is provided to consider *other* ways of drawing the undecidable frontier. Crucially, democracy is predicated not on ‘resolving’ these antagonisms, but in creating conditions that make them less likely to occur in the first place, despite the fact that they remain, intrinsically, immanently possible (Mouffe, 2000, pp. 12-13). In effect, it involves weakening the hegemonic nature of social objectivity – exposing the ‘taken-for-granted’, revealing the necessary contradictions of belief, and making undecidable frontiers less fixed and more fluid. For Mouffe, this makes conflict less likely to generate an antagonistic ‘us/them’ distinction and more likely for mutually constituting subjects to find “common symbolic space” in democratic tolerance and pluralism – so that simple differences remain simple differences, and there is a shared expectation of fluidity of order (Mouffe, 2000, p. 13). She terms this state of affairs ‘agonistic pluralism’ – a relation between adversaries, rather than enemies.

As such, the agonistic approach does not challenge Collaborative Planning practices per se; it challenges any faith in them as definitively “ethical” or “good”. What can be said about Collaborative Planning practices is that they are *useful* for producing planning processes and outcomes seen as legitimate, but that legitimacy is itself a social and political phenomenon resulting from a fixing of power relations. Agonistic planning ethics, therefore, has to do with how undecidable frontiers are established and maintained, both prior to and in response to the emergence of antagonism – this may or may not take place in the context of Collaborative Planning practices of engagement, meaningful consideration, and deliberation.

It is for this reason that agonistic pluralism is termed here as a *pragmatic* normative theory, rather than an *idealistic* one that posits the possibility of some neutral ground on which to justify a *specific* undecidable frontier.² The potential of this normative architecture for use in Collaborative Planning theory is borne out most directly by its capacity to meaningfully evaluate and recognize the contingency of both the constitutive practices and emancipatory commitments of the discipline. With this approach, the ethics of planning practices answer solely to the consequences of the actions and agency of its practitioners, rather than some transcendental epistemic viewpoint, including that of the problematic “consensus” of a community of deliberators. Consequently, the quality of the emancipatory potential of Collaborative Planning

² This research is not intended to be aligned (or necessarily misaligned) with a very sizeable collection of pragmatist and neopragmatist writing in planning theory – most of which belongs to the collaborative planning tradition (Hoch C. , 1988; Healey, 2009; Forester, 2012). Philosophical pragmatism is generally considered to be epistemically agnostic in the sense that “truth” is a relatively unimportant driver of theoretical valuation – some theories of pragmatic orientation are epistemic, while others are not. Instead, pragmatism makes strong ontological claims about the primacy of practice over metaphysics (Bacon, 2012). It is used herein as an extension of the pragmatic maxim, “according to which the meaning of a concept is a matter of the practical effects of acting in accordance with it” (Bacon, 2012, p. 3).

practice is contained within the capacity to have new and meaningful conversations about how things might be different, and why a given experience of conflict might demand that things *should* be different. On this view, normative planning theory should be directed toward exposing and deconstructing the necessary contradictions and power-bases of planning practices to transform them into tools for thinking anew – to turn what appears to be immutable and inevitable into something mutable and revisable. Here, it becomes possible to talk about the *value* of those practices in new ways. The outcome of such valuation is indeterminate both in terms of history and normativity – deconstruction applies to all discursive phenomena, both “good” and “bad” (however defined). Following the normative emphasis of agonistic pluralism, the ‘conversation’ about value should be premised on the demands and values of antagonized identities in a given context. Conflict therefore simultaneously serves as a lightning rod for practices that most deserve revision, as well as the terms for its revision, if any.

We have glimpsed a possible new research programme directed towards advancing the emancipatory potential of planning practice. The following chapters will attempt to develop a broad characterization of the commitments of planners and how these commitments might provide some insight into the emancipatory limits of planning practice. It will imagine a place for the discipline that is conducive and constructive to an agonistic democracy – an imagination predicated on the capacity to have New Conversations about an experience of antagonism in a given context that serves to legitimate an expression of conflict and strife and create new ways of ordering practice for the future.

5.0 Research Design: Discourse, Conflict, and Deconstruction

To reiterate the purpose of this research, this study aims to apply the theoretical framework of agonism to understand the emancipatory limits of Collaborative Planning practice and to explore what these limits might mean for planning ethics. Thus far, the literature review conducted throughout Chapters 2, 3, and 4 has discussed the historic evolution of the relationship between rationalism and democracy in planning, and that different understandings of these concepts constitute the incommensurability of deliberative democracy and agonism. I would like to suggest, however, that this incommensurability is not a major concern from a practical point of view, because Collaborative Planning practice seems to be constituted by more varied and complex commitments than those accounted for through communicative rationality. Agonism is argued to be able to account for these more varied commitments because the ethical is located at the undecidable frontiers of *any* practice. To begin to move towards a discipline whose ethics is directed toward the reflexive interrogation of such frontiers, a new ‘ethos’ is necessary (Pløger, 2004; Bond, 2011). As will be discussed in Chapter 6, this ethos can be described as a kind of planning-disciplinary ‘conversation’. Pursuant this new conversation, it is critical to develop an understanding of the emancipatory limits of planning practice and how they actualize the potential for antagonism. With this understanding, it is possible to develop recommendations for a framework for planning ethics that is sensitive to the conditions for the emergence of antagonism, so that this conversation occur and the discipline can reimagine new planning-disciplinary frontiers. These points are translated into the central research questions below:

1. What are the commitments of planning practitioners and how are they discursively constituted?

2. What tensions and contradictions exist in the employment of these discourses? How do these tensions actualize the potential for antagonism?
3. Are there limits to the emancipatory potential of planning practice? How can they be characterized and what consequences does this have for our understanding of ethics?

The next section will reflect upon the methodological considerations that inform this research, including Discourse and Conflict. The following section reviews the methods employed to gather the interview data. The final section of this chapter reviews the method of discourse analysis used to explore the interview data.

5.1 Methodological Considerations: Discourse, Practice, and Conflict

Further to the discussion on language in the previous chapter, discourse is a “particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)” (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 1). Following Laclau and Mouffe, Jorgensen and Phillips explain that a discourse is a “fixation of meaning within a particular domain” (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 26). They use the metaphor of a fishing net whereby the knots in the net are linguistic “signs” that derive their meaning from their position and differentiation from other nearby signs. As a fundamentally social process, this ‘net’ is the site of constant struggle, with the forces of convention, negotiation, and conflict constantly working to perpetuate or rearrange its structure precisely because agents do not carry identical ‘nets’ (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 25). As further explained by Jorgensen & Phillips:

We constantly strive to fix the meaning of signs by placing them in particular relations to other signs; returning to the metaphor, we try to stretch out the fishing-net so that the meaning of each sign is locked into a

specific relationship to the others. The project is ultimately impossible because every concrete fixation of the sign's meaning is *contingent*; it is possible but necessary. It is precisely those constant attempts that never completely succeed which are the entry point for discourse analysis.

(Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 25)

For example, a planning practitioner may describe their practice as one rooted in “facilitation” – this is a “knot” in the above-mentioned net analogy. Notwithstanding one's own inferences about the word ‘facilitation’ in a planning context, it means nothing. It requires *articulation* to introduce other knots and fix their relationship to ‘facilitation’. The practitioner may then mention the words “process”, “diversity”, “interest”, and “stakeholder” to begin to articulate its meaning. Crucially, this process of “fixing” is intersubjective – the knots must be fixed in a way that makes sense to a community of participants. It is a kind of socially-mediated logic (or “rationality”) about intuitive ways that these knots fit together and relate to one another. This “logic” and the rules it entails is discourse.

Discourse is therefore a fundamental requirement of the intelligibility of the complex communication that characterizes the transmission of knowledge, the existence of culture, and the conduct of politics, among other things. It is a kind of *practice* in the sense that it is a form of social order – actions that enforce or reproduce a relationship between subjects and objects, both social and material, and are often (albeit inadequately) characterized by regularity and habit (Schatzki, 2001, pp. 50-52). These nodes cannot be fixed in a way that seems arbitrary or incoherent to the listener. To do so, the speaker would not bring any meaning to what they are attempting to articulate. The former must draw on concepts, ideas, and logics that the latter can

relate to in some way through “ways of speaking”. Returning to the above example of ‘facilitation’, consider the following hypothetical segment:

“The process involves helping stakeholders understand the situation, hearing their concerns and interests, and collectively figuring out what to do next.”

The segment is made up of various objects, such as “situation”, “concerns”, and “interests”, and subjects, like stakeholders. It is also articulated in such a way as to establish the hierarchy of “roles”, forming social identities for the speaker and the subject: “...*helping stakeholders...*”, or “*collectively figuring out*”. It also has a sense of movement toward resolution: “...*what to do next*”. In this limited example, each of these components “speaks to” the signifier of process in such a way that draws on shared ideas about facilitation. Were the speaker to say, “The process involves educating them about the situation, identifying the problems they have with it, then figuring out how to get this done without making them angry”, other discursive resources are being used that “position” objects and subjects in different hierarchies than the original formulation. Conversely, if the segment had articulated that “the process is about the showing them the vegetables we put in the stew, hearing their tastes, then proceeding with the project”, there would have been several hints of coherent discourses, but outside of the context of this explanatory paragraph, little meaning would have been conveyed. In a planning context, the invocation of ingredients of a stew is not a common analogy (assuming it is intended to be an analogy), nor is typically possible to “hear” tastes. Practices and discourses are therefore a form of social order because participants are compelled to use and understand them in non-arbitrary ways. This does *not* mean that the listener has to agree with this articulation, or that the speaker cannot use unconventional discourses to connect knots in the net. Indeed, as will be discussed, these two

possibilities are the essential connection of the political to the social, and the mode of entry for antagonism, resistance, and social transformation (Schatzki, 2001, p. 53).

A key part of the methodological attention to discourse in this research is that it is intimately connected to non-discursive practice, providing a window into planning practice as it occurs outside of the interview. For Schatzki, discourses and practices are separate but interdependent phenomena that exist in a cyclical, mutually constitutive relationship, each playing a role in the maintenance and revolution of social order. Following Laclau and Mouffe, he explains that discourses are “structured totalities of meaningful entities”, while practice is “movement and change”. He elaborates with the following explanation:

Discourse ... is being, while practice is the becoming from which discourses result and to which they eventually succumb. Conversely, discourses are the precarious fixities that precipitate from human practice and from which further practice arises.

(Schatzki, 2001, p. 53)

To illustrate using the example of “facilitation” provided above, a planner enters into facilitation knowing, at least in some subconscious way, what facilitation entails – the activity has been discursively constituted to serve as a kind of ‘blueprint’ outlining the rules about what it is and what it isn’t, and how it is done more or less “properly”. The actual act of facilitation, however, is where real contingency of the social world enters into play – calling upon habit, creative thinking and connection to other knowledge, emotion, and others. None of this *means* anything until the planner or an observer rearticulates the experience by reflecting on it, either privately or publicly. Practice is therefore tied in a non-arbitrary way to discourse, and vice versa. This means that the interview data is indicative of the “real” practice of planning outside of the interview discussion.

This is not to say that everything said in an interview is necessarily “true” about practice, but that practices have a sort of resemblance to the discourse in the sense that the same rules or logics are at play.

This key assumption about the relationship between discursive data and practice provides direction on the *kind* of conversation that would yield the best data about practice. Planning scholarship features a strong tradition in the study of practice. John Forester’s work on *practice stories* is particularly useful example of the study of practice that focuses on the ways that planners leverage context in order to achieve their goals and maintain legitimacy (Forester, 1989, p. 28). Consistent with the notion that discourse and practice are very closely connected, other scholars also advocate a turn toward “story telling” as a rich and accessible way to generate meaningful data about what planners *do* (Sandercock, 2003; Forester, 1993). Recognizing that problems and challenges need to be *constructed* before they are intelligible, either to the researcher or the planner themselves, Forester explains that it is not the facts in stories that are important, but the claims of value and significance: we discover “an infrastructure of ethics, an ethical substructure of practice, a finely woven tapestry of value...” through the telling of stories (Forester, 1993, pp. 199 - 201). Leonie Sandercock concurs with Forester’s understanding of the importance of storytelling, arguing that much of planning itself is performed through story, from the emotional and value-laden to identity and core phenomenology (Sandercock, 2003, pp. 181 - 204).

In order to attend to these aspects of stories, Forester provides several useful recommendations for analyzing, examining, and telling practice stories. For the purposes of this research, several are particularly important (Forester, 2005):

1. Allow the subject to choose the case in question, provided it is an “instructive” example of the challenges and opportunities faced by the practitioner. The choice of case is an indirect expression of what the practitioner takes to be particularly valuable.
2. Focus on how a situation was handled, rather than what they think about it. The former approach grounds discourse to tangible planning practices, the latter is likely to produce more general statements about politics. This point is less important for the purposes of this research than it is for Forester, but it does draw attention to the grounding of analysis of practices directly connected to antagonism. General statements about politics or conflict are reflections of identity and, as such, play a role in the reproduction of certain practices, but it is not likely to entail the same kinds of discourses used *in the moment*. While it is a tenuous and imprecise distinction, it reflects the difference between discourses used to support a “public” self versus the “practical” self (cf. Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, pp. 109-110).
3. Allow time for reflection. Here, asking what lessons were learned from an experience provides another opportunity to gather data about value. What surprised a practitioner about an experience is also relevant, as it is a manifestation of conflict between systems of rationality; what is expected is an expression of a structure of hegemony, what is truly surprising may be the expression of the ambiguity of that structure – an affront to the taken-for-granted.

These methodological considerations are applied herein to generate interpretive data on the reproduction of planning practice. A final consideration in this discussion of practice is the phenomenon of conflict – the key “moment” when the ethical is of greatest concern both the planning practitioner and the discipline of planning more broadly.

Although the methodological principles of *différance* and undecidability are just as applicable in cases of ‘regular’ planning practice (i.e. “non- conflictual” practice), conflict is understood here to be a “critical case” that permits some qualified applicability to the broader scope of Collaborative Planning practice. According to Flyvbjerg (2001, pp. 78 - 79), such cases permit logical deductions about the “population” of possible cases of a study – an effective substitute for the limited generalizability of qualitative data under conditions of small sample sizes. This is further justified in this research by the following observations:

- As has been explored in previous chapters, the academic literature focuses on conflict as a key “test” for emancipatory change, and;
- Practically speaking, conflictual situations often feature a heightened experience of stress, and, from a planner’s point of view as a facilitator of public engagement, typically necessitates a response of some kind. Whether strategic or impulsive, these communicative and social responses are amenable to the kind of discourse analysis planned for this research project.

Recognizing these points, it is important to appreciate that there are many different *kinds* of conflict. This research does not impose a specific definition or typology of conflict at the stage of data collection. As conflict is best seen not as the object of this research, but the “field” in which it takes place, the meaning of conflict is left open for the research participants to interpret and apply themselves. In Chapter 6, an heuristic typology of conflict will be discussed to support the general conception of the emancipatory limits and potentials of planning practice. In consideration of the above methodological considerations, this discussion will now turn to the procedures of data collection.

5.2 Data Collection: Semi-Structured Interviews

This research relies on the transcripts of five semi-structured interviews to develop source material for discourse analysis. This limited sample size is a direct consequence of the limited resources available to undertake this research project and the diminishing return on resource investment for a larger sample sizes for discourse analyses. In their guidance on selecting a sample for this kind of project, Jorgensen and Phillips explain that “Discourse analysis takes a long time” (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 120). The method of discourse analysis is premised on repeated reading and re-reading of texts and they suggest that it is often sufficient to use a sample of only “a few texts”. This is because “...the focus of interest is language use rather than the individual, and ... discursive patterns can be created and maintained by just a few people” (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 120). Five interviews is considered to be sufficient to provide access to a wide range of discourses while both keeping the project manageable and helping to ensure that the analysis of any one text does not suffer from the inclusion of too many sources.

The participants were selected using a programme of *purposive sampling* (Berg, 2001, p. 32). This sampling method was chosen primarily to ensure that participants were selected based on the depth of planning experience on which they could draw. As such, all of the planning practitioners had at least five years of continuous planning experience, and four of the five had at least 15 years. Again, because the object of analysis is discourse, rather than the individual, the “representativeness” of the sample is less critical to the validity of this study than the consistency of coding and soundness of conclusions. That being said, some degree of variation helps to ensure that a diversity of perspectives – and therefore a diversity of possible discourses – is encountered, thereby *enriching* the study. As such, the sample was also constituted by a mix of planners from the private and public sectors. Interviews One, Two, and Five featured planners from the private

sector, while Interviews Three and Four featured planners from the public sector. Research participants were drawn from the consultants list published by the province's professional planning body, the Manitoba Professional Planners Institute, staffing directories available at the City of Winnipeg, as well as the small network of practicing planners with whom the author has a professional relationship.

The interviews were conducted in person, and entailed approximately 10 interview questions discussed over the course of roughly 45 minutes to an hour. Interviews occurred over the course of June, July, and August of 2017. The full interview schedule is provided in Appendix A. It was divided into three main sections. The first was intended to be a general introduction, giving the participant an opportunity to introduce themselves and the kind of planning they do, as well as to give them an opportunity to ask questions about the interview process and research purpose. The second was intended to explore how the participant understands certain entries in the Canadian Institute of Planners Code of Professional Conduct that have to do with ideas pertaining to values. The use of the CIP Code of Professional Conduct (Appendix D) was used to serve as a conceptual "bridge" to link the relevant findings in the literature to practitioners' reflections on practice. Finally, the majority of the interview was dedicated to the third section, which dealt with the experience of conflict in the participant's past while working as a planner. The interview questions were designed to permit significant deviation from the "scripting" of the interview to permit a conversational and reflective tone – a key characteristic of an approach to developing participants' *practice stories*.

Prior to the interview, the research participant was informed of the measures taken to ensure anonymity and confidentiality, including the removal or obfuscation of any identifying

information from the interview transcript, transcript verification by the research participant following transcription, and the use of a password-protected identity sheet linking them to their data which was anonymized following this verification. Despite these efforts, however, due to the nature of the sample's group affiliation, there was still some risk that their interview data could make them identifiable to their peers. This risk was shared with the participants prior to obtaining their consent to include them in this research.

5.3 Method of Analysis: Discourse Analysis

The first step in the analysis phase of this research is the transcription of the audio into text. Recognizing that the interview process is best understood as a *social interaction* (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 124), the audio data has been transcribed using a strategy that records a certain degree of non-verbal or non-syntactical verbal utterances (such as repetitions and filler expressions including 'um' or 'like'), but does not record *all* of these expressions. The emphasis has been placed on capturing purposive communication and how that communication was developed and conveyed, rather than attempting to record precisely everything that was communicated. Following the completion of the transcription process, the transcripts were provided to the participants and edited for accuracy and anonymity. Once the transcripts were verified, following a "feedback period" of four weeks that gave the participant a chance to comment or withdraw their consent to the project, the process of reading, coding, refining, and developing connections in the data began.

Next, the interview data was analyzed using the *discourse analysis* method. It should be recognized that discourse analysis can be conducted in a number of ways. Jorgensen and Philips profile three approaches to the method, including 'critical discourse analysis', Laclau and Mouffe's 'discourse theory', and 'psychological discourse analysis', though there are many others

(Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). That said, all discourse analysis methods are united in their goal of revealing the linguistic structure of social phenomena and the rejection of the appeal to any a priori, deterministic, or foundational properties driving those structures (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, pp. 18-20). The method of discourse analysis selected for this research is modelled after Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory as it is presented in Jorgensen and Philips (2002) because of the direct compatibility between agonism, a project of Laclau and Mouffe's, and their brand of discourse analysis.

A key part of the coding process entails "asking the data a specific and consistent set of questions" while also remaining open to unexpected patterns and revelations (Berg, 2001, p. 251). This is to help ensure that the analysis of the transcript data is both focused on the objectives of the research and flexible enough to take advantage of unanticipated benefits. As such, and following the first research question, the coding process was directed toward the identification of the *commitments* of practicing planners. As the literature review conducted in chapters 2, 3, and 4 indicates, there appears to be some tension between the constitutive practices of planning and its emancipatory goals. By focusing on the general objective of the identification of commitments, it was hoped that both of these kinds of commitments would be identifiable.

Before communicating the steps employed to conduct this discourse analysis, it is useful to note the technical verbiage drawn from Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory employed throughout the remainder of this research. The terminology listed in **Error! Reference source not found.** is derived from Jorgensen and Philips (2002):

Table 1: Discourse Analysis Terminology

Term	Definition
Articulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice.
Discourse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The “structured totality” which results from practices of articulation. This is done through the exclusion of all other possible meanings that signs in a text could have had - it is therefore a <i>reduction</i> of all possibilities. It is the temporary fixing of meaning.
Element / nodal point	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All signs in a discourse whose meanings have not (yet) been fixed. In other words, taken individually, they are meaningless.
Key Signifiers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A privileged node around which the other nodes are ordered. The other nodes in a discourse acquire their meaning from their relationship to the Key Signifier.
Moments / articulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The instance in a text that establishes a relation or hierarchy between elements. These may include framing, presupposition, reportage, negation, irony, or analogy.
Field of Discursivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whereas discourses are the exclusion of alternative meanings that signs might take up, the field of discursivity is all possibilities, including that which the discourse excludes, within a particular order of discourse.
Closure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signs whose meanings have not yet been fixed are called elements - that is, signs that have multiple potential meanings. A discourse establishes a closure by attempting to transform elements into moments - to stop the fluctuations in the meaning of the signs.
Subject Position	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A subject position is a placeholder for a subject to fill whose relationships to objects and other subjects are defined by a given discourse. Subjects have an identity insofar as they identify with a given subject position within a discourse.
Overdetermination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When subject positions are populated by competing discourses and claim a given subject simultaneously, that subject is said to be <i>overdetermined</i>, inducing an internal tension and the potential for conflict.

Bearing these terms in mind, the following has been conducted according to the following steps relative to the research questions outlined at the beginning of this chapter:

1. What are the commitments of planning practitioners and how are they discursively constituted?
 - i. This step involves the development of open codes to free-associate the interview text and begin to identify and define text **Elements / nodal points**. Open coding is a creative process of ‘opening inquiry widely’ – this involved coding the vast majority of text with anything that comes to mind to frame avenues for further analysis: “this seems to indicate that the planner is an educator”, or “new ideas serve to enrich planning process” are two examples drawn from the notes in this research. These codes are then refined repeatedly to common themes and concepts as they relate to the objectives of the coding process. When this process yielded as mutually exclusive and comprehensive codes, the elements and nodal points used for the remainder of the research were set.
 - ii. The next step involves the identification of **Moments** within the text that are *articulated* in relation to a signifier or signifying theme. Moments are identifiable in the text when the subject establishes a hierarchy or relation. For example, framing an engagement process as “messy”, or arguing that a stakeholder is unreasonable are articulatory moments.
 - iii. This pertains to the identification and development of extant **discourses**. Key Signifiers are empty signs until they are imbued with meaning through their combination with other signs in a discourse. Identification of nodal points and moments in a text permit investigation into *how* discourses, identity, and social

space are organized (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 50). Here, a collection of nodes, one or two key signifiers, and one or many articulatory moments may signify a discourse.

2. What tensions and contradictions exist in the employment of these discourses? How do these tensions actualize the potential for antagonism?

- i. This step refers to the exploration of the ways that discourses compete or assimilate one another in practice. This is manifest in the **overdetermination** of a subject position, whereby more than one discourse makes articulatory demands at the same or different points within the same text. An example might include the discourse of liberalism, predicated on moments extolling the virtues of the freedom of the individual to use a given piece of property as they see fit, while also positioning one's self as an environmentalist that views the regulation of private uses to be valuable.

To illustrate this overdetermination, an "adjacency matrix" figure will be used to show how different signifiers relate to one another in the text. Here, elements are combined and connected to one another in contingent ways in order to ascribe meaning to a key signifier. This will be used to illustrate how these relationships and connections were established in the Text and the ways that discourses competitively take up these elements to make meaning.

- ii. Deconstruction of the nature and purpose / use of the privileged relationship of one discourse over the other in a given context. Deconstruction is understood loosely here to refer to the task of demonstrating that a given discourse is implicitly predicated upon its margins, and therefore contingent and changeable. Exposing

this tenuousness can be done in many ways, but the most common way is reversing the intended hierarchy of a text. “Planning is about process” is not the same thing as saying, “planning is not about outcome”.³ To what degree is planning about process if it isn’t not about outcome? This simple example helps to show that there is an ‘undecidable’ line between process and outcome, and that the margins of what is intended are both necessary to intended’s meaning and the symbol of why it cannot *purely* be true.

3. Are there limits to the emancipatory potential of planning practice? How can they be characterized and what consequences does this have for our understanding of ethics?
 - i. This step is a discussion section in which the case will be built for a new kind of conversation. A key conceptual framework used to interpret the results of the discourse analysis to interpret the emancipatory potential of planning practice is the agonistic concepts of “politics” and “the political”.

5.4 Biases, Assumptions, and Limitations

It is important to recognize the prime researcher on this project is a young student planner who has some degree of professional or academic connection with each of the planners who participated in this study. Although the ethics of the individual planner are not the subject of this study (i.e. they are not being “judged” at any point in time) it is important to acknowledge that this relationship, familiarity, and junior status relative to the practitioner may have affected the conduct

³ The “process versus outcome” debate is prominent in planning discourse (Christensen, 2015).

of the interview or the interpretive aspects of the discourse analysis, though this is not anticipated to be a significant research bias.

An important limitation of this research is the method of discourse analysis chosen to analyze the interview data. Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory is not specifically intended to be a "method" in the sense that it is not designed to guide empirical analysis – their interest is centred more specifically on the critique of neoliberalism and institutionalized power structures in western society at large. To quote Jorgensen and Phillips, applying this discourse theory requires "a little imagination" (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 49). This is connected to the earlier-cited criticism of agonistic pluralism in Mouffe's work that it does not explore its empirical consequences very clearly, nor is it a particularly accessible theory to examine from an empirical perspective (Wingenbach, 2011). This limitation may affect the impact of this research, but it is important to note that regardless of these limitations, discourse analysis is fundamentally interpretive and directed towards "exploring patterns in and across [speech] and identifying the social consequences of different discursive representations of reality" (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 21). As such, although the method itself may be tenuous and susceptible to critique, this research can also be judged on the consistency of the method, between what is laid out in this chapter, and the carrying out of the method as discussed in the following chapter.

6.0 Analysis and Discussion

Although there are five interviews constituting the interview data for this research, this discourse analysis generally treats such data as a singular body – “the Text”. Because the object of analysis is discourse, which is understood to be a *common* social symbolic resource, the differences between individual participants’ responses is not considered to be directly pertinent to this research. With that said, some contextual cues unique to a given planner are instructive for the reader, particularly in the case of the planner’s work in the public versus private sectors or the area of planning to which they are specialized. As such, the focus is to inductively build a picture of the discursive commitments of “mainstream planners” (as defined in Chapter 3.0) in general and the shared symbolic resources they draw upon in their practice. When discussing a specific segment of the Text, however, some characteristics of the individual will be introduced to provide context to that segment.

Toward to the establishment of a context for the interview data, the planning participants interviewed are introduced below. Please note that their names and any personally identifying features have been omitted and their genders may have been changed for the purposes of confidentiality and anonymity.

Planner 1: Planner 1 is an environmental planner and has a background in environmental sciences and natural resources management. His practice is focused on Indigenous engagement, but he also works in the private sector supporting clients as they work through their regulatory requirements as they contemplate their developments. A large part of this process involves helping clients understand their responsibilities, needs, and the internal management of their resources.

Planner 2: Planner 2 began her career as a landscape architect and her entry-point into planning occurred as the result of practicing alongside her mentor, a planner and senior member of the company she worked for in her early professional career. Since becoming a full member of the Canadian Institute of Planners some thirty years ago, Planner 2's has practiced landscape architecture and planning in the private sector in both medium and large-sized firms. She has worked on "the full gamut" of planning activity, including working on policy documents, development plans, official plans, secondary plans, and zoning by-laws. She has also worked in facilities planning, recreation master planning, and master planning, which features significant overlap with her landscape architecture experience.

Planner 3: Planner 3 is a public sector municipal planner whose practice focuses on regional planning, secondary planning, and 'special topics' including the planning administration of urban reserves⁴, agriculture, airport areas, campus planning, and other specialized areas requiring tailored analyses. She emphasizes that there is no such thing as a "regular day" in planning, but typically focuses on development project reviews, help private sector partners develop engagement strategies, identify stakeholders, and develop planning processes.

Planner 4: Planner 4 is a public-sector planner who began his career with a focus on public consultation and policy development, but has since moved into utilities planning, with an emphasis on waste management. Planner 4's focus is on planning, policy, and legal, issues pertaining to environmental management within the municipality that he works. His day-to-day activities

⁴ From Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada: "An urban reserve is land within or adjacent to an urban municipality that has been set apart by the federal Crown for the use and benefit of a First Nation" (Government Of Canada, 2014).

typically include liaising between other municipal administrators, providing regulatory guidance, and conducting and reporting on site visits.

Planner 5: Planner 5 is a private-sector planner with experience in medium and small-sized firms. He was attracted to planning through his training as a geographer and has since amassed approximately 20 years of experience. He emphasizes that his personality lends itself well to planning, which he sees to be about people and process. Planner 5 has experience developing planning policy documents including development plans, zoning bylaws, and secondary plans, but also focuses on infrastructure development and public engagement.

The above planning practitioners developed a collective narrative that yielded a rich and dynamic dataset containing both components that were anticipated by the primary researcher and those that were not. In general, interview participants expressed a wide-ranging diversity of commitments, though it was clear from the outset that there were strong patterns in the Text. This suggested that there was a common symbolic ‘core’ to planning practice from which planning participants drew discursive resources. As was expected, each interview participant was united in the view that engagement of the public, stakeholders, or other groups was an essential component of planning practice both as a source of creative energy and expansion of the possibilities for action, and as an ethical good and professional responsibility unto itself. It entailed the recognition and valuation of diversity for diversity’s sake and the importance of respectful and empathetic deliberation. This is consistent with the planning theory literature in the sense that Collaborative Planning had established itself to some degree as a paradigm of practice, replacing the more disinterested rational-comprehensive model.

What was surprising to find in the interview data was how careful research participants were to articulate this commitment so as to avoid any undo hyperbole – each maintained to some degree that they were fundamentally *constrained* in their pursuit of these collaborative aims. Constraint was modelled in many ways, including policy and legislative context, technical constraint, other disciplines, the political sphere, the client-consultant relationship, and others. When prompted about the relationship between these commitments, such as the publicly-defined “good” versus the technically, economically, or politically defined “possible”, no common explanation stood out. Some, for example articulated the idea of “balance”, while others rejected this characterization altogether. The participants agreed to some degree that this relationship was a defining feature of planning practice.

The “materials” for the above observations were derived from connections observed following the coding process. Beginning with free association in “open coding”, the process of breaking down and refining these codes yielded 17 elements in the Text. These elements were operationalized through the development of a definition that was intended to be both clear and mutually exclusive from other elements. These elements, their associated definitions, and example signifiers are listed in Table 2. Please note that the example signifiers are the identified in the table below *as part of an articulation*. As such, the appearance of words like “discussions” or “empathy” do not necessarily signify the elements “Communication Listening, Trust” or “Honesty, Directness”, respectively. Instead, they need to be articulated in a manner consistent with the associated definition to “count” as such.

Table 2: Element and Definition Coding List

Element / Node	Definition	Example Signifiers
Process	Having to do with frameworks for approaching engagement, decision-making management, planning.	“Process”, “methodology”
Communication, Listening, Trust	Having to do with the act of communication as an embodied, effortful, and meaningful activity	“express”, “opinion”, “...hear concerns...”, “discussions”, “...believe them...”
Constraints, Context	Having to do with the things that limit possibilities (general constraints, costs, institutions, legal frameworks, standards, etc.)	“straightjacket”, “limited process”, “isn’t legal”
The Stakeholder, Public, Multiple Publics	On the constitution of the stakeholder, the idea of the public, or multiple publics	“client”, “property owner”, “industry”, “...diverse interests...”
Conflict	Representation or strong implication of conflict or a conflictual instance. Includes reference to the management of instances.	“disagreement”, “argument”, “heated”
Responsibility, Conscience, Personal Ethics	Related to agency, authorship of an activity or product such that the planner identifies with it (or not) in a value-laden way.	“...really pushed clients...”, “hill ... to die on”, “disrespect my friend”
Honesty, Directness	Having to do with communicating bluntly, not avoiding disappointment / saving face.	“forthright”, “...full disclosure...”, “empathy”
Rights, Hierarchy, Role	Having to do with what a planner is entitled to, justified in doing from a legal or practical point of view, or recognition of hierarchy.	“...treated appropriately...”, “...do what you can...”, “...that’s your job...”
Respect	Having to do with the constitution of mutual respect.	“doesn’t marginalize...”, “mindful”
Meaningful Consideration	Having to do with the constitution of 'real', 'legitimate' consideration of something.	“really listen”, “capable of modifying”
Success, Solution, Outcome	Having to do with the meaning / constitution of success (of a project, policy, engagement, etc.).	“legitimate”, “result”

Options and Alternatives	Having to do with the provision of options or alternatives.	“course of action”, “flag problems”
Planning Meta ('Good' Planning)	Having to do with ideas about good planning (form, density, sprawl, etc.)	“multiple publics”, “infill”
Other (Resistant Signifier)	A keyword that resembles, but does not fit congruously with other themes / signifiers; an important but difficult-to-classify outlier (may be beyond scope of research)	NA
Empathy	Development, cultivation of care for other / wider points of view.	“I’m sorry for...but”
Human Nature	Having to do with how people are intrinsically.	“people on one side aren’t on that side”, “fears”
Mutual Education	Having to do with educating a stakeholder and being educated by the stakeholder - an "exchange", rather than "dictation"	“educate them...”, you’ll learn...”

To be clear, although these elements were identified using a rubric that sought mutual exclusivity, articulation rarely employs them in a mutually exclusive way. Competing discourses in meaning-making are inevitable and that they push and pull on elements in multiple and contingent ways is the source of both the dynamism of language and its immanent potential for antagonism.

In the following sections, two central discourses are identified that are argued to be the principal drivers of the normative commitments of planning practitioners. To be sure, numerous other discourses may be identifiable in the Text, as is the case with any interpretive exercise. These two discourses were selected because they are most directly connected to the ways that planners understand what they *ought* to be doing and *ought* to value. Specifically, through reading and re-reading the Text, it became increasingly clear that most articulations tended to have some combination of two characteristics. They were either centred on communication, deliberation, and diversity as democratic, ethical, creative energies that served to enrich planning activity, or they

were centred on navigating constraints, context, and “realities” skillfully. In each case, these were, normatively speaking “good” things.

As will be discussed, these discourses are invoked in different contexts to support different aims, but it is argued that they are essential resources for practitioners to articulate their responsibilities in their capacity *as planners*. Although all of the Text was coded and analyzed to identify the components of these discourses, including elements and moments, the following does not present a full textual analysis of coded text. Instead, an attempt is made at developing key illustrative uses of each discursive resource.

6.1 On the Commitments of the Planning Practitioner

The following will review the use of each selected discourse as it constitutes relations between the elements within the Text. The excerpts identified below pull key moments from the text – these may include subjects’ framing, presupposition, reporting on, negation, or irony, among other articulations. Within each moment, elements are identified with underline formatting, while key signifiers are identified in **bold and underlined**. Although the entire block of text is intended to represent an articulatory moment, where there are significant statements or phrases used that are particularly representative of the overall moment, these are identified in *italics*. Please also note that the discourses identified in the Text are capitalized to distinguish them from their namesake terms found in the literature.

6.1.1 Communicative Power

The notion of communicative power is introduced in the literature as an epistemic normative resource generated by participants engaged in deliberative communication. It is

premised on the notion that deliberative communication is an essentially productive force in decision-making, implicating the meaningful consideration of needs, concerns, and interests of the Other as merit-worthy. Its product is recognized in the literature to constitute the fundamental “materials” for decision-making – a process that is often referred to in terms of “social capital” and the development of intersubjective resources that can be used to invent, reveal, or propel courses of action (Healey, 1992, p. 155). It is typically emphasized that the development of communicative power is a process – that is, it emerges from iterative communication between a diversity of subjects and is agnostic to the content of an outcome.

Given its prominence in the literature, it is with little surprise that the most prominent key signifier observed in the interview data informed by the discourse of Communicative Power was discussion of process - every interviewee directly referenced process and asserted to some degree its importance as a defining feature of what planners do. The invocation of process as a key signifier was typically seen as the series of actions or steps taken throughout the planning process to the achievement of a “successful” end. It is typically referenced in the literature in opposition to a focus on outcome. The "Process versus Outcome" issue is something of an historic debate in planning (Christensen, 2015) and refers to the organization or framework of activities undertaken toward an end. Crucially, this 'end' is not to be confused with the competing attention to substantive planning outcomes (such as "complete communities", or "transit-oriented development"), but to contextually-derived notions of 'success'. The segments of text below illustrate how the “process” key signifier is constituted by its adjacent elements using the discourse of communicative power:

Well, it's a process.... A respectful process. And what I find, maybe going too far ahead, is that when those varied stakeholders, as examples, do *feel respected*;

and respect again is not just a respect for interaction, I mean respected by what your **process** is, *how you approach* them, *how you involve* them, *how you listen* to them, and *how you showed* them. *Then the solution does turn out to be acceptable in most cases, I'm going to say 99% of the cases...* It's a beautiful thing because it does... forcing yourself through a **process** that *recognizes all those interests*, forcing yourself to be respectful, does end up creating a project that is probably the *best possible project*, because it's *addressed all those things* in some way, shape, or form.

Interview 5

Here, the Text establishes process as something beneficial not just to the stakeholder as a source of respect, but also to the project. This key “win-win” connection is crucial to the discourse of Communicative Power as a means of making a project’s success more likely, directly associating the diversity of interest and contingency with the “quality” of outcome.

As is clear in these moments defining “process”, what constitutes “meaningful engagement” is also important. In the Text, “meaningfulness” is premised on effortful, embodied, and personal communication as important in stakeholder and public engagement for its role in producing valuable outputs in the planning process:

I want to talk to each person individually, I'll meet them anywhere, I'll come to their house for coffee if they want, we'll lay out maps, we'll give them as much information as we can, we'll draft out their ideas and we'll provide them with feedback. *They can't say that we didn't **meaningfully consult** with them, because really we want the ideas to be theirs.*

Interview 3

Here, the key signifier of meaningful consultation is constituted by ideas about agency and ‘ownership’ over the planning process as a goal of the planner. It also shows how this agency and ownership is a benefit to the planner and their process because it serves as an intersubjective marker of meaningful engagement to others party to that process – “*They can’t say...*”. This situation is also couched in a more personal environment that emphasizes person-to-person contact: an implied equality between the expert and the stakeholder. This “down-to-earth” aspect is illuminated by Habermas’ attention to the ‘lifeworld’ as a genuine source of locally-generative knowledge, and suggests that the profession is to some conscious of the “problem of experts” (Habermas, 1984, p. 126) discussed in Chapter 3.

This idea of meaningfulness is also connected to the key signifiers of honesty and trustworthiness. Communicative theorists often speak to the role of planners in reducing the distorting effects of power through the limiting of misinformation (Forester, 1989, pp. 33-47). This commitment is also visible in the Text:

And also I think lots of people *confuse* the idea of being **direct and forthright** and disappointing people. Often planners don't want to disappoint people ... by telling people *how it is*, and being **direct**, but I think in my experience people *really appreciate* that **direct**... so if I know that someone doesn't want the bridge, *but I know* there's going to be a bridge, *and I know* they're going to be impacted, *then I'll tell them*: "Look. I know this is going to impact you in some way, and I'm empathetic and I'm sorry that *you're going to be impacted* in some way."

Interview 5

Here, the participant is placing the value of honesty about what is *known* above efforts to ‘save face’. The provision of undistorted information is considered to be a critical responsibility. Another

participant takes this a step further to be clear about the *power* that a stakeholder to a planning activity has over the process:

So **meaningful engagement** is not having one open house, presenting a bunch of boards, and saying, "*This is it boys: tell us what you think,*" and then ignoring all feedback. **Meaningful engagement** has to go through an iterative process where you allow people to look at a range of alternatives that aren't just variations on the same thing; where you basically allow people to understand what is being proposed and *what their potential to, capability of, modifying that proposal is. Including killing it, you know.*

Interview 2

The above articulatory moments attempt to establish some degree of shape and form to the discourse of Communicative Power as it has been developed through the Text. The eight most prominent key signifiers, identified as a combination of frequency and interpretive symbolic significance, are identified below in Figure 1. Please note that this figure is for illustrative purposes only. It is not a generalizable statement of how this discourse is constructed generally, but how it was employed in the Text specifically.

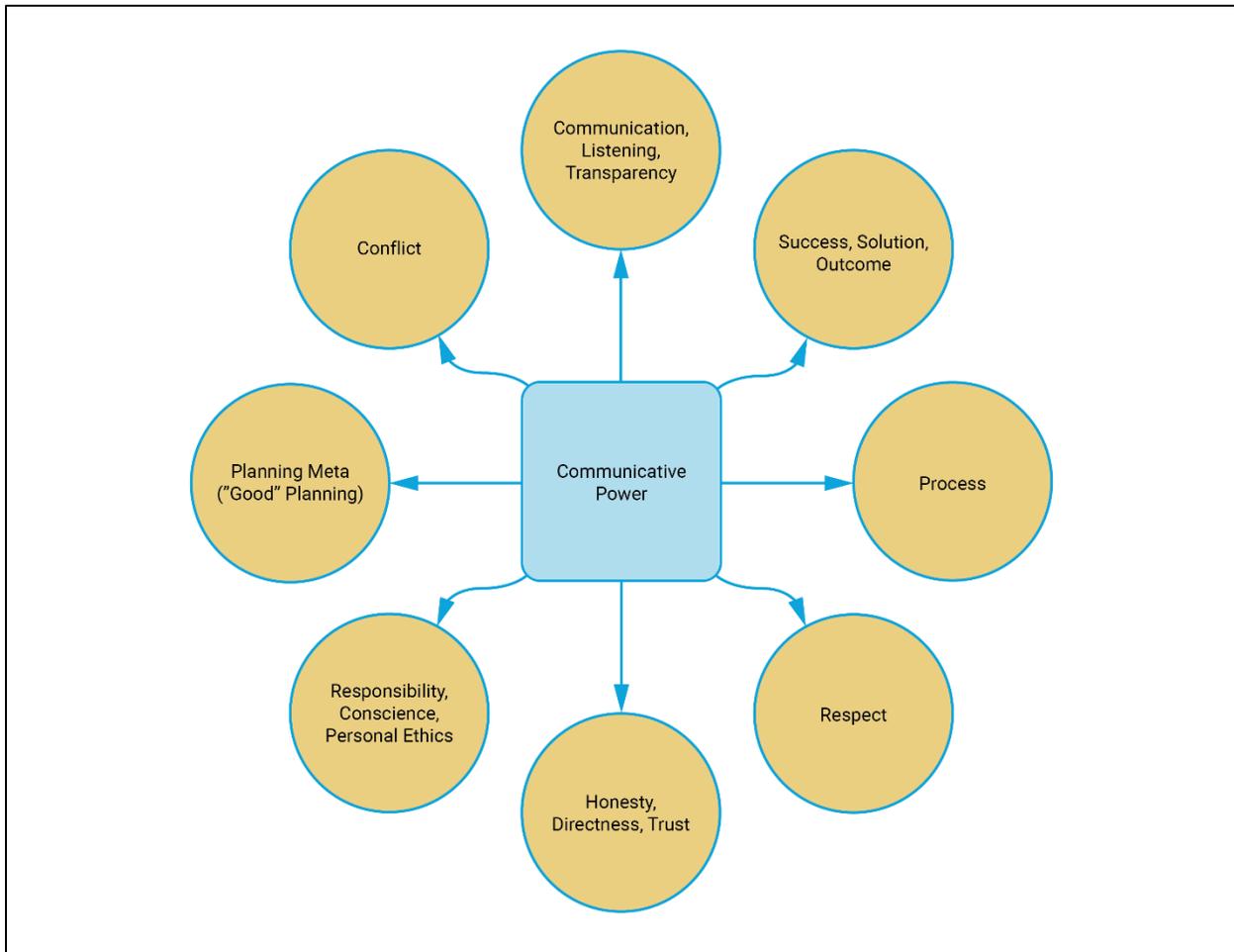


Figure 1: The Discourse of Communicative Power – Most Prominent Elements found in the Text

6.1.2 Epistemic Mediation

The discourse of Epistemic Mediation is identified in the Text that have to do with the cultivation of boundary objects in planning engagement practice. The term itself is derived from Bruce Goldstein's (2010) works, but refers to a broad thread in many communicative and Collaborative Planning theorists' thought that speaks to the skillful and prudential application of limits on the planning process through an interpretation of context and constraints (Forester, 1989; Forester, 2012; Schön, 1983). Epistemic mediation is typically expressed as a fundamentally

strategic skill, both premised on the accurate forecasting of potential events and tactical achievement of a practical outcome within a planning process. These limits are usually not overtly imposed to a planning process, instead, they are often covertly applied. Forester's assessment of the planning analyst has been brought up earlier in this research, but is particularly illustrative of this point: "...*selective* organization of attention to the *real* possibilities for action" (Forester, 1989, p. 14; emphasis added).

In the Text, the discourse of Epistemic Mediation is at once visible as a source of constraint that delimits the capabilities and options of a planner's practice – legislative requirements, bureaucracy, client needs, other practitioners, etc. In the following segments, note the focus on the key signifier of context as a delimiting factor – something constraining the opportunities for action:

*They do have to remember they're working within the uh requirements - In the case of Manitoba, in the Planning Act...you know, we have District Development Plans or Municipal Development Plans, secondary, so within those constraints as you well know, *we have to* sort of modify things or hold back on things or do things maybe, um, according to what other people have dictated already. That's not really anything about a conflict between practice and theory ... It's really, it's really saying as planners we have to respect the fact that there are other... there are various, um, tools that are used that we have to sort of work within the context."*

Interview 2

*And especially in the city, it's a fairly complex organization, so you *want* to say something, you write it up, it goes to a whole different division, and they change it, and they check back with you, and then it goes to a different department (right, it goes up the chain), and maybe there's some political stuff, so like *you do what you can*. And *I'm not saying* that things are, that*

the city's lying to people or anything but *you have to keep an eye on it* and being clear *what you think is* important *to be able to* communicate...

Interview 4

In addition to its role as key signifier for the discourse of Communicative Power, process is also invoked in as a means of structuring relationships between stakeholders, clients, and the public. As seen in moments informed by the discourse of Communicative Action, process is about cultivating an equal standing between stakeholders, but, as is seen in articulatory moments it is more often informed by the discourse of Epistemic Mediation and has to do with *equitability* - a dimension of process focused on engaging and communicating with stakeholder differentially based on how they might be affected by a project – and making sure they understand how and why they are being differentially engaged:

...it's important *they recognize who they are*, treat them with respect, invite them all equally to the table, consult with them--*I can't say* consult with them all *in the same way*, but consult with them *as thoroughly as you can*, to get *what type of* **stakeholder** they are. If you have an environmental group, or someone in a **stakeholder group** that maybe doesn't own land in an area but has an interest in preserving something that is on the land, you're going to consult them *differently* than a **stakeholder** *who actually owns* property in the area and has a right to develop it.

Interview 3

Here, the participant uses a figurative case involving the right to develop property. The practitioner is articulating a distinction between the element “stakeholders” based on some “context” – a priori

conventional knowledge about the neoliberal construction of property rights.⁵ Crucially, this differentiation is observed to be tied the construction of an epistemic boundary object that serves to moderate the *kind* of consultation afforded to that group.

Furthermore, this establishment of epistemic boundary objects for one stakeholder appears to be intimately related to *relative* comparisons between parties. Awareness of how another ‘kind’ of stakeholder is potentially affected by a project makes it more difficult to interpret ones’ own isolated interest – to be part of something (i.e. a ‘process’) larger than the individual. Put more simply, that they had an opportunity to participate, and that their views were considered against others’, and they saw how their role in shaping the project was compared to others’ serves to legitimate the planning process *as distinct from* the planning outcome. This distinction serves to separate the experience of being in a collective “process” from individual interest. In the below example, when asked about their approach to reconciling individual interests and the “public interest”, a participant had this to say about the importance of separating process and project for stakeholders:

...it's neat because *most* people, *the vast majority* of people are able to distinguish those things if you ask them: '*the people did a good job, I really appreciate being asked but I really don't like this project.*' And that's really important to distinguish. It helps them distinguish their feelings by asking the *two questions*. I think participants, if they're not asked, *confuse* the process with the project, and it's *really important* to sort those out because you have people who *might actually support* a project *but are mad about*

⁵ The cited segment presents a *neoliberal* conception of property rights, where there are other possible formulations. See Nicholas Blomley’s *Unsettling the City: Urban Land and the Politics of Property* (2004) for further discussion.

a process, and now you've got a *negative* **result** that you haven't distinguished between your process and your project, and you've actually *sunk yourself*.

Interview 5

Here, the practitioner makes the case that not distinguishing between process and project runs the risk of making an otherwise “legitimate” project “illegitimate” simply because stakeholders were not adequately consulted.

Another prominent moment observed in the Text informed by the discourse of Epistemic Mediation is the provision of options and alternatives as a means of rectifying impasse and conflict. The act of formulating options and alternatives for moving forward is a product of the synthesis of the “realities” of a project as they see them – be they regulatory constraints or the positions of other stakeholders – into specific courses of action. In the following segment, the practitioner extolls these as key responsibilities of the planner:

I think the *biggest lesson* out of that episode and out of practice in general has been that it's fear of *the unknown*. It's not knowing what to do. Industry, developers, clients, *like certainty*. They like to know what to expect. And I think the greatest role of a practitioner is to *raise a flag*, but present at least two **options** that can help mitigate that. Because without those options, then you're just raising problems - and they can see the problems themselves. So it's your job then.

Interview 1

As illustrated in this segment, the use of “options” is intended to be a strategy used to drive the planning process forward through the presentation of ways to move beyond problems. Crucially, this way of speaking is predicated on the valuation of certainty – the notion that the planning

process produces contingency, but the provision of options and alternatives “mitigates” this tendency. Certainty is therefore a key “job” of the planner, who is able to develop definitions of reality toward the assurance of certainty.

To summarize, and as was illustrated for the discourse of Communicative Power, the eight most prominent key signifiers informed by the discourse of Epistemic Mediation are identified below in Figure 2. At this point, it is instructive to note which signifiers constitute both of the discourses of Communicative Power and Epistemic Mediation. As will be argued in the next section, it is at these sites, among others in the text, where the potential for antagonism is most directly manifested.

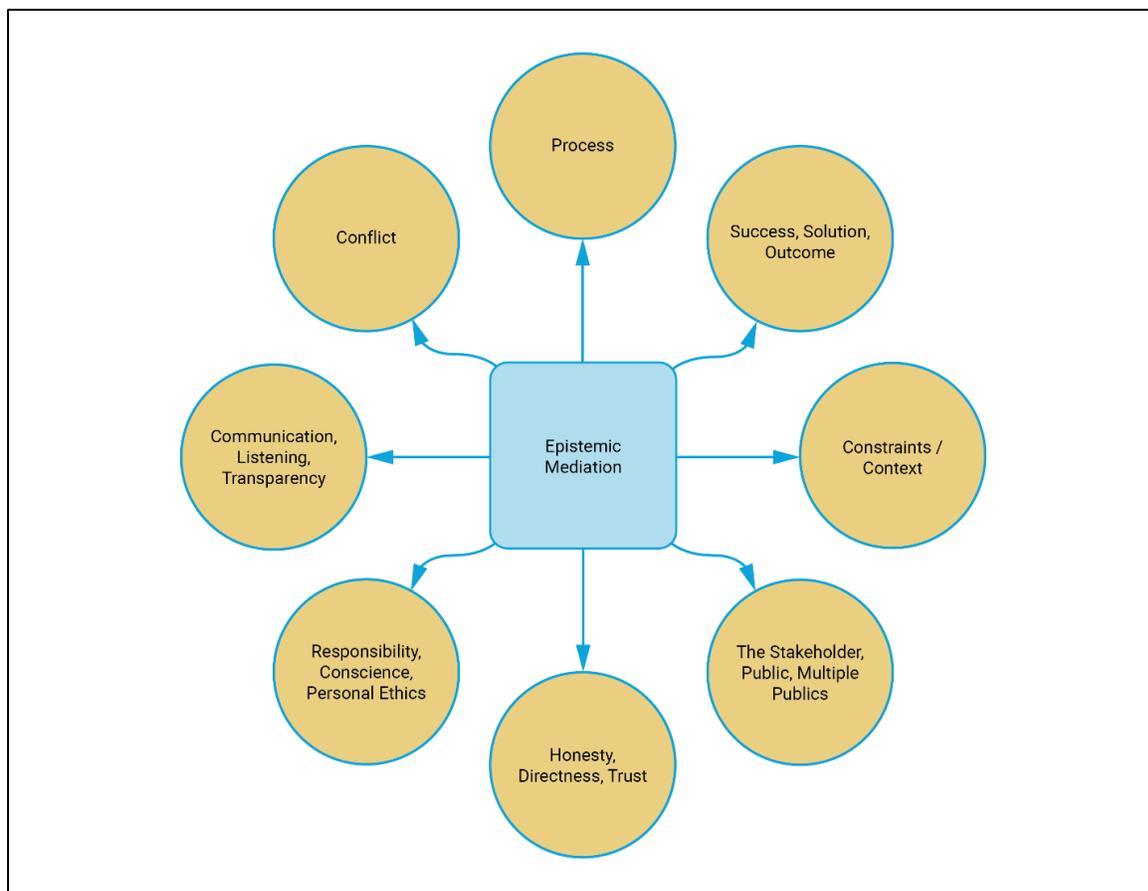


Figure 2: Discourse of Epistemic Mediation – Most Prominent Elements found in the Text

6.2 The Overdetermination of Planning and the Immanent Potential for Antagonism

Discourses designate ‘positions’ for key signifiers that fix their meaning in specific ways relative to elements in the text. When a given signifier is simultaneously positioned by multiple discourses, it is said to be *overdetermined* (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, pp. 41-42). To elaborate, overdetermination suggests that a signifier is the subject of a competition between discourses such that its meaning can never be definitively determined except as it is constituted by *each* discourse. The signifier has no essential meaning apart from its overdetermined plurality of meanings – a complex “overlapping” that plays out in the contingency of practice. (cf. Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 102).

This complexity is illustrated in Figure 3 below through an “adjacency matrix” that illustrates each of the 17 elements identified in the Text as “nodes” (see Table 2). Connections between nodes denote their presence in articulatory moments in the text. The size of nodes and connections indicate relative prominence (i.e. magnitude). In this study, the discourses of Communicative Power and Epistemic Mediation do the work of positioning these elements next to one another to make meaning, but crucially, it is never fully clear (and from Mouffe’s concept of overdetermination, never possible) that one discourse is fully constituting the meaning of a given relationship between elements. Where no overdetermination is visible or apparent, an hegemonic process has excluded any other possible articulations and a dominant discourse has been naturalized (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, pp. 41-42). This is illustrated in the selected segments below.

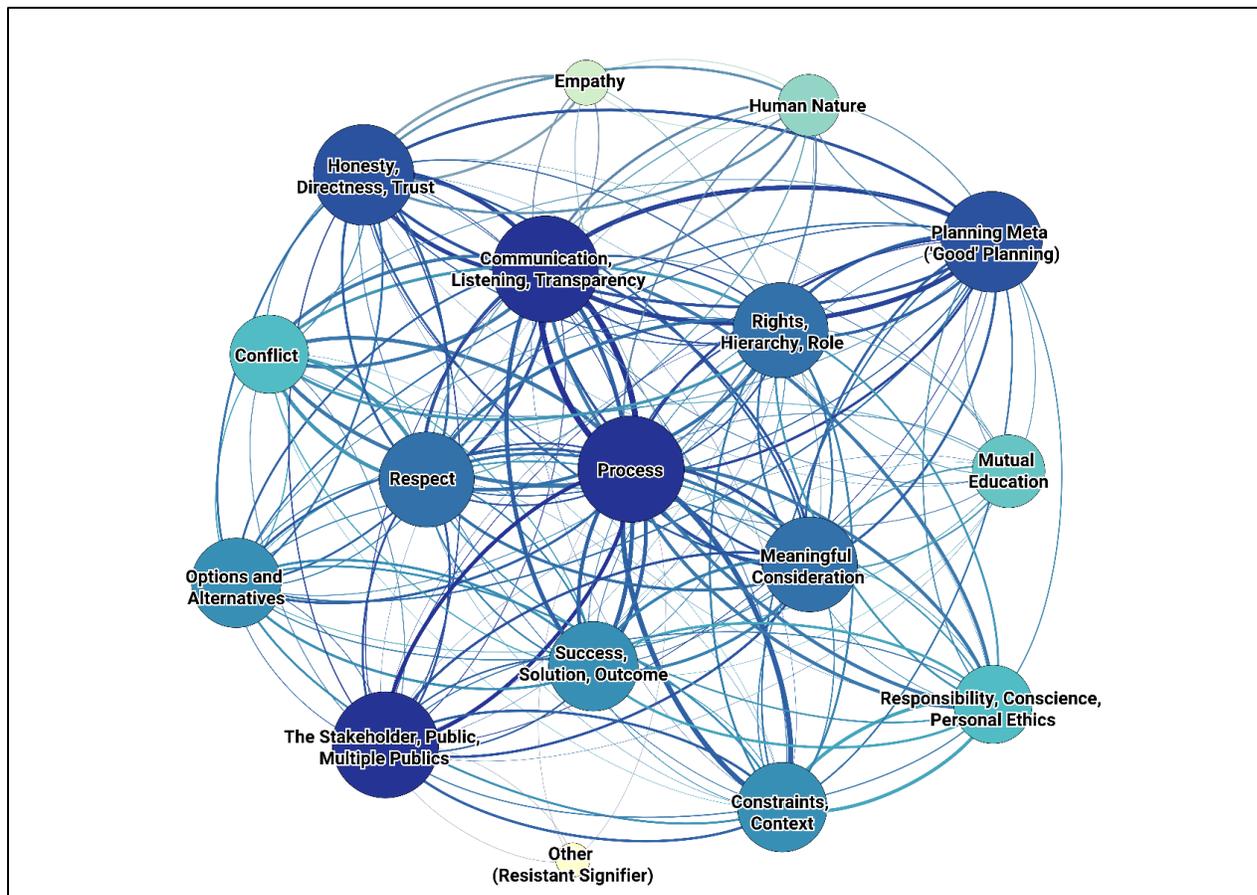


Figure 3: Element Adjacency Matrix

This research finds the planner subject position to be overdetermined by the discourses of Communicative Power and Epistemic Mediation, but the discourses are naturalized in specific contexts. The discourse of Communicative Power tends to dominate rhetorically in the language of planners and is critically important to their self-representation, identity, and personal ethics. This is evident in the numerous chains of equivalence (subject comparisons) observed in the Text between planners (including public versus private sector), other disciplines, politicians, and the public:

It can be, especially if you're working with other disciplines that *have less*, uh, interests or concerns about the **process** ... it *gets tricky* because starting out with a client, *some clients* really don't see public engagement as an *examinable*, as a **process** they completely buy into. I see... so to them *it's just a step*, a *hurdle they have to get over*, and it's *not something that they want* to spend a lot of time, money, energy, or *deal with* this sort of fallout from. And by the way, I've also found *the same thing* with politicians, *where if things start getting messy*, meaning *there's a lot of vociferousness*, I guess is the word, *there's a lot of discussion, loud voices*, *they get concerned* too that things *should be* shut down, or *you're not doing it right* because these people are [concerned] about something. *But to my mind*, that's just *letting people* express that they have an opinion (a good thing) that *they're at least* thinking about what's going on.

Interview 2

...it's primarily because **industry** is used to - **industry** historically is used to consulting with people who are *willing to be consulted* with, or who are *easy to reach*, or are *easy to explain* things to. So it's been sort of an engagement - *it's been a practice of convenience*. When you start working with - when you start being honest about diversity, about inclusion, and about reaching out to - to everyone who's impacted, then by *default, I think you end up* in a position, where *default*, your **client** *may not want to* reach out to those people.

Interview 1

In the above examples, the Text is constructed using a variety of chains of equivalence that establish a hierarchy between subject positions. Crucially, these chains of equivalence serve to privilege the planner subject position relative to another on the basis of the discourse of Communicative Power. The comparators that signal equivalence are identified in moments above

and suggest that the planner subject position is unique in its valuation of, or its freedom from constraint to, engagement or consultation with the public. In *Interview 2*, the subject distinguishes planners from “other disciplines”, clients, and politicians, who do not value public engagement, or are insincere about their commitment to it. The participant uses phrases like “it’s just a step, a hurdle they have to get over”. Similarly, in *Interview 1*, the participant talks about how consultation is “just a practice of convenience” – an activity inviting only to people who are already “willing to be consulted”. It is also notable that, whereas the *Interview 2* discusses planners’ ‘higher’ prerogative for engagement on the basis of *resources* (time, money, energy) and *order* (“messy”, “vociferous”), *Interview 1* is premised on *honesty* about diversity and inclusion.

Reversing these hierarchies shows the unintended meanings in the speech of these practitioners, and suggests that the statements are also predicated on the marginal ‘hidden’ discourse of Epistemic Mediation. Taking each in turn, in the first case, it is implied that the planner is someone who *wants* to spend ‘a lot’ of resources on public engagement, wants to *deal with* fallout, and doing it “right” means *messiness*. Where ‘a lot’ signifies more than something – a finite amount – it suggests that there is point somewhere where these resources stop flowing and must be allocated. In wanting to ‘deal with’ fallout, there must be some attenuation or management of ‘fallout’, a statement that belies the ‘messiness’ of ‘doing it right’. This implies that some organization and order is imposed on the chaos of messiness. In the second case, where honesty about diversity and inclusion is based on reaching out to those who are impacted, does dishonesty about diversity and inclusion entail not reaching out to those who are not impacted? These ideas about inclusion still require definitions about who is included and who not on the basis of “impact” – a segmentation about “kinds” of stakeholders. In both of these cases, the discourse of

Communicative Power informs the intended meaning of the segments, but this meaning is also predicated on hidden meanings informed by Epistemic Mediation.

The reverse is also true and observable in the Text. In the segment below, a participant is recounting an experience of conflict in their practice and how they handled it. Although the segment is rooted in regaining control of a tumultuous moment at a public event, it is important to pay attention to the appeal to authority the participant's speech, and how that appeal is constructed:

I took a *step toward him, and I pointed my finger at him and I said, "You sir are going to have to calm down if we're going to have a meeting." And he was *shocked*. I said some other things but that was *the gist of it*. I said to everybody, "we're not going to be able to handle your questions in this format, that's not how we set up the meeting. However it does seem to be the will of a lot of people in this group to have some questions answered as a group, so what we're going to do is we're going to take ten minutes, we're going to answer questions that come in those ten minutes, and then we're going to resume the meeting..." And it worked... So ... yeah it wasn't a moment where I had to *step up* with somebody, where *we'd lost **control*** of ... the process but we had to flex enough, but we *still maintained **control*** of the process."*

Interview 5

Here, the planner has articulated their response to a stakeholder in the terms of a given planning process – they have set up a meeting to entertain feedback of a certain kind. The *force* of the response, however, does not derive from the planner's implication of their process or capacity to control, but by their appeal to "...a lot of people in this group", referencing the normative dimension of the distribution of entitlement discussed in Chapter 6.1.2. This stakeholder is compelled to cooperate in the planning process by his or her own position relative to other

stakeholders – something of which the planner is no doubt cognisant. Analytically, this is an instance of hegemonic assimilation of the discourse of Communicative Power toward the legitimation of control and delimitation of the planning process – moments themselves overtly constituted by the discourse of Epistemic Mediation.

There is a mutually constitutive tension within the planner's articulatory commitments to Communicative Power and Epistemic Mediation. Planners privilege their role and responsibility using articulations informed by the discourse of Communicative Power, but in practice, tend to assimilate this discourse in consideration of the "realities" of the planning process – a key moment in the discourse of Epistemic Mediation. According to agonistic pluralism, this is the site of immanent conflict. The planner's capacity to understand and bring meaning to their activities is dependent upon their ability to naturalize each discourse in their respective hegemonic contexts. Crucially, and speaking to the pragmatism of agonistic pluralism, this tension is not necessarily explicitly manifested in outward practical conflict. When asked about the line between nondisclosure and misdirection or manipulation, a participant had this to say:

[the line] ... needs to be visible. I do wrestle with this one. I'm not troubled by it, but I constantly have an intention in mind because I know it's human nature *to say no* [to a project]. So talking about infill projects, say. You know this is good planning. I'm going to do a condo development, I'd like to do a condo development in this place. It would be, it follows all principles of the development plan, zoning is appropriate. It's good for the city from a planning perspective and economic perspective, however--the neighbours don't want it. [Yep.] So do I go and just show them a plan and say, "*Hope for the best?*" or do I have to deal with human nature and *ease them into this conversation*. Now you're starting to get into something that

feels manipulative. Is that not transparent? Or is it dealing with human nature. I'm going to say it's dealing with human nature and it's smart.

Interview 5

There's quite a lot going on in this segment of text. The planner is articulating something they perceive to be intrinsic to people ("human nature"), that something which is "good planning" is that which meets regulatory requirements and is economically "good", and the "neighbours" (homogenously defined) don't "want" it. Other discourses not directly considered in this research are quite visible here: for example, one can see essentialism, utopianism, and (neo)liberalism at play, respectively. Narrowing the focus of this segment to the last statements having to do with manipulation, transparency, human nature, and what is "smart", it's clear that the planner has a certain degree of awareness about the tenuousness and "grey area" of ideas like "transparency", or "manipulation". What is equally clear, however, is that the planner is making a choice about how this should be construed – as a "smart" way to pursue this "intention" – to achieve a contingent "end". Still, this is a decision that they "wrestle with". It is perhaps the clearest indication the Text that planners are making "undecidable" decisions within moments simultaneously constituted by Communicative Power and Epistemic Mediation.

When planners encounter situations that they "wrestle" with, about what they "ought" to do, they make undecidable decisions about how to "fix" concepts in place to make sense of their experience and their courses of action. In so doing, they establish logical "places" for the objects and subjects in question. In the process of "fixing" these things there is always the immanent potential that they will encounter a thing that does not "fit" – an antagonism over a space where there is no place. The critique of agonism aimed at Collaborative Planning practice is that these decisions are unexamined, unopened, and the privilege they instill in the status of certain elements

– “good planning”, “the economic perspective”, or “human nature” – is unchallenged. Given that the ‘site’ of antagonism is identified within the competition between Communicative Power and Epistemic Mediation, it becomes possible to speculate about the emancipatory limits of planning practice.

6.3 Politics and the Political – On the Emancipatory Limits of Planning Practice

As it is argued herein to be the ‘site’ of the immanent potential for antagonism, the overdetermination of Collaborative Planning is consequently the place where an agonistic planning ethics should focus. To provide some scope to the context and “task” of a potential agonistic ethics, it is critical to understand what the potential is for emancipatory change in the first place. As will be argued in this section, Collaborative Planning cannot exceed the limits of the discourses used to constitute it – this is a function of the way that practices and activities are linguistically constituted. If one is to understand both Communicative Power and Epistemic Mediation to be principally responsible for constituting the normative commitments of Collaborative Planning, as is suggested by this research, it is impossible to *exceed* them.

In order to develop this argument, it is instructive to return to the post-structuralist idea of mutually-constituting opposites. Following Mouffe, a binary opposition is simultaneously the condition of its intelligibility and a symbol of its own impossibility (Mouffe, 2000, pp. 12-13). As was discussed in Chapter 5.1, this argument is premised on the idea that signifiers only derive their meaning from their relationship to other signifiers – there is no transcendental or inevitably fixed “signified”. The key social vehicle that ensures two or more interlocutors are “on the same page” in this process is discourse, which inscribes different logics or “rules” about the ways that these signifiers ought to “fit” together. The central argument here is that planners cannot easily exceed

these rules because doing so entails the intersubjective consequences of not being recognized to be “doing” planning in the first place by peers, other disciplines, academia, government, industry, the public, and others.

Of course, the practical consequences of this act depend on the situation, but consider the practice of a medical professional. As an actor who has been constituted through their relationship to other subjects in the discourses of medical practice, a doctor has a very strong understanding of what it is to be a doctor and how to do the job more or less ‘well’. To be a patient of a doctor who decides to do something that stretches the definition of what “counts as” being a doctor, perhaps by employing a very fringe technique, or asking a psychic what course of action to take, one can only imagine the ramifications for such practice – to the patient’s physical and emotional wellbeing, from a disciplinary committee, for that doctor’s license, and perhaps most pertinently, for that doctor’s identity. This individual would have had to make a very uncommon and necessarily peculiar decision about the situation to decide to pursue this course of action. Although the analogy should only be taken so far, linguistically, meaning is understood to function in the same ways for planning. This is not to say that mainstream planners are somehow prevented from, for example, claiming rights for the marginalized in radical and unprecedented ways, it is to say that their ability to articulate, understand, or bring meaning to such acts is a function of the degree to which they can successfully negotiate the undecidable frontiers within the discourses available to them. Beyond this negotiation, where a subject chooses to constitute these acts with radically different discursive resources, a subject cannot easily be said to be “doing” planning⁶ any longer.

⁶ To reiterate – this “planning” refers to mainstream, contemporary collaborative planning practice.

The Wittgensteinian idea of language games is very helpful here. For Wittgenstein, a “game” is known and recognizable through a set of “rules” that constitute it (Grayling, 2001, pp. 93-95). A game of chess is recognizable by a board, game pieces, players that act in turns, and certain defined ways that the pieces move around the board. These rules can certainly be “bent” – one may replace all of the game pieces with rooks and it might still be called “chess” to observers, but it would probably be called a “strange game of chess”. Arguably, the game ceases to be recognizable as chess when one removes the board, or when one changes the kinds of moves available to the game pieces. These ‘constitutive rules’ – what counts as what – apply to all forms of human practice. To develop a hypothetical example for Collaborative Planning, imagine a highway development in a rural area. A private-sector planner is working for a public-sector client and they are about to present their preferred alignment to the public when a hitherto unknown stakeholder group emerges making claims to the land proposed to be used for the development – they are opposed to any large-scale development. These claims are not easily accounted for by the planner – they do not have “property” (as conventionally defined) or other previously defined “interests” in the area, but are making claims based on traditional uses, values, and attachments to the land. The planner knows that this group has certain constitutionally protected historic and ethno-cultural rights, but these are often seen to be poorly defined outside of delimited boundaries – none of which are within the project region. The group is also the subject of historic and contemporary structural persecution and strife. In this example, the planner is very sensitive to these claims and intends to do everything they can to develop a ‘solution’.

In this example, what is the “ethical” decision for the planning practitioner? Given intuitions from this research, they are likely to meet with this group – in this case they may even be required to meet with them and attempt to accommodate some of their concerns. They may set

out a process directed toward respecting and empathising with their claim, lobby for opportunities for mutual learning that provide feedback for meaningful consideration, and they may provide all of the details of the project that they can in a transparent way. At the same time, they are likely to approach each of these activities with some consideration of context, costs of delay to their client, to the stakeholders who were going to be provided a safer and newer route to their homes and workplaces, or to the greenhouse gas emission reductions from more efficient freight routes. They are also likely to look to precedent, to the legal effect of the claims, to the opportunity to introduce a new option for consideration that attends to these claims, but ‘gets the job done’. In Chapter 6.1, it was argued that the discourses of Communicative Power and Epistemic Mediation were principally responsible for informing the normative commitments of planning practitioners. In Chapter 6.2, it was argued that these discourses compete for symbolic resources to result in the “overdetermination” planning. As such the discursive limits established by these discourses serve as the intersubjective limits for meaning making, interpretation, and action, establishing the conditions for at least some of the constitutive rules of planning practices. To put it simply, in the above example, it is not in the ‘vocabulary’ of mainstream planning practice to provide radically asymmetric emancipatory resources to antagonistic claims if that action involved exceeding the limits imposed by the discourse of Communicative Action or Epistemic Mediation. It is even challenging to imagine what “providing radically asymmetric emancipatory resources” might look like except as it exceeds what could reasonably ‘count’ as planning – perhaps to halt or sabotage the project altogether, or to suddenly begin a campaign against the project to support these claims.

This is not to suggest that it is not in the vocabulary of planners to resist oppressive planning action or to experience ethical tension in their practice. Consider the following segments of text from a public sector planner and a private sector planner, respectively:

... there is an avenue for you and that is: you don't put your name on the report. So ... they would ask you to do something that you didn't feel was ethical, didn't have value, went against your principles as a planner, you didn't even feel was legal under the current planning framework, and it was just, everything was wrong about it, and so what you'd do is, a CAO might call you up and that report's going to be positive or you're fired. Well is that the hill you're going to die on? Probably not, so you write the report but you don't put your name on it. That's the best we could do and you know, keep our jobs.

Interview 3

I think as especially as a consultant, as a consultant, I've felt like we've always had to prove that we operate ethically. And we don't just do whatever the client wants us to do. I've had to defend that so many times, and it's a very interesting question because it makes you wonder like, do we just, you know, you know, bend over for clients and the answer is no. I think for me personally, I've always told the client what I think. I've always said, you know, "you're welcome to do whatever you want to do, but you're here - you've hired us to give you proper advice. If I don't raise the flags for you, then I don't know if someone else will. But I'm just going to raise this for you and do with it as you will."

Interview 1

These segments in the Text show two things. First, planners are not omnipotent in their practice. Providing radically asymmetric emancipatory resources to one group is not only likely to produce intersubjective repercussions like those discussed above, it is also likely to fail given the multitude of other actors and institutions that they are connected to. Second, it shows that resistance is very tenable in the discourses that constitute planning – be it through the anonymous authorship of a

report or through the resolve to state what is right or wrong, even if it affirms the client's sovereignty over decision making.

The point of all this discussion of emancipatory limits is not just to show that planners can only 'go so far' to meet the demands of the oppressed. It is to suggest that planning discourse is necessarily one that attempts to fix positions for subjects and objects and that it resists or assimilates attempts to break or reconfigure those positions. Emancipatory action *must be* premised on this discursive terrain. Simply through the act of practicing planning – be it deliberation, facilitation, mitigation, or others – the potential for antagonism is always present, therefore the potential for oppression is always present. Because of the discursive constitution of planning practice, there is no place beyond these limits where the potential for antagonism and oppression does not exist.

As decisions are made to balance or reconcile a diversity of commitments in practice, planners are very likely to assimilate antagonistic values they encounter to preserve the constitutive rules of that practice. The crucial point here is that this process says nothing about ethics – it describes only the structure of the politics of planning. For Mouffe and other agonistic pluralists like Rancière, these resemble a very specific kind of politics. Agonistic pluralists typically divide politics into two dimensions that approximately signify the competing and contradictory forces of continuity and change, order and chaos, tyranny and emancipation, etcetera. For Laclau and Mouffe, *la politique* ("politics") refers to the "ensemble of practices, discourses and institutions that [seek] to establish a certain order and to organize human coexistence in conditions which are always potentially conflicting..." (Gualini, 2015, pp. 10-11). Conversely, *le politique* ("the political") is the dimension of antagonism that is never fully suppressed in the in the efforts to affix

social institutions and order. Jacques Rancière elaborates on this distinction with a focus on the lived experience of politics (Gualini, 2015, p. 11). He uses the term “police” to describe “the set of procedures whereby the aggregation of consent and collectivities is achieved, the organization of powers, the distribution of places and roles, and the system for legitimizing this distribution” (Rancière, 1999, pp. 28 as cited in Gualini, p. 11). It refers to the institutionalized practices that establish and reproduce the ‘natural order of things’ – policing the partitioning of society and practice into recognizable parts. He uses the term “politics”, on the other hand, to describe moments when this natural order is challenged. As Gualini explains,

Politics ... emerges whenever this quasi-natural order of things is challenged. Politics emerges when the contingency and the constructed character of a given order of things is revealed; and, according to Rancière, this occurs whenever a subject brings about the perception of a ‘wrong.’

(Gualini, 2015, p. 12)

The articulation of a “wrong” is associated with a subject’s forceful imposition of discontinuity in “count of parts and parties” of society. This is a discursive discontinuity – a function of the incommensurability of the “Other” in which the dominant inside cannot accommodate or assimilate an antagonism. Based on the findings of this research, where planning is seen to be limited in its capacity to grant emancipatory resources to those who demand them, it is suggested that planning is best understood as an intrinsically *policing* force of politics. As discussed in Chapter 6.2, even in instances where the planner is naturalized as an emancipatory agent, the discourse of Communicative Power is always predicated on some constraint, context, or construction of epistemic boundary objects.

As has been explained elsewhere, democracy is a condition of the political such that antagonism is transformed into agonism, which occurs when there is ample space to reimagine and rearticulate social order. That neither politics nor police can be excluded from this condition suggests that even policing forces can be arranged in such a way as to promote this amenability to reimagination and rearticulation. To reiterate, toward the goal of agonistic pluralism, ethics and normative theory should be directed at exposing and deconstructing the necessary contradictions and power-bases of planning practices to transform them into tools for thinking anew – to turn what appears to be immutable and inevitable into something mutable and revisable. Crucially, the means of accomplishing this goal are contingent upon the conditions of the emergence of antagonism – there is no a priori “ethical” institutional arrangement. Among other things, this makes the establishment of “an ethics” to promote an agonistic pluralist planning particularly challenging. It suggests a dynamic and contingent ethical structure – one that resists specification prior to the introduction of a “wrong”. It is why planning scholars tend to use the word “ethos” in place of words like “principle” or “code” – it is a reference to a cultural or attitudinal shift rather than instructions or blueprints (Pløger, 2004; Bond, 2011; Hillier, 2003).

There are two possible undesirable outcomes for this state of affairs. First, and almost certainly most likely, the arguments and intellectual products of the agonistic pluralist movement will be ignored as esoteric academic pontification with no practical payoff – as has been the approximate argument from practitioners in the past for so many other theories (cf. Friedmann, 2008). In the second, less likely but more interesting scenario, planning is continually disarticulated and rearticulated at every instance of conflict. Without guidance on recognizing a “wrong”, the discipline faithfully tears down its institutions, reimagines its practices, and creates new subject positions to accommodate stakeholders, other disciplines, public and private sector

planners, etc. This scenario is implausible precisely because planning conflict is a local phenomenon, while the practice of planning is a social discursive phenomenon. Institutional change must be part of a conversation; it is likely to be slow and incremental, and it is likely to consider the merits of existing planning practices and institutions on their own terms *in light* of a wrong or many wrongs. Again, politics and police are *both* constitutive of agonistic democracy. A third way may be possible, and, following Gualini's work, is predicated on a *heuristic* approach that can be used to interpret the co-evolutive dimension of planning and contestation begin to think about demands for emancipatory change

An heuristic of conflict is first and foremost a practical method for recognizing “wrongs” - it cannot be guaranteed to be ‘true’ or ‘optimal’, but sufficient to achieve immediate practical goals and aims. This method is pre-eminently fallible and should be used with the knowledge that its premises are infinitely revisable. In what follows, a multi-tiered series of recommendations are made that are designed to be sensitive to the context of planning conflict.

6.4 The Heuristics of Conflict, the Ethical Imperative, and a New Conversation

Gualini draws on several typologies of conflict and social mobilization to develop a kind of heuristic device for recognizing and understanding the nature of contestation in planning, particularly as it relates to the policy and institutional environment of the latter (Gualini, 2015, p. 26). In developing this typology of conflict, Gualini's focus is primarily analytical. He argues that the institutions and practices of planning are instrumental in shaping and framing the dynamics of the co-evolutive dimension of contestation and social mobilization. Within these dynamics there is an opportunity to better understand the forms of strategic reflexivity (read herein to be “undecidable decisions”) employed by subjects in a given planning activity (Gualini, 2015, pp. 29-

30). Gualini's overall argument is that planners will contribute to the evolution of social mobilization and contestation simply by being planners and doing the things that planners do, such as engagement, deliberation, facilitation, mitigation, and others. His interest is in developing an analytical framework for recognizing the increasing severity of antagonism throughout this evolution so as to understand how planning contributes to this process. This research borrows Gualini's typology of conflict in order to inform what is termed herein to be the *ethical imperative* – a signal of the demand for emancipatory change that is intended to be commensurate to the nature of the 'wrong' experienced in practice.

Drawing on Pizzorno (1993), Gualini identifies three "kinds" of conflict in his typology: *interest conflicts, recognition conflicts, and ideological (value) conflicts*. This typology can be modelled on a scale of shared symbolic space that ranges from high to low levels of agreement on core values and shared symbolic space. Interest conflicts bear the highest levels of agreement, in which conflict typically takes the form of a distributive game premised on the competitive allocation of resources. Conflicts that fall into this category are perhaps the most common – or at least the most apparent in planning processes. The planner and the subject, after all, share the same symbolic space – they are playing the same *game*. Most problematically, also included in this category are those who mask these more basic interest conflicts as if they were more significant ideological ones. As put by John Pløger, "[i]f planners want to empower their position as guardians of lesser heard voices and common societal interests and concerns, they cannot ignore the fact that local citizens may disguise or protect their own interests when acting as neighbourhood fathers [sic.] – or, indeed, the NIMBY-factor" (Pløger, 2015, p. 115).

Recognition conflicts, on the other hand, are premised upon the struggle for the recognition and respect for identity. As they are predicated on issues pertaining to the search for mutual recognition, respect, and sovereignty, the degree of shared symbolic space is itself the central question – an evolutive process that can be distributive, in the case of some shared symbolic space, or antagonistic (Gualini, 2015, p. 27). These instances are ones in which antagonism is likely to be most difficult to identify and which oppression through the closures established by “regular” planning practice most likely. At its core, this ‘wrong’ takes the form of seeking a place where there is no space. This is illustrated by the following segment of the Text in which an Indigenous group ‘suddenly’ sought recognition for the claim to lands that have seen continuous mining development for a century prior:

Yeah, so they had just done that and, for some reason, when I joined on, I heard that there were some challenges with one of the Indigenous communities in the area that had sent a letter to my client saying that "you do not have our free, prior, and informed consent", so, we're going to oppose you.... They clearly felt like they had been wronged, and so they wanted to express their reluctance to move forward. And so, as I sat in the boardroom, the discussions around the table were "oh what do they mean, what does free prior and informed consent even mean? Are they asking us to get their consent?" and "what is - how do we proceed?" ... I was just a newbie, and so a little bit reluctant to express my opinion, but I watched everyone say "I think what they mean is, we gotta do this" and someone else saying oh "I think we should just ask a couple of the Elders to join us in the bush"... it was a real ethical dilemma because I didn't know - what, what this would mean for the community moving forward. And at the time, the discussion that happened in the board room with the advice of some lawyers was that we should get a court injunction that prevents any blockades on the site. Which was the wrong move ... this was years ago

and it's still pretty [pause] the community doesn't want anything to do with the company and the company doesn't want anything to do with the community.

Interview 1

Here, the Indigenous community articulated a wrong that the client could not understand or relate to. Although the planner later stated that, despite his junior status on the team, he was proud to have it ‘on the record’ that they opposed the move to shut out the claim, this instance was particularly unresolved for him. Specifically, although it was abundantly clear that the community wanted to be recognized and have their claim to the land taken seriously, it was unclear what the community wanted from the relationship or how they might resolve the issue – if at all. Had process allowed for this discussion, it would have become clearer whether there was any shared symbolic space. If there was very little, the ethical imperative would be higher.

At the furthest end of the spectrum are ideological (value) conflicts. These conflicts are centred upon competing fundamental values and beliefs – “ontological worldviews” (Gualini, 2015, p. 27). In these cases, a “counter-hegemonic” subject position is established that is premised upon an antagonism. These usually manifest in fully-fledged social mobilizations in which a group has established an identity that is opposed to established structures and institutions. The canonical examples of such planning mobilization include the likes of Jane Jacobs’ opposition to the large scale development plans of Robert Moses in New York City in the 1950s (Flint, 2009), or more recently, the opposition to the Dakota Access Pipeline and the protests of the Hunkpapa Lakota, Sicasu Lakota, and Yanktonai Dakota of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe (Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, 2018). In these situations, the ethical imperative is highest, most clearly demanding that the

boundaries of the discourses of planning be creatively rearticulated to allow for new symbolic resources to be generated.

For each of the above “kinds” of conflict, the “ethical imperative” increases, raising the demand for emancipatory change in planning practice. Of course, how to meet this demand for change is the ultimate question for the challenge of agonism. Some of the most persuasive literature on the implementation of agonism in planning has called for a new “ethos” of practice. This ethos typically premised on the provision of *powerfulness* and *masterfulness* for subjects of planning activity. As explained by Pløger, powerfulness is, “... a matter of individuals and communities’ actual opportunities to get through politically” while masterfulness is, “... a matter of being able to utilise the dispositional possibilities for influence in supposedly adequate ways” (Pløger, 2004, p. 86). In simple terms, this entails ensuring stakeholders are empowered and given sufficient space to pursue their aims, and that they have access to (or are unobstructed from) resources to pursue them. As has been established, however, the ‘materials’ for this change must come from the instance of antagonism and the planning practices used to meet it. In other words, agonistic pluralist ethics must be *nonfoundational* and unencumbered by *idealism*. At this point, it seems there are two closely interrelated ways forward to continue this agonistic project beyond the broad call for ethos.

The first nonfoundational and non-idealistic approach focuses primarily on the role of the planning practitioner. This makes intuitive sense: the practitioner is the primary agent of planning institutions, the main actor interacting with subjects, and at this point in time, the principal target of “planning ethics”. One take on this approach is introduced by Katie McClymont who draws on Alasdair MacIntyre’s ‘virtue ethics’ perspective (McClymont, 2018). Briefly, according to

McClymont, “Virtues pertain to the skills needed to develop aptitude at a practice; doing them allows judgement to be made that the practice is good” (McClymont, 2018, p. 10). Practices therefore have specific values that drive the perfection of the skill for the practice in question. As pointed out by McClymont, however, a single person is very likely to pursue multiple practices whose values are not necessarily congruous – the example of a watchmaker who is also a mother was given. Where these practices collide in temporally and spatially delimited contexts and their values conflict, these values must be assessed through *situated judgements* and the relative merits of each worked out by a *community* (McClymont, 2018, p. 10). McClymont emphasizes this point throughout her work as a means of bringing the language of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ into a mainstream debate that anyone involved in planning activity can participate in.

Despite some claims that this approach is not compatible with agonistic pluralist theory (McClymont, 2018, p. 12), there are several very strong connections between them that should be drawn out. As has been discussed, overdetermination is a property of both objects and subjects of discourse and a key reason for the immanent potential for antagonism. The notion that planners might cultivate separate practices with competing values that might conflict in contingently-defined moments is a very compatible with the agonistic approach. The push toward community as a place for ethics also appears well connected to agonism. The rearticulation of the “constitutive rules” of the profession is something that planners cannot possibly do on their own. Because these are intersubjective and mediated by the social, exceeding the limits of language mean exceeding the practice recognizable as such in the first place. It would not do justice to the call to transform the conditions of antagonism so that it would be less likely to occur in the future if only one person heard it. The movement to the social, rather than the individual, is therefore a crucial step in further specifying this ‘ethos’.

Still, there is a problem with this approach as described by McClymont. The theory of agonistic pluralism suggests that these ‘virtue-value’ conflicts occur *very* often in practice – a phenomenon that is corroborated by the findings of this research through the phenomenon of overdetermination – to be committed the conflicting demands of Communicative Power and Epistemic Mediation. Criss-crossed by conflicting discourses and demands, it is not clear when planners would be compelled, ethically, to appeal to the social to rearticulate planning practice (let alone *how* this might look). For this purpose, it is possible that planners could use an heuristic typology of conflict like the one developed herein, but this places *all* of the responsibility to recognize and act upon the ‘ethical imperative’ on the planning practitioner. This idea of planners playing such a role as ‘gatekeepers’ between politics and the political is not a new one in the planning literature (Forester, 1989, p. 17), but it is one that has been criticized for being highly dubious (Metzger, Allmendinger, & Oosterlynck, 2015). Retaining this idea of the ‘pivot’ to the social as an important step for the individual planner, I argue that there are more significant changes at the social level necessary to move towards an agonistic planning ethics – one that requires a new collective *conversation*.

Here, I propose that the discipline of planning as a whole must think about its practices differently in order to make its constitutive rules more flexible and amenable to change. Planners are bound to make undecidable and potentially antagonistic decisions, and those decisions are necessarily subject to the limits of discourse. I suggest, however, that a discipline more committed to expanding the kinds of symbolic spaces constitutive of planning, that new kinds of emancipatory actions become possible. This is the condition of the ethos of agonistic planning described in the literature. To achieve this condition, I propose three characteristics of this conversation below.

Openness

The notion of openness serves two key functions. The first is intended to signify the breadth of participation required for a “planning discipline” to undertake the proposed conversation. As fundamentally social and intersubjective phenomena, the revision of the constitutive rules of discourses and practices must occur at the level of the social. Laclau and Mouffe emphasize this through their attention to radical mobilization as the means of “struggling against inequalities and challenging relations of subordination” (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 164). As such, this is a conversation that should be actively maintained by the likes of practitioners, academics, students, and planning enthusiasts. The intended effect of openness as it is promoted by the discipline described above is a necessary component of agonistic democracy as a *condition*. The expectation of openness felt by antagonized subjects of planning serves to signal the hope that they will find an audience for their ‘wrong’.

The second key function of openness is the distribution of attention to the “ethical imperative.” Where planning activity is open and amenable to the participation of a broader planning community, discussion and attention to the nature of a ‘wrong’ becomes the prerogative of more than just the planner in question. Attention to planning activity by a plurality of persons is therefore critical to ensuring that the ethical imperative is observed. A critical condition of this attention is to recognize the situated position of planners. If this conversation is to be agonistic, it must be predicated on the recognition of the conditions in which the planner operates. This includes the discursive emancipatory limits of planning practice as discussed in Chapter 6.3, as well as the practical. As a *pragmatic* enterprise, agonistic planning ethics begin with situated, local practices and ask how to make things better in light of a wrong, *not* by identifying an ideal utopia of either

outcome or process that the practices, discourses, and context of a situation cannot possibly support.

Reconciliation

The notion that the proposed conversation should be *reconciliatory* is derived from the work of John Pløger (2015). Pløger's work is premised on the question of coming to terms with agonism's claim that democracy is about not "shutting out" conflict and strife on the one hand, and the fact that in planning, decisions must be made. To build this argument, Pløger forcefully implicates the ways that a planning subject's experience of loss should be remembered, recorded in such a way as to "do justice to their historic and actual position within the issue raised", and that time and space – what he terms "temporary resting" – should be given to planning processes to allow for reflection, critique, and renewal (Pløger, 2015, pp. 120-121). This provisional reconciliatory process helps to make more tangible Mouffe's ephemeral notion of a "conflictual consensus" – one that can promote the "privileged terrain of agonistic confrontation among adversaries" (Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*, 2000, p. 103). As such, reconciliation is seen to be a key way for conflict to stay alive, for adversaries to be respected, and for opportunities to re-examine the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. There is ample precedent for this in the reporting practices of planners observed in this research. The elements pertaining to honesty, and forthrightness can be manifested in the plans and reporting that follow engagement. As one planner put it with respect to reporting on the range of feedback and how to report disagreement and conflict, beyond the face-to-face interaction, "this is data... I'll avoid at all costs the sense of volume, because fifteen said they liked it and one didn't, we get to do it... that wouldn't be democracy..." (Interview 5). The key to reconciliation is the expansion and broad public

recognition of this ‘wrong’ to live on in memory and to resurface where plans are renewed or similar developments initiated.

Modesty

The final characteristic of the proposed conversation is the suggestion for modesty in the outcome of planning activity – particularly that which featured conflict. Planning seems to be driven to “result”, “solution”, or “success” in the sense that planning terminates in a decision. In this research, this was particularly visible in the discourse of Epistemic Mediation, where for example, participants were averse to simply ‘flagging’ problems, drawing on context and constraint to generate new options and alternatives, and an emphasis was placed on ‘good process’ in order to ‘succeed’. This is not to suggest that planners necessarily show hubris when successful, nor is it to suggest that planners should not feel accomplished for achievement. It is to make explicit that, as a product of making undecidable decisions, they have participated in the perpetuation of certain social and political structures – some of which may have played a role in the perpetuation of the status of the marginalized and oppressed. It entails finding the failure in success. The corollary is even more important as an end that should not be stigmatized. In the failure of a planning engagement which features conflict, particularly where that conflict is predicated on a claim to symbolic representation (in the case of recognition or ideological conflict), it should be recognized that the planner in question has participated in a process that has rearticulated the terms of inclusion and exclusion. This, conversely, entails the finding of success in failure.

7.0 Conclusion

I have argued that an agonistic planning ethics is possible through practices that target the discursive boundaries that enforce what ‘counts’ as planning. To do so, I suggest that planning ethics must develop an open, reconciliatory, and modest conversation to make these boundaries flexible, amenable to creative rearticulation, and always ready to redefine who and what is included or excluded when it is demanded. Crucially, this recommendation is placed at the social dimension of ‘conversation’ because this is seen to be the fundamental ingredient to an agonistic ethics. Because the emancipatory potential of planning practice is argued to be dependent upon the limits of discourse, it becomes necessary for a community to work towards changing the terms of that discourse. As planning is said to be *overdetermined* by the discourses of Communicative Power and Epistemic Mediation, planners’ ability to understand and bring meaning to the conflict and antagonism they experience in practice is dependent upon their ability to navigate the ‘undecidable’ terrain of these discourses. Expanding this terrain is a task they cannot do alone; it requires a social mobilization – a *conversation*.

Communicative approaches to ‘mainstream’ Collaborative Planning practice have been dominant in the study of planning ethics over the course of the past 20 years. At least part of its dominance is due to its prescriptiveness – it provides very clear guidelines for the achievement of ethical ends in practice. The accelerating critique against communicative approaches threatens to launch the discipline into crisis over the ethical status of its practices. Where there are no secure foundations for cornerstone planning activities like deliberation, engagement, and facilitation, how can the public value of planning be defined? How can it be *good* for society (cf. Marcuse, 1976)? Answers to this question have been difficult to find because agonistic pluralism and the

communicative approaches are *incommensurable* – it is not easy to compare or combine them coherently to continue to defend existing planning practices. It is argued that the solution lay in giving up on fundamental defences of practices, and letting them speak for themselves. On this *pragmatic* view, taken at face-value, practices of planning are neither ethical nor unethical except for their malleability and responsiveness to planning subjects' demands for change. Agonism, therefore does not demand a revolution of *what* planners do so much as it demands a revolution in how they *see* what we do. Changing this condition makes it possible realize the tensions and disjuncture of planning practices so that they can be remade.

In building this argument, this research explored the discourse of practicing planners in Winnipeg, Manitoba to answer three central research questions. The first asked what commitments practicing planners have and how they are discursively constituted. Although many discourses could be found in the Text, two stood out as being particularly prominent in structuring the normative architecture of the profession. Communicative Power is premised on informing commitments pertaining to the expansion of opportunities, knowledge, and courses of action derived from the diversity of perspectives and values that emerge from engagement and deliberation. The most prominent elements that were found to be constituted by moments informed by the discourse of Communicative Power included “process”, “meaningful consultation”, and “honesty, directness”. Epistemic Mediation, on the other hand, was premised on the implication of context and constraint – the so-called ‘realities’ of planning that informed the “selective [organization] of attention to the real possibilities for action” (Forester, 1989, p. 14). Here, key elements identified in the next included “process”, “context, constraint”, and “stakeholder, stakeholder group”.

The second research question asked what tensions and contradictions exist in the employment of these discourses and how these tensions might actualize the potential for antagonism. Here, segments from the Text were deconstructed or juxtaposed against one another in order to show how intended meanings are predicated upon hidden “marginal meanings”. It also revealed that planners tend to use an hegemonic discourse in a given context. With reference to their role and identity, the discourse of Communicative Power is dominant, obscuring its hidden premises on Epistemic Mediation. Conversely, Epistemic Mediation and the aim to establish boundary objects toward control and context tend to assimilate the discourse of Communicative Power. In these two classes of articulation, the planner is never able to fully separate these discourses. Because of this, planning practice is said to be *overdetermined* – it is simultaneously constituted by overlapping discourses that compete for meaning. It is here in the precarious fixities established by discourse that antagonism – a claim to space where there is no place – is immanently possible.

The third research question attempts to draw out the implications of these findings by asking what the emancipatory potential of planning practice is and how this affects the discipline’s understanding of ethics. Here, the claim is made that the emancipatory limits of planning practice are a product of the limits of the discourses that constitute it. As planning is herein understood to be a *policing* force in society, it is argued that it must be arranged in such a way to be amenable to the emancipatory demands of politics (or ‘the political’). In order to structure this amenability on some structure, the idea of the *ethical imperative* is introduced, which is predicated on an heuristic of conflict. Here, it is suggested, the need for change should be proportional to the nature of conflict, specifically, the amount of shared symbolic space available between the privileged and the marginalized. To reiterate, this is a *heuristic* device intended to be useful, rather than ‘true’ –

and how it is used should be the responsibility of a *community* rather than an *individual*. Coming full circle in this concluding chapter, this is why a new conversation is necessary – to collectively pull planning practice into new agonistic emancipatory possibilities.

A central limiting assumption in this research is that it applies solely to “mainstream” Collaborative Planning practice. This is tenuously defined, but was essentially based on the notion that “radical” planning might have different commitments than mainstream planners – those explicitly directed to the subversion of established structures of power, namely the state. The omission of radical planners is a risk in this research. On the one hand, it further isolates insurgent and uniquely progressive practices with the label “radical”, and could be detrimental to the very project of expanding the “constitutive rules” of planning advocated herein. On the other hand, the distinction may not be analytically tenable, and there may be nuances in the patterns of discursive use that could challenge the discursive binary and diagnosis of overdetermination developed herein. A related assumption pertains to the combination of public and private sectors into the Text. This can be defended by the fact that both private and public sectors planners are bound to the same codes of ethics and that both ostensibly operate within similar structural constraints and conditions. With that said, there were hints of nuances in the commitments of public and private sector planners, and several participants explicitly articulated this difference. As such, analytical “blind spots” are considered to be key areas for further research, both in terms of better specifying the analytical construction of normative commitment, and to better integrate these practitioners into the agonistic project advocated herein.

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Appendix A: Interview Schedule

The purpose of the interview is to explore the discursive resources that planners use to describe their practice, particularly as it relates to conflict. This pattern of language use is indicative of broader ethical discourses. I intend to interpret these patterns to relate them to the academic literature on democracy in planning practice.

The interview schedule is divided into the three sections. The first is intended to be a general icebreaker to introduce the participant and provide context. The second is intended to explore how the participant understands certain entries in the Canadian Institute of Planners Code of Professional Conduct that have to do with ideas pertaining to values. Finally, the majority of the interview is dedicated to a semi-structured discussion of an experience of conflict in the participant's past when working as a planner. A preliminary schedule is provided below:

Introduction

- 1) Could you tell me a little bit about yourself?
 - a. What kind of planning have you been involved in?
 - b. Could you describe an average day at the office?

CIP Code of Professional Conduct:

- 2) I'd like to ask you a couple of questions about the CIP Code of Professional Conduct. I will not be testing your knowledge of the document, but instead ask about your interpretation of certain elements or principles.
 - a. §1.0 of the Code deals with various aspects of the public interest.

- What's the first thing that comes to mind when you think of the meaning of "the public interest"?
- b. §1.1 asks that planners "practice in a manner that respects the diversity, needs, values, and aspirations of the public and encourages discussion on these matters."
- What kinds of things do you think planners should be doing to ensure that different values are recognized in public engagement?
 - §2.3 and 2.5 of the Code note that planners have a responsibility to acknowledge and notify a client or employer when their values are in conflict with those of the Code. This implies that there are limits to recognition and respect for diversity. Can you think of any examples of these limits from your own experience?
- c. The Code makes several mentions of "meaningful" engagement. What do you think it means by "meaningful"?

Conflict in Practice:

- 3) Can you think of a recent planning project you were involved in that you would define as conflictual in nature? This might be a general characterization for the overall feeling of the project, or it could be a particularly conflictual moment.
- a. Could you describe the project?
 - b. What happened?
 - What were the key reasons for the conflict?
 - c. Who was involved?
 - d. Was it something you predicted might happen?

- 4) What action(s) did you take in response to the conflict and to what end?
 - a. (Discuss why they decided to do what they did. What was the context?)
 - b. (Discuss consequences of action(s), including any unintended consequences. Did this lead to further action / change in strategy?)
 - c. (Repeat as necessary. Iterate between the above questions for each conflictual element produced by the interviewee. Focus will be on what they did, to what end, and “and then what”.)
- 5) Did anything surprise you about the project?
- 6) What was the biggest lesson to be learned through your experience?

Appendix B: Ethics Approval Certificate



Human Ethics
208-194 Dafoe Road
Winnipeg, MB
Canada R3T 2N2
Phone +204-474-7122
Email: humanethics@umanitoba.ca

PROTOCOL APPROVAL

TO: **Conor Smith** (Advisor: **Janice Barry**)
Principal Investigator

FROM: **Kevin Russell, Chair**
Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board (JFREB)

Re: **Protocol J2017:031 (HS20688)**
**“Toward a New Conversation: Planning Theory and Practitioner
Constructions of Democracy in Planning Practice”**

Effective: May 4, 2017

Expiry: May 4, 2018

Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board (JFREB) has reviewed and approved the above research. JFREB is constituted and operates in accordance with the current *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*.

This approval is subject to the following conditions:

1. Approval is granted only for the research and purposes described in the application.
2. Any modification to the research must be submitted to JFREB for approval before implementation.
3. Any deviations to the research or adverse events must be submitted to JFREB as soon as possible.
4. This approval is valid for one year only and a Renewal Request must be submitted and approved by the above expiry date.
5. A Study Closure form must be submitted to JFREB when the research is complete or terminated.
6. The University of Manitoba may request to review research documentation from this project to demonstrate compliance with this approved protocol and the University of Manitoba *Ethics of Research Involving Humans*.

Funded Protocols:

- **Please mail/e-mail a copy of this Approval, identifying the related UM Project Number, to the Research Grants Officer in ORS.**

Appendix C: Background Information and Consent Form

Faculty of Architecture

Statement of Informed Consent

Research Project Title: *'Toward a New Conversation: Planning Theory and Practitioner Ethics in Planning Practice'*

Principal Investigator: Conor M Smith, Graduate Student, Master of City Planning,
Faculty of Architecture, University of Manitoba
Email: [REDACTED]
Phone: [REDACTED]

Research Supervisor: Dr. Janice Barry, Assistant Professor, Department of City Planning,
Faculty of Architecture, University of Manitoba
Email: [REDACTED]
Phone: [REDACTED]

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

Introduction

You have been invited to participate in a research study. This consent form, a copy of which you may keep for your records, is intended to ensure you have consented willingly and with all necessary information. It explains what is involved in the research and what is expected of you as a participant.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the proposed research is to explore the relationship between professional planning ethics and ideas about democracy in the academic planning literature. It will analyse the discursive resources employed by practitioners as they reflect on instances where they have experienced or managed stakeholder conflict. The patterns within these discourses will be used to build a picture

of the different commitments, both implicit and explicit, that hold together real, practiced value systems. It is hoped that this will provide a means of advancing the academic debate about democracy in planning by providing a reference point that is explicitly rooted in practice.

Study Procedures

By participating in this study, you will be asked a series of questions pertaining to past planning experience with emphasis on an instance in which you experienced or managed stakeholder conflict. The interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed. It is expected to take between 60 minutes to complete. *You will be given the opportunity see your transcription and make redactions before the research is finalized and submitted.* This ‘feedback period’ will begin no more than four (4) weeks after the interview has taken place and will last for a period of four (4) weeks.

Participant Risks and Benefits

This research project has been foreseen to pose *minimal risks* to you, the interview participant. Your identity (i.e. name, place of work, etc.) will not be included in this study, however, because of the small size of the planning community in Winnipeg, you may be identifiable to your peers or general public based on the descriptions you provide in your interview data. I will attempt to minimize this risk by providing you with a ‘feedback period’ to read your transcript and make redactions before the research is published and by fictionalizing any identifying features through the replacement of the names of other people, places, organizations and any other identifiers that may appear.

A benefit of your participation includes contributing to the advancement of disciplinary ethics and the pursuit of more democratic planning practices.

Audiotaping & Confidentiality

The interviews will be audiotaped for later transcription and the data will be stored confidentially on a password-protected computer. After the feedback period has elapsed (four weeks after initially providing your interview transcript for review and/or redaction), your data will be anonymized (any personal identifiers will be expunged with the exception of your participant group) and it will no longer be possible to associate your identity with your data. Only the principal

investigator and thesis advisor will have access to this device. This data will be destroyed two years after successful submission of the research project or October of 2020, whichever comes first.

Dissemination of Results

Research findings will be disseminated in hard copy at the University of Manitoba's Architecture / Fine Arts Library, in digital format on the University of Manitoba's M Space, and at my oral defence. If desired, I will also send you a summary (1-3 pages) of the project results via your choice of email or surface mail once the date for my oral defence has been set. It is also possible that this research could feature as a part of conference materials or in an article for publication.

Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal from Study

Your decision to take part in this study is *voluntary*. You are free to refuse participation or to withdraw from this research. Withdrawal may occur up to four (4) weeks after the feedback period has been initiated, after which time your data will be made anonymous (it will be impossible to link you to your data). Should you choose to do so, your data will be destroyed no more than one (1) week after you have requested to withdraw and a confirmation of its destruction will be delivered. Please contact the principal investigator or supervisor using the provided contact information to initiate a withdrawal request.

If you choose to participate, you have the right to refuse to answer any question or refuse participation in any interview activity.

Statement of Consent

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial

consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board (JFREB). If you have any concerns or complaints about this project, you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) by phone at [REDACTED] or by e-mail at [REDACTED]. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

If you agree to each of the following, please place a check mark in the corresponding box:

I have read or it has been read to me the details of this consent form. Yes () No ()

My questions have been addressed. Yes () No ()

I agree to have the interview audio-recorded and transcribed. Yes () No ()

a. I agree to be contacted by phone or e-mail if further information is required after the interview Yes () No ()

b. I agree to have the findings (which may include quotations) from this project published or presented in a manner that does not reveal my identity. Yes () No ()

Do you wish to receive a summary of the findings? Yes () No ()

How do you wish to receive the summary? Surface Mail ()

Email ()

I, _____ (print name), agree to participate in this study.

Address: _____

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix D: CIP Code of Professional Conduct



CIP CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Last modified Aug. 19, 2016

Minimum Standards for Codes of Professional Conduct

[Examples of possible non-compliance are provided in italics for information]

1. The Planner's Responsibility to the Public Interest

Members shall:

- 1.1** practice in a manner that respects the diversity, needs, values and aspirations of the public and encourages discussion on these matters;
[A Member unreasonably dismisses ethnic and/or religious based concerns.]
- 1.2** 1.2 provide full, clear and accurate information on planning matters to decision-makers and members of the public, while recognizing the employer or client's right to confidentiality and the importance of timely reporting;
[A Member releases confidential information, when they have been specifically requested by a client, employer or another planner not to do so.]
- 1.3** acknowledge the inter-related nature of planning decisions and the consequences for natural and human environments;
[A Member recommends the elimination of an engineering requirement which they know is required to protect public safety.] and,
- 1.4** provide opportunities for meaningful participation and education in the planning process to all interested parties.
[A Member conducts a public hearing process without the required notice(s) or without indicating to a member of the public that their speaking time will be limited.]

2. The Planner's Responsibility to Clients and Employers

Members shall:

- 2.1** provide independent professional opinion to clients, employers, the public, and tribunals; perform work only within their areas of professional competence;
[A Member provides advice in an area of planning or another discipline where they do not have appropriate training and experience. An example is a Member who does not have professional competence in transportation planning and prepares a report with recommendations in this area.]
- 2.2** undertake planning services with diligence and render services with appropriate preparation;
[A Member does not take the time and care needed to provide appropriate professional advice and presents a major report which has not been well researched and is poorly written and presented without a factual basis.]

- 2.3** acknowledge the values held by the client or employer in work performed, unless such values conflict with other aspects of this Code;
[A Member ignores the client or employer's standards or needs in the work being done and does not adhere to the agreed-upon Terms of Reference for a project.]
- 2.4** respect the client or employer right to confidentiality of information gathered through a professional relationship, unless such right conflicts with other aspects of this Code;
[A Member releases information that is confidential. This right of confidentiality does not extend to, for example, a situation where the Member is required to testify before a tribunal of the Member's Affiliate Institute where a complaint has been made against the Member by the client or employer.]
- 2.5** inform the client or employer in the event of a conflict between the values or actions of the client or employer and those of this Code in a timely manner;
[A Member who does not immediately notify the client or employer that something they want the Member to do is in conflict with the Member's responsibilities under the Code. An example is a client asking a Member to share with them confidential information that the Member has collected in the course of conducting an assignment for another client.]
- 2.6** ensure timely and full disclosure to a client or employer of a possible conflict of interest arising from the Member's private or professional activities;
[A Member who does not immediately let the client or employer know of a situation where the Member believes they cannot continue to offer independent professional advice. An example is a Member employed as a consultant on the side providing professional planning advice in a municipality where the Member is employed full-time as a professional planner.]
- 2.7** not offer or accept any financial or other inducements, including prospective employment, that could, or appear to, influence or affect professional opportunities or planning advice;
[A Member asks for or receives a financial or other benefit, including a job, in exchange for providing professional advice that is not independent and objective. An example is a Member providing biased conclusions, at the request of a client, in a report that will be received by a public regulatory body in exchange for gaining further work from the client.]
- 2.8** not, as an employee of a public agency, give professional planning advice for compensation to a private client or employer within the jurisdiction of the public agency without disclosure to the agency and written consent;
[A Member accepts a bonus payment based on a planning approval achieved] and,
- 2.9** not, as a consultant to a public agency during the period of contract with the agency, give professional planning advice for compensation to others within the jurisdiction of the agency without disclosure to the agency and written consent in situations where there is the possibility of a conflict of interest arising.
[A Member acts as a consultant providing professional planning advice to a developer on a project in a municipality at the same time as the Member is providing professional planning advice to the municipality on matters that may affect the developer's project.]

3. The Planner's Responsibility to the Profession and Other Members
Members shall:

- 3.1** maintain an appropriate awareness of contemporary planning philosophy, planning theory and practice by obtaining professional education throughout their planning career, including complying with the Institute's continuing professional learning requirements;
[A Member ignores the Affiliate requirements for continuous professional learning]
- 3.2** not in professional practice, extra-professional activities or private life, engage in dishonourable or questionable conduct that may cast doubt on their professional competence or integrity or that may reflect adversely on the integrity of the profession;
[A Member at a conference spends all of the program time outside of the conference in a disorderly and disruptive manner.]
- 3.3** ensure that advertising or promotional activities fairly and accurately communicate the expertise and skills offered, including professional qualifications and affiliations, education and experience;
[A Member provides false or misleading information on a CV or corporate brochure]
- 3.4** act toward other Members and colleagues in a spirit of fairness and consideration and not falsely or maliciously injure the professional reputation, prospects or practice of another Member or other colleagues;
[A public sector Member, when asked to recommend a good planner for employment purposes by the public or developer, continuously gives a specific reference rather than referring to an approved list or the Affiliate's Directory of Planning Consultants]
- 3.5** respect colleagues in their professional capacity and when evaluating the work of another Member, show objectivity and fairness and avoid ill-considered or uninformed criticism of the competence, conduct or advice of the Member;
[A Member makes derogatory comments at a Public Hearing on a planning matter about the work performed by another Member.]
- 3.6** not attempt to supplant another Member once made aware that definite steps have been taken toward the other's employment;
[A Member offers a discount or other incentive to lure a client's business when that client is in the process of securing a contract with another planner.]
- 3.7** only sign or seal a final drawing, specification, plan, report or other document actually prepared or checked by the Member;
[A Member seals a final site plan, prepared by a friend, who is a non-member, without checking the plan and thoroughly understanding the project.]
- 3.8** report to the Institute the behaviour of any Member believed to be in breach of this Code in a timely manner; *[In spite of extensive media coverage and personal knowledge, a Member does not report that a fellow CIP member has vociferously criticized a planning scheme proposed by the firm of another Member.]*