

RACE AND PLANNING IN THE U.K.

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June 2009.

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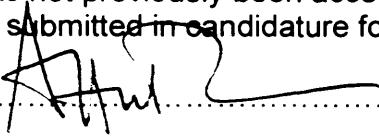
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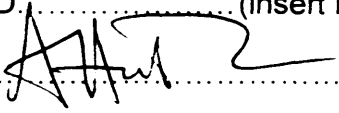
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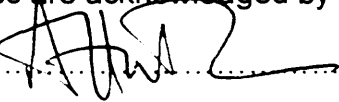
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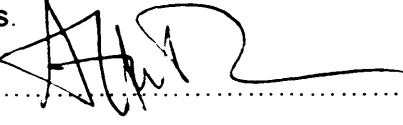
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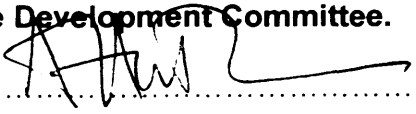
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Reprinted works, bound :

(with F. Lo Piccolo) 'Legal Discourse, the Individual and the Claim for Equality in British Planning', *Planning Theory and Practice* 2, 2, 2001

'Values, working lives and professional socialisation in planning', from Pattison, S and Pill, R (eds), *Values in Professional Practice* Oxford, Radcliffe Medical Press, 2004

'British Planning and the Promotion of Race Equality : the Welsh Experience of Race Equality Schemes', *Planning Practice and Research* 19, 1, 2004

(with Neil Harris) 'Planning for a Diverse Society? A review of the UK government's Planning Policy Guidance', *Town Planning Review* 75, 4, 2004

(with Elaine Hutchings) 'The Business Case for Equality and Diversity : a Case Study of Private Consultancy and Race Equality', *Planning Practice and Research* 20,3, 2005

'Race Equality and Planning : a Changing Agenda', *Planning Practice and Research* 23, 1, 2008

Note : additional work, submitted, but not bound:

Race Equality and Planning. The UK experience London, UCL Press, 2000

Summary

This commentary :

- identifies the main themes in the work submitted for the degree of PhD;
- argues for their originality and their continuing influence in the field of planning;
- notes the research upon which they were based and the evidence this provides of my capacity to design and conduct research projects;
- suggests ways in which the body of work relates to some important contemporary discussions within and outside planning.

The field that the submitted work has contributed to (and, it is contended, helped define) is how planning operates in a racialised society. The work spans a period from 2000 to date. It is argued that it has retained a focus on a limited range of important themes over that period. The three themes identified are :

1. How do planners understand the implications of planning in a racialised society, and what links do they make between other policy areas and their own work?
2. The need for a non-essentialist conception of race and ethnicity, and the way these can be understood in relation to the social construction of space.
3. Given that the answer to question 1 is disappointing, how might the practice of planning be improved?

Among the key debates that the submitted work is related to are critical race theory, those surrounding multi-culturalism and multi-faith societies, and the increasing significance for public policy of acknowledging diversity .

Race and Planning in the UK : an evaluation of the field, and of the contribution of my work to it.

Introduction

The work submitted spans a period from 2000 to date. This commentary will identify three themes which run through that work. It will be argued that it has retained a focus on a limited range of important themes over that period.

These themes emerge from policy and theoretical concerns. They have been addressed through research strategies which are discussed in the commentary. Of course, the world has changed in the period over which the submitted work was published, and the commentary will consider some new debates and issues which have arisen in recent years to which it might be felt the submitted work could, and should, be related. Finally, the commentary considers ways in which the submitted work might be taken forward in the light of these discussions.

Race and Planning in the UK : the themes and the research strategy

This section will set out the themes which have run through the work submitted, and the research designs and methods adopted to address those themes.

The field that the submitted work has contributed to (and, indeed, helped define, I think) is how planning operates in a racialised society (a term defined below). Research design and methods, and indeed implications for policy drawn from findings, are directly related to theoretical positions adopted in framing research (Massey and Meegan, 1985). From quite early on in the programme of research which issued in the works submitted for examination, I explored how 'race' and racism might be understood within a critical realist (and specifically materialist) view of the social world. There is an extended discussion of this in *Race and Planning* (Thomas, 2000), and some elements are re-visited in a later section of this critical commentary.

One important implication of this theoretical position is that it interrogates the everyday vocabulary (and conceptualisation) of the social world and seeks – notably through abstraction – to define objects and processes which will provide fuller, more coherent causal explanations of the social world as experienced (Sayer, 1992 : 87ff). It seemed to me important then (as it does now) that the planning system's involvement in 'race relations' and the lives of ethnic minorities (and the potential to promote race equality) needed to be understood in terms which linked those interactions to wider (and deeper) explanations of life in contemporary capitalist societies. This led to a review of the social science literature which convinced me of the lack of utility of race as a theoretical (ie explanatory) concept, but the usefulness of the concept of racialisation. The term 'racialisation' is defined in Thomas (2000:24) as :

'a process whereby the socially constructed category of 'race' (or, more usually, specific constructions of particular racial categories) structures the perceptions and interactions of people...'

A racialised society, then, is one where race plays a central role in structuring everyday understandings and social interactions. These interactions have material consequences, of course. A racialised society is one in which race helps structure the distribution of material goods and opportunities. In order to improve race equality the key question was not why different 'races' (sometimes) failed to get on, but rather under what conditions were social relations likely to sustain and be shaped by racial thinking (i e the idea that society was composed of genetically or culturally defined mutually exclusive groups, which changed slowly if at all, were naturally supportive of their own 'kind' and often antipathetic to each other, and were hierarchically ordered in terms of moral worth). Moving on to planning, I was concerned as to what might be planning's role in these processes of racialisation, and how might planning be affected by its racialised social context ? Understanding this was important as a basis for understanding how planning might contribute to promoting race equality.

It is in this sense that the work has sought to understand how the promotion of race equality within, and through, planning can be best effected. Very little was published in this field in the UK, or about the UK, before the work with which I was involved in the early 1990s. The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) and Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) had published a booklet which applied to planning some of the established principles of promoting race equality (RTPI/CRE, 1983). There were some pioneering academics and activists interested in the field (eg Patrick Loftman, Ian Munt, Peter Ratcliffe) but the literature was still very small. So, while some halting progress had been made in pointing out to planners the potential for discrimination in the way bureaucracies operated (lessons long ago learned in fields such as housing – Moore, 1995), there was

- no extended, systematic discussion of key terms in the field ('race' and 'ethnicity', especially),
- no attempt to consider what might be distinctive about *planning* in a racialised society (perhaps because at that time planning was still largely thought of in procedural terms rather than as an activity bound up with the construction of space(s)),
- no discussion of the kinds of circumstances under which planning practice might change (what kinds of barriers there might be to changing practice in general, and in relation to race equality in particular).

The themes which run through my work relate directly to these shortcomings :

1. The need for a non-essentialist conception of race and ethnicity, and the way these can be understood in relation to the social construction of space.
2. How do planners understand the implications of planning in a racialised society, and what links do they make between other policy areas and their own work?
- 3 Given that the answer to question 2 is disappointing, how might the practice of planning be improved?

Research undertaken alone and with others in the 1990s began to address these gaps. The most significant projects were :

- the RTPI – funded ‘Ethnic Minorities and the Planning System’ of 1991-3, where I was lead researcher and designed the research project , was responsible for analysis and wrote the report.
- the ESRC-funded ‘Race Equality and Urban Development Corporations’ of 1994-5, where I was joint principal investigator, and as such had a major responsibility for research design and management (the research assistants were based in my department rather than in the co-investigator’s department)
- the European Commission funded Marie Curie post-doctoral fellowship on the Multi-Ethnic City, 1998-1999, where I was responsible for supervising and training the fellow and designed the research project on which he and I worked .

Since then I have undertaken small scale unfunded research, such as that into the implementation of race equality schemes in Wales in the early years of this decade.

Research design and methodology

This section will discuss the research designs, and approaches to data acquisition and analysis used to address the themes identified above. In later sections there will be a summary of my findings and conclusions, and a discussion of the more recent literature.

Theme 1 was pursued through critically reviewing literature, largely sociological and social-policy focused in relation to race and ethnicity. As discussed later, my major concern here was that much of the literature was aspatial . I reviewed geographical literature in relation to debates about conceptualising space (and, from the late 1990s , taught Urban Geography part-time for the Open University and hence was exposed to ideas of a group of Geographers that was at the forefront of re-thinking space). The work

involved, then, an articulation of different disciplinary areas, and a drawing out of their implications for a third, namely planning.

Theme 2 involved exploring the perceptions and understandings of planners and planning authorities. In each research study, the unit of analysis was the planning organisation – typically, the local planning authority, sometimes a planning consultancy. But as data collection involved exposure to, and engagement with, individual planners some evidence was accumulated of the understandings of planners also. The consistency of this evidence allowed some tentative generalisations about planners to be made, using inductive reasoning. However, the main focus of research has always been to understand planning organisations, and hence planners within their organisational contexts. The research challenges in relation to theme 2 were to achieve (a) a breadth of knowledge of what was happening in planning agencies (primarily planning authorities) at any given time, (b) an appreciation of the nuances and subtleties which were likely to be part and parcel of the perception and understanding of planning agencies, and indeed planners within them, (c) some understanding of the dynamic of the processes affecting the perceptions and understandings of planners, as a basis for addressing theme 3 (seeking improvements).

In addition, the research was always conducted with an appreciation of the political and sometimes individual sensitivities of the research topic. It is of the USA that Babbie (2007 : 75) writes when saying that ‘ Nowhere have social research and politics been more controversially intertwined than in the area of racial relations’, but in the UK too researchers have to be aware of the potential sensitivities and anxieties in relation to ‘race’ of all those they may come across – research sponsors, interviewees and questionnaire respondents, and indeed the audiences for the research findings. [The continuing strength of feeling in some parts of the population on issues such as race/immigration/inequality in the UK is for example illustrated by Utting (2009, section 1)]. These implications will be identified in appropriate positions in this commentary. In relation to data acquisition, it meant, for example, careful wording of questions – in interviews and questionnaires – to ensure that respondents were unlikely to interpret questions (or indeed the wider research project) as implicitly accusatory in relation to planning practice.

Considering the body of research which addressed theme 2 , using Hakim's (1987/1994) classification of research types a three –pronged research strategy was, in effect, adopted , and most of these prongs were also evident in individual research projects. Hakim (1987/1994 : 144-145) argues for the advantages of combining different research designs ('studies' in her terminology) in a programme. In my case, this was not a deliberate strategy, but nevertheless as years went by the research benefited in drawing on the strengths of different kinds of research designs. The most important kinds of studies used were :

- *ad-hoc sample surveys* The surveys were usually of organisations (usually local planning authorities) and the views of individual planners were accessed in their roles as employees of organisations .The selection of local planning authorities (lpas) to be surveyed was generally as extensive as resources and timetables allowed. The two largest ad hoc surveys were 1) of all 414 lpas in England and Wales, in relation to exploiting the potential of Best Value in promoting race equality (Thomas and Lo Piccolo, 2000) ; and 2) of 135 lpas with above-average proportions of ethnic-minority residents, in RTPFI-funded research on the sensitivity of the planning system to the needs and aspirations of ethnic minorities (Krishnarayan and Thomas, 1993) [response rates were generally reasonable for a postal survey – 49% of the 414 ; and 69% of the 135; details are reported in Thomas, 2000: 84; and Thomas and Lo Piccolo, 2000]. Smaller surveys – eg of Urban Development Corporations (Krishnarayan and Thomas, 1993) or all Welsh planning authorities (Thomas, 2004) were 100% samples. Where samples were under 100%, the criteria reflected the third theme running through the research – the desire to improve the practice of planning in relation to race equality. Consequently, the attempt has been made to gain knowledge of 'best case' authorities and other organisations . Thus the selection of lpas with higher than average proportions of ethnic minorities as residents was (and is) justified on the grounds that of all lpas such lpas are more likely to exhibit reflective understandings of planning's role in a racialised and

ethnically diverse society. Arguably, they thus presented a best case scenario in relation to how planning authorities understand and respond to their racialised social context. This rationale carried over into the selection of follow-up case studies of aspects of the activities of survey respondents. In the case of research into private consultancies' approaches to race equality, for example, consultancies which appeared to have responded with more understanding than most to the issues pursued in the survey were followed up.

Ad-hoc surveys used questionnaires with a mix of closed questions (usually relating to standard equal opportunity procedures and instruments that might be in place) and open questions which allowed opinions to be expressed on the significance of race equality, or issues related to race equality within a broader view of planning (Bryman, 2001). Respondents would be asked to provide copies of, or references to, relevant official documentation – committee reports, for example.

- *case studies*. As indicated above, case studies were usually selective (Hakim, 1987/1994: 61 -62), being used to explore issues arising from the sample surveys. This exploratory function in relation to phenomena which are little researched is a common use of the case study method (Yin, 2003; Bryman, 2001: 51 – 52). Thus, for example, in the research on ethnic minorities and the planning system, there were case studies of the use of particular approaches to promoting race equality such as employing ethnic minority liaison officers and ethnic monitoring. Case studies also have acknowledged strengths in seeking to understand **processes**, which of necessity involve linking phenomena and 'context' (Sayer, 1992: 241 ff; Yin, 2003: 13). For example, my research attempted to understand why some local planning authorities are more responsive to the race equality agenda than are others. A case study allows an attempt to be made to relate phenomena such as the degree of sensitivity to race equality issues to 'contextual' factors such as professional discourse in an office, the organisation of the local authority, and the local politics of race, and of planning.

The case studies drew on multiple data sources (Yin, 2003) – questionnaires, documentation, and interviews. The latter were typically semi-structured interviews – where identified topics were explored in conversations (Babbie, 2007 : 306) - with key informants (Burgess, 1984). These informants would be selected on the basis of their different relationship to the planning process : thus, local authority planners, applicants for planning permission, agents, race equality activists, and politicians were all interviewed for various projects.

- *research based on administrative records and documentary evidence* (such as development plans, committee reports, planning application files), where an ‘analytical reading’ of documents (Hakim, 1987/1994 : 44) provides insights which are not necessarily those intended by the authors of the documents. These are what Scott (1990 :14) refers to as officially authored (as opposed to personal accounts). These were analysed as socially situated documents (Scott, 1990) , written within an organisational process that needed to be understood, for particular audiences (and it should not be assumed that there was always one audience for each document) , and in particular circumstances.

In addition, a very basic, but I think useful, amount of *secondary analysis and meta-analysis of existing data* (Hakim, 1987/1994 : 8 – 10) was undertaken in the book *Race and Planning* (Thomas, 2000 : 82 – 91) , where the results of a series of sample surveys of local planning authorities over a ten year period were compared in order to draw conclusions about trends in practices.

As indicated above addressing theme three – which considered how practice might improve – involved developing an understanding of the dynamics of planning practice, drawing on *case studies*. In some respects, there was a resemblance to what Burawoy (1991) refers to as the extended case method, where case studies are used as a way of deepening understanding within existing frameworks of knowledge rather than as sources of data which can suggest new explanatory concepts. So, for example, the use of the notion of

policy processes to analyse planning (as in Healey et al, 1988) was something which informed the way that case studies were conducted and data analysed. The case studies – as indicated above – involved generating a variety of qualitative data (primarily semi-structured interviews, documentary sources, occasionally newspaper clippings).

The data collected were largely qualitative. Data analysis involved searching for patterns in the material according to concepts and themes central to the questions being posed in specific projects (Babbie, 2007). There are dangers of decontextualising material when it is coded in this way (Bryman and Burgess, 1994), but sensitivity to this possibility helps avoid this pitfall, as does feedback from respondents, and in some cases – notably the RTPi study – key elements of the analysis were checked against perceptions of respondents.

While the research strategies adopted were appropriate for exploring the themes that have been central to my published research, there were two other research designs which might, in principle, have been undertaken, and which could be pursued in future research. These are :

- *Action research* , understood as systematic evaluation of initiatives in which one has been personally involved (Costello, 2003). If the opportunity arose, it would be very interesting to be involved in trying to improve the sensitivity of the planning system to promoting race equality, while reviewing the initiative in a systematic way. Such an approach would be especially relevant to the third theme identified above.
- *Ethnography* . Running through the research presented for a PhD is a concern to understand the way the idea of race is understood and used within the planning system, and why this is so. Theoretically informed ethnographic work of the kind advocated by Burawoy (1991) would be a powerful way of addressing these concerns, for as Silverman (2005) qualitative research can explore the way categories can be used and gain purchase in the concrete activities of people studied (eg Salzinger (2002) in relation to gender categories) . Such an approach is especially sensitive to the temporality of social processes. For example,

reviewing recent ethnographic research Smith (2001 : 225) concludes that 'Ethnographies ...have uncovered how work sites recreate gender and race stratification over time...'. There can be constraints involving the time-consuming nature of ethnographic work , and also gaining access to sites (Smith, 2001), and one option explored in my work (see Thomas, 2004 a) was a tentative use of 'second-hand ethnography' (Porter, 1994) where data are generated by others' experiences, but are analysed by the researcher at a distance. While this approach has clear limitations in that the data are mediated by a third party with her or his own framing of the social context being studied, it can take understanding forward and provided a basis for useful results in Thomas (2004a).

Considerations of research ethics are significant in research in the area of 'equalities', and while the research underlying this submission was conducted at a time when formal research ethics approval from one's university was rarely if ever necessary for a social researcher I was still acutely aware of ethical questions which needed addressing. Foremost among these was to be sure not to exploit the co-operation and trust of all those who generated data for the research by consenting to be interviewed and observed or by commenting on work. Often, those who are suffering from inequality are, in effect, treated as what Ladson-Billings (2000) has called 'data plantations'. I was mindful of the need for openness in explaining to respondents what the research was about, and what it might achieve. That said, my own stance in relation to race equality was not hidden; and in reporting and following up the findings of my research I have always sought to maximise its practical impact – eg through activity in the RTPi. These follow-up activities provided opportunities for me to work with activists in the field of race equality, and while I never used these experiences as research data, I am sure that as the years wore on they shaped the way I interpreted research data in this field.

The themes explored

My book, *Race and Planning. The UK experience*, drew upon a number of pieces of research, and addressed each of the points set out above. In doing so it laid the foundations for a more systematic approach to understanding planning in a racialised Britain. The book had its limitations, and some of the more important ones of which I am aware will be discussed below. But it has proved systematic and authoritative enough to provide a key reference point for the (still relatively small) amount of subsequent planning scholarship in the field, including international work (e.g.; Beebeejaun, 2004, 2006; Ellis, 2001; Ellis and McWhirter, 2008 ;Pesticeau and Wallace, 2003; Ryan, 2006 ; Uyesugi and Shipley, 2005.) It has also received attention outside its immediate field but within urban studies (eg Inch and Marshall, 2007; Ray et al, 2003; Talbot, 2004, 2006; Talbot and Bose, 2007). The additional work submitted for consideration for a PhD on this occasion can be regarded as helping to flesh out aspects of the approach and framework which is initially set out in *Race and Planning* . Three themes – identified above - run through this body of work and will be discussed in turn.

Planners' understandings of racialisation, race equality , etc..

My work has documented the persistent difficulty which planners have in understanding how their work relates to promoting race equality. The most stark finding of research into 'race and planning' over the last twenty five years is the sustained ignorance and uncertainty of planners and planning agencies in relation to how planning should take account of debates, discussions about (and indeed the reality of) racism, racial disadvantage, and the racialisation of social relations more generally. This was the picture painted in 1983 (RTPI/CRE, 1983), again in the 1990s (including in work conducted by myself and Vijay Krishnarayan). More recently, case studies (eg Beebeejaun, 2006) and surveys (Hutchings and Thomas, 2005; Thomas,2004b ; CRE, 2007) have confirmed that relatively little has changed (see also Greed (2005) in relation to gender equality).

Reviewing four surveys conducted in the 1980s and 1990s, Thomas (2000:82) argued that :

'...it seems reasonable to conclude that with a few notable exceptions British planning authorities have continually failed to perceive the relevance of concerns about racial discrimination or racial inequality for their work...'

In 2007, the CRE reported on a formal investigation into physical regeneration in Britain. It involved collecting evidence about a range of agencies in the public, private and voluntary sector, and concluded, *inter alia*, that :

'We were very concerned by the number of officers , at all levels, who said that racial equality and good race relations were irrelevant to the work of regenerating the built environment and that they used a 'colour blind' approach to their work'.

(CRE,2007:127).

It is pretty evident that there is a persistent blind spot among built environment professionals, including planners, when it comes to thinking through the connection between race equality and the development, use and management of the built environment. Why this might be will be discussed below.

In 1995, Robert Moore was astonished at the apparent backwardness of discussions of race equality in planning compared to policy fields such as housing. The evidence of the CRE – which confirms the findings of Booth et al (2004) in relation to respecting diversity within and through planning – suggests that it is unlikely that there has been significant change since then. In some ways this is surprising, because the British legislative context in relation to race equality has been strengthened considerably since the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, passed as a response to the report into the police investigation of Stephen Lawrence's death (Thomas, 2008). Especially important has been a shift towards requiring public bodies (defined in particular ways, but definitely including local planning authorities and 'stand-alone' public sector regeneration agencies), to consider the implications of all their activities (policies, actions, and as employers) in relation to the promotion of race equality. This is a quite different model from the essentially reactive model that has underpinned equalities legislation in the UK since the nineteen sixties. It would be a plausible supposition that such a requirement might encourage, even force, planning agencies to learn from agencies in

other policy fields which had more experience than them. My own research into the early years of the Act's implementation, looking at how planning tasks were considered in the newly required Race Equality Plans (Thomas, 2004b), suggested no great engagement with these new challenges, though it is probably significant that apparent lack of engagement of planning authorities was not noticeably out of line with the approaches of the councils of which they were a part (see also CRE & Schneider-Ross, 2003). In the private sector, too, planning firms appear pretty much unmoved by new corporate vocabularies about 'valuing diversity' (Hutchings and Thomas, 2005). Yet since the turn of the century the RTPI has been as active (and consistent) as ever in promoting the importance of race equality (see, eg, RTPI, 2007; Thomas, 2008), and central government has also produced advice (ODPM, 2005). There remain, then, very difficult questions about how to promote change in the day to day understandings of planning agencies, and individual planners, of their tasks and social context. One part – but only one part – of that task is introducing into the everyday mentalities and practices of planning a clearer understanding of what race and ethnicity mean. This was something that my book tried to tackle and which has influenced the work of others in this field since.

The questioning of essentialism

The body of research which *Race and Planning* drew upon was the first attempt within the discipline of planning to consider how we might best understand the concepts of race and ethnicity. Up until that point the notions were pretty much unexamined among planners in professional practice and among academic planners, and terms such as 'race' and 'ethnicity' were used interchangeably and unreflectively (Thomas, 1997). My work has used the kind of anti-essentialist conception of race which had a secure place in social science by the nineteen eighties (eg Miles, 1989; Hall, 1996). My work has not discussed notions of nation and culture much, but I take a similar anti-essentialist approach to nation and nationality also (see, eg, Macdonald and Thomas, 1997). The theoretically important distinction for me in the *Race and Planning* book relates to explanation and causation. The great limitation of the notion of 'race' is that it does not identify a phenomenon that has causal

properties which can be invoked in an explanation of the way the world works. I believe that 'nation' has the same limitation. There may be conceptions of ethnicity and culture which can be used in such explanations. Thus, racial categorisations, national distinctions, ethnic categorisations and cultural affiliations can all describe aspects of the world (they are not entirely arbitrary terms, for if we can make sense of these categories in social intercourse it can only be because they are not arbitrary in their application), but race, certainly, offers no deep insight into why the world is the way it is. They are categories which arise within and from social interaction.

Though some geographers, notably Peter Jackson (1989) and David Sibley (1995), had written about racism and racialisation my work has been the first to relate the social construction of racialised space and place to planning. It has used the idea of racial formation (Omi and Winant, 1994) to explore the way that racialised identities can be partially constructed or confirmed through planning procedures and processes and through the way planning helps create and manage place. Often it is the silences and omissions in plans and rationales of projects which are as relevant as any explicit reference to racial groups (Thomas, 1995, 2000).

Racial identities cannot be understood in isolation. an account of the social formation of racial identities, no less than of ethnic identity, must take account of :

the significance of bases of identity and culture such as gender, sexuality, class, disability and age which do not just cut across ethnicity leaving, leaving the phenomenon itself unchanged, but shape its every significance and meaning for particular individuals and groups
(Thomas, 2000: 29)

This appreciation of the significance of *intersectionality* was pioneered by feminists and entered the field of race and ethnicity through scholars and activists such as Floya Anthias, Stuart Hall and Ali Rattansi. Intersectionality identifies

the way that race, like other social divisions, reconstituted altogether the way in which oppressions were manifest and experienced rather than just adding another layer
(Bagilhole, 2009 : 51)

Significantly for planners, 'intersectionalities are bound up with spatialities' Peake (2010 : 65) , because it is in particular places that differences come together and are mutually constituted. The management and planning of space can therefore influence the way that intersectionality plays out. Yet, as Bagilhole (2009 : 52) notes, the complexity flagged up by the notion of intersectionality must be 'contained' if effective action is to be taken to address inequality. She outlines two approaches that can be taken as appropriate . These she labels :

- intracategorical : which focuses on particular social groups at neglected points of intersection
- intercategorical : which 'strategically adopts existing categories to investigate the multiple and conflicting dimensions of inequality between them' (Bagilhole, 2009 : 52).

It could be argued that government, through its concern for sensitising planning to social diversity (ODPM, 2005), is beginning to promote an intracategorical approach. Certainly, Dory Reeves (2005) , for example, has seen the increasing concern in public policy for improving sensitivity to diversity as responding to a growing awareness of the significance of *difference* , and a need to get beyond mechanical working, through lenses of crude social categories. The term 'diversity' has been used in many ways in relation to debates on social equality in the UK (Cooper, 2004), and Harris and Thomas (2004 : 475 – 478) suggest that there are two meanings which are especially pertinent to discussions of planning. The first regards diversity (and difference) as the outcome of persistent and structural inequality. It recognises that differences are socially constructed and sustained and that as argued above these processes are power-laden. [This view appears to depart from Reeves' opinion (2005: 201) that equality speaks to power and diversity

to difference; an understanding of diversity, too, must address the power-relations underlying the significance of the social differences that are being identified as significant.] The second way that the term 'diversity' is important is in recognising that the reality of social differences makes it dangerous – and unfair – to think in terms of 'typical' citizens. This point recognises the force of intersectionality. Harris and Thomas (2004) argue for the usefulness of proofing as one tool in sensitising policy development to diversity; this is something emphasised and developed at some length by Reeves (2005 : 77ff) in her discussion of the significance of mainstreaming .

Additional arguments, issues and debates

Intersectionality and diversity were two ideas which became prominent in discussions of race equality in planning from the late 1990s onwards , and while neither was discussed fully in the book of 2000, subsequent work has tried to at least be sensitive to the implications of the ideas and debates around them. With faith/religion the matter is somewhat different. This was an issue which was significant in the very early discussions of race and planning in the UK (see RTPI/CRE , 1983) , where the fear was that faith groups largely composed of ethnic minorities were finding the planning system especially insensitive to their needs largely because of an eliding of faith and ethnicity into a generalised 'Other'. It is probably fair to say that most scholars and commentators at that time believed that ethnic minorities would become as secularised as the rest of the UK population and that racism in relation to ethnic minorities would thereby become clearer and less clouded by the possibility of its being mixed with religious bigotry.

In fact, of course, this kind of secularisation has not happened. Religious identity (and observance) remains significant for substantial proportions of the UK population and especially significant in some ethnic minority groups. What we have here is an extremely important illustration of intersectionality. For some people, ethnic identity appears to be intimately bound up with religious identity, so that being Moroccan, say, is in part to be a particular kind of Muslim (Thomas, 2008 : 4). A minority of those appear to understand their faith and ethnic identity in terms of some kind of unchanging essence; in so doing they are on the point of racialising both religious and ethnic identities

by suggesting that these are natural kinds which are unchanging, unchangeable and mutually exclusive in relation to other religious and ethnic identities. As Thomas (2008 :5) points out , we need more research on the relationship of faith and ethnic identity. Yet there is some evidence that among relatively new immigrants religious and ethnic identity re-enforce each other. Ley (2008) illustrates the way that churches have long been used by immigrant groups in Vancouver as ways of providing welfare support to co-ethnics, and also as ways of re-enforcing ethnic identity (eg through language classes in the ethnic tongue for children who are second generation migrants) (see also Agrawal, 2008). There is no single pattern here, however. Thus in the case of Chinese immigrants, sharp differences in wealth complicate the relationships between co-religionists/co-ethnics. The important longitudinal dimension of his account also allows us to see how in the case of some groups (eg immigrants from Germany) religious identity and ethnic identity can separate, and the one may become more significant than another : many (but not all) Christian Germans have chosen to prioritise religion over ethnicity. Fascinating social changes are underway as we get to grips with a post-secular society in which faith groups are already important players in local governance (Beaumont, 2008, Chapman and Lowndes, 2008). These changes need to be researched and understood. But in relation to my work the key question is the extent to which religion is racialised. Episodes such as the refusal of planning consent for a mega-church for a largely African Pentecostal church in London illustrate (1) that it remains a live question whether religious groups identified with racialised minorities are harshly treated by the UK planning system; and (2) in concrete cases, answering that question is as tricky as it ever was (BBC News, 2008). Having said that, as Onuoha and Greed, 2003) have pointed out, there does seem to remain extraordinary insensitivity within the planning system to the requirement on it to (generally) support the varied economic and social needs of an ethnically/religiously diverse population. It does appear to be the case. still, that those who wish to develop a facility that differs from some kind of simplistic stereotype of what is the norm – a kind of ‘Lego-view’ as it were of how cities function and look – find themselves in the position of having to justify their difference rather than being able to assume support of the

planning authority unless there are strong reasons for that support not being forthcoming.

A further issue raised by mega-churches (and, indeed mega-mosques) is whether they constitute a form of segregation which may reduce community cohesion. For if they follow the US model, the auditoria for ten thousand and more worshippers will be supplemented by a wide range of social facilities – cafes, bookshops etc.. The community cohesion debate is discussed later in this commentary.

While the material submitted did display some sensitivity to intersectionality, albeit not under that name, it did not engage with formally, the idea that race-formation and racism might be an irreducible structural factor in understanding the dynamics of societies such as Britain. This is a view associated with critical race theory (CRT), a stream of thought developed largely in the USA since the late 1980s (Crenshaw et al, 1995), and now influencing social geographers, including feminist geographers (Peake, 2010). Proponents such as Mills (2007) characterise CRT as an approach which places the construction of race (and specifically whiteness and non-whiteness) as central to the making of the modern world (particularly the USA). Moreover, race is regarded as irreducible to class (as 'vulgar' Marxists might argue) or individual prejudice (as liberals might claim). This appears to challenge the kind of view of race held in *Race and Planning*. For CRT it is not simply the case that racial categories and racial thinking are constructed in part by planning and other state activities; rather, the very process of becoming modern societies and the formation of the modern capitalist state has at its heart the formation of racial categories. The racialisation of planning, on this account, is so deeply rooted that its ultimate removal can only be achieved in the context of momentous social change - though of course struggle against racism – in planning and elsewhere – remains essential as a means of bringing about that change; and there are constructive ways of living with people one may not understand, nor even particularly like (or, perhaps, respect).

Yet CRT does not appear to claim that race is a phenomenon with causal properties. Rather, its focus is racism and racial thinking. Consequently, while it may understand race in the same way as *some* theorists understand class,

it remains wholly consistent with those theories which define class as a theoretical term implicated in deep structural explanations of social life. For these latter kinds of theories class remains a potent explanatory factor even if no individual ever thinks in terms of class in precisely the way the theory understands it. CRT does not have that conception of race; rather, what CRT wants to emphasise is that racism, and hence race, is a potent and durable social reality, often banal and unobtrusive, yet deeply entwined in how people in western societies make sense of themselves and the world.

Goldberg (2002, pp39 ff) argues that post-Enlightenment European political theory, so important in legitimising (and questioning) the development of the modern state, already included a key racialised distinction. This was between being in what we might call, at risk of confusion, a state of Nature and governance by the state, the latter involving, crucially, the application of Reason to collective affairs. There were differences between those – following Locke and, indeed, Marx, – who regarded the (non-European) ‘Other’, living in a state of Nature, as ultimately educable, and those (following Hobbes) who took a more pessimistic and categorical view that racial characteristics were fixed by nature and made some beings incapable of taking part in fashioning rational arrangements for governance. It is not difficult to see how both these strands still have resonance in contemporary international politics. The ‘War on Terror’ is elided with a campaign to ‘bring democracy’ to peoples who – if suitably guided/educated – are (surely) capable of a rational approach to governance. On the other hand, and less publicly, there are those who would question whether certain peoples – eg black Africans – are ever going to be capable of government on the western model (see, eg, Diski, 2008). It is Goldberg’s argument that these racialised approaches to international affairs simply reflect the fundamentally racialised nature of the modern state (the implications of this perspective for race equality in the UK – as elaborated by Kundnani (2007) – will be discussed below).

Goldberg’s (2002) discussion of the state points to an omission in my work to date. *Race and Planning in the UK* sketches a neo-Marxist framework, following Urry (1980) within which it is claimed the racialisation of social relations are best understood. A great advantage of this framework is that it

allows for inter-play and mutual influence between the spheres of civil society, production and exchange and – as the work of the Lancaster Regionalism Group and, independently, Massey and McDowell (1984) demonstrated – this creates theoretical space for variation over time and space, i.e. for distinctive ‘local cultures’ , but also for the co-presence (and hence potential co-existence) of different ways of ‘living’ capitalism, of different space-times (Massey et al, 1999). [Amin’s (2002) argument that to understand contemporary Britain we need to pay attention to the specificities of how spatial ‘micropublics’ are constituted, and the nature of inter-ethnic (typically racialised) encounters within them, is a development of their perspective.] . In my work I argue that Warde’s (1988) application of the approach, to provide an understanding local politics, is clearly important for anyone wishing to understand local planning, including the distinctive ways in which it might be racialised . But the state as such is not discussed in my work. The logic of the theoretical approach adopted in the book is that the state arises from, and needs to be responsive to, tensions and demands in each of the spheres of production, exchange and civil society, and that the state’s actions in turn influence each of these spheres. Only empirical investigation can uncover how these complex constellations of mutually influencing sets of social relations play themselves out in a particular place and time (ie how intersectionality is exhibited in specific forms) but the approach would lead us to expect that certain historical generalisations can be made, and indeed they can. So, we might expect pressure for state intervention to regulate some of the tensions within a capitalist economic system, which might threaten its stability (Foglesong, 1996 ; Holgersen, 2008) . But what is an appropriate intervention in these circumstances will be contested, and the terms of the contestation can only be understood by an historical understanding of the social relations in all three spheres of production, exchange and civil society (re-production of labour power), and that historical understanding will include an appreciation of the significance of previous state interaction with each sphere.

Goldberg’s (2002) argument is that the development, over the last three hundred years or so, of Western states as part of a capitalist economic system which has always been global in influence in varying ways has

involved the construction and maintenance of an elaborate and dynamic system of racial categorisation . This has been central to the way states have developed, operated and been justified; and has influenced the way production, exchange and civil society have themselves been racialised. His claim is :

the racial state is racial not *merely* or reductively because of the racial composition of its personnel or the racial implications of its policies... States are racial more deeply because of the structural position they occupy in producing and reproducing, constituting and effecting racially shaped space and places, groups and events, life worlds and possibilities, acceses and restrictions, inclusions and exclusions, conceptions and modes of representation... And they are *racist* to the extent such definition, detemination and structuration operate to exclude or privilege in or on racial terms , and in so far as they circulate in and reproduce a world whose meanings are in effect racist.

(Goldberg, 2002, p 104).

While this holds forth the possibility in principle of ' taking up race as an organizing theme to anti-racist ends' (Goldberg, 2002, p113), he warns that historically, 'Race has been invoked normatively in institutional terms and state contexts almost always to hierarchical purposes ' (p113). It is this seriousness with which the history of actual racism is taken which is part of the force of critical race theory. The critical race scholars tend to eschew the scare quotes around 'race' made fashionable by some anti-essentialist scholars ; not because they disagree with anti-essentialism, but because they wish to avoid the implication that race as a real presence shaping people's lives (or even as an feature of our – enlightened intellectual- understanding of the world) can be dissolved simply by scare quotes. For on this account, 'racial thinking', to use a phrase from *Race and Planning: the UK experience*, remains part of the way in which people in a country like Britain come to understand themselves (are constituted as subjects) and in so doing understand others, and the world (what race means will, of course, be

inflected by class, gender, etc....as discussed earlier). We cannot divest ourselves of habits, emotions, preferences, reactions we might regard as instinctive or natural, simply by accepting an intellectual thesis; far less can this be done when we operate within local and global social contexts which are structured by race . We can at best work slowly, with others, towards a more just future.

As Young (2007) puts it, the struggle for race equality must not overlook the significance of the 'politics of positional difference' , as it acknowledges the 'politics of cultural difference'.

Critical race theory can accept that the precise nature of racism changes - that , in the nineteenth century , for example, working class white Britons were regarded by many aristocrats as a different race , a different kind of being (Herbert, 2008, p35). And there are very many kinds of racial state – as there are variants of welfare capitalism, for example (Esping-Anderson, 1990). Racist South Africa of the 1970s, say, was different from the USA of today, which in turn is different from Japan or the UK. But the inequalities and exploitation characteristic of capitalism - both within states and between states - require justification, and since the Enlightenment the distinction between species capable of reason and those not so capable (and/or not actually practising it) has defined a distinctive notion of race which has been central to justifying the inequality and exploitation of capitalism (though, of course, it is not the only component of the justification).

Goldberg (2002) provides a very persuasive account of the centrality of race to 'Western' political theory, and convinces me with his re-thinking of the development of the modern nation-state. His discussion of race can be seen as part of the broader discussion of the way that western states have privileged certain kinds of embodied citizens (Hastings and Thomas, 2005). The implications of CRT in relation to distinctive fields of public policy is that the policy field (planning, education, etc..) of necessity functions within a society in which racial oppression and exploitation is fundamental .

Researchers and activists in the policy field must uncover how the broader social networks of power relate to (eg help frame, are reproduced by, or indeed are resisted within) their policy field. In areas such as criminal justice this may be fairly straightforward once appropriate questions are asked, and

perhaps it should not be surprising that CRT developed in response to critical legal studies (Crenshaw et al, 1995; Hylton, 2005)., But when the policy field appears to make no direct reference to race, analyses need to be more subtle, and resourceful. Scholars such as Katznelson (2005) and Sacks (1997) have provided detailed histories of the racialisation of public policy even where there was no overt racism (for example, post-war higher education provision for American GIs). In my work (Thomas, 2000, pp64ff) I did something similar for post-war planning policy in Britain. My discussion of the way Gypsies and Travellers had been been treated by public policy, especially planning, was perhaps the closest I have come to a critical race perspective. My argument (Thomas, 2000, chapter 5) , which I still find compelling, was that Gypsies' and Travellers' ways of life cannot be encouraged/facilitated, even if at times they must be tolerated, because they refuse to engage with the networks of modernity – schooling, banking, regular employment, literacy, and so on. They refuse to let the state see them (Scott, 1998). It is this, rather than some primordial anti-nomadism (Ellis and McWhirter, 2008) which best explains the continuing extreme racism to which they are subject. However, what I would now add is a discussion of how the non-conformity to modernity is interpreted/explained racially – so that the non-conformity becomes part of a way of understanding Gypsies and Travellers which also involves seeing them as having primitive. pre-modern ways of understanding the world and relating to people (eg through fortune telling, and clan-like groupings), and being incapable of much else. They are not people like us , if people at all. [Anderson (2007) talks of post-Enlightenment racial hierarchies as being based on distance from Nature]. But, beyond anti-Gypsy and Traveller racism, in what sense might we think of contemporary Britain as a racial state? For all that Britain has changed since the 1960s, there is plenty of evidence – not least the reports into urban disturbances in some of Britain's northern towns in recent years – that racial categories remain central to how very many people make sense of the world (Amin, 2002). But have government sponsored race equality measures begun to make inroads into these understandings ? Sandercock (2003), for example, has suggested that initiatives such as those of Birmingham City Council's planners have begun to change perceptions; and some of my work has suggested that changes in

local governance may open up new possibilities (Thomas, 2000; 2004b). Yet the evidence of CRE investigations – referred to earlier – is that government commitment to race equality can be eroded by other priorities. Kundnani (2007) goes further and argues that state policies on immigration and ‘the war on terror’ place racial categories and racial hierarchies (ie racism) at the centre of contemporary governance. He provides a powerful demonstration of the way in which social tensions resulting from the project of western countries, with the USA and Britain in the vanguard, of imposing a self-serving version of a neo-liberal political and economic order on much of the world, has fuelled new kinds of racist discourses. These seek to justify global inequalities and harsh treatments of non-Western people who threaten the global order, either directly and knowingly (eg by resistance of some kind) or by their destabilising presence in western states (eg refugees) . In these racisms, the ‘rest’ (ie the non-West) is portrayed as defined by failure (eg of states, of harvests, of social order) and by irrational action (at its worst, terrorism, but also extreme religiosity), ‘as if they carried a barbarism gene’ (p4).

One form that this racism takes is the racialisation of religious observance, a phenomenon which Kundnani is not alone in noting (Amin, 2002). This has been most overt in various kinds of influential portrayals of Muslims by government and the media, but of course just as whiteness is the un-stated racialised ethnicity against which overtly racialised minorities are implicitly judged (Rattansi, 2007) so too non-Islamic religion (and especially strands of Christianity with a long historical presence in Europe, often with explicit state support) are the (racialised) ‘norm’ against which the irrational, fanatical , intolerant Muslim Other is defined. Needless to say, historical accuracy plays no role in these racialised stereotypes. But racism, and racial thinking, is a set of practices undertaken by sometimes different groups at different times, and while Muslims are demonised at certain times, there are also moral panics about non-Muslim European groups (such as Poles and Romanians, not to mention Roma) who have entered the UK in increasing numbers in recent years as economic migrants. Kundnani’s (2007) main point, in effect, is that laws, regulations and border policing practices which are difficult to read as anything other than racially discriminatory, along with internal law-

enforcement practices which do nothing to counter crude stereotypes of non-white Muslims as a kind of enemy within, provide the key lineaments of the contemporary manifestation of the racial state. Racial distinctions drawn in relation to something as prominent and emotive as the very security and integrity of the country will help structure other policy and popular discourses. Beebeejaun (2004,2006) notes how British planners operate with stereotypes of 'Asian' or other minority ethnic groups, and tend to fail to grasp (or imagine) that these may be groups of people who may share certain, but not all, characteristics, may have a variety of aspirations and values, and may disagree profoundly on many issues. I would argue that it is not enough to say that this kind of approach by planners is simply a failure to think clearly about culture and ethnicity, a clinging to essentialist notions which obscure rather than illuminate social reality (Amin, 2002). It certainly is that, but I think it is plausible to suggest that it is more. Because most reasonably reflective people, including relatively well educated planners, realise that one label does not sum up their life, does not provide a key to understanding them. On the contrary, most of us experience at first hand and vicariously all sorts of tensions associated with being parts of all kinds of social networks. That's what a human life is. And to that extent, what Beebeejaun describes is a failure on the part of planners to understand that the people concerned (Asians in this case) may be people who are fundamentally similar to (white) planners, in that they have a way of life (and webs of social relations) which could certainly be categorised as human and rational.

Improving the practice of planning

Central to my work has been a concern to improve the way that planning can contribute to a more just society. However, the focus of my diagnostic and prescriptive efforts has been relatively narrow. It has largely concerned the understandings of planners of the (spatialised) dynamic of racialisation, and the ways that this understanding can be improved, particularly through government guidance. It has left largely un-discussed the kinds of concerns for the micro-politics of everyday life within which place-specific racialised practices emerge (Amin, 2002) (though as explained earlier it is sensitive to them), and hence has had relatively little to say about the ways that planning

might relate to interventions in these local micro-political relations (as, say, Fincher and Iveson (2008), do). Prescriptions of this nature would flow more readily from the findings of ethnographic studies, as discussed earlier. This section will contain a commentary on the work actually undertaken, and some remarks on the micro-level work which might be the way that my work could develop.

The prescriptions which are suggested for improving the performance of planning practice in relation to promoting race equality will be related to the diagnosis of the problem and a view, or theory, of how change can be effected within public administration in Britain. I will consider each component in turn. The diagnosis of the problem can itself be considered in two parts: an analysis of the dynamics of racism and racial discrimination in general, and a consideration of factors specific to planning. In relation to the first, it might be helpful to begin by pointing to a well-publicised diagnosis with which I disagree. This is Cattle's (2005) idea that the key factor in racism is 'fear of difference' (exacerbated, it is true, by various economic and social anxieties) (see, eg, pp16-19; pp 91-115). This is an analysis which – as Cattle (2005) himself points out – considers racism to be simply one facet of a more general social problem of an anxiety about social difference (an approach which Reeves (2005) also appears to endorse). Anti-racism, it more or less follows, can be addressed within a more general policy of accepting, possibly even celebrating, diversity. The increasing attention paid to accepting or celebrating diversity is part of the organisational context of planning in both the public and private sector (Harris and Thomas, 2004; Hutchings and Thomas, 2005). [As many authors have noted, the terms 'difference' and 'diversity' have many meanings of more and less theoretical import (eg Cooper, 2004; Eriksen, 2006). In what follows, like Cattle, the terms will be used, unless otherwise stated, in their everyday conversational sense].

Let's consider, first, the root (at least for Cattle) of a concern for diversity – the fear of difference. This is an unsatisfactory approach because it leaves unexamined how the key phenomenon of difference is construed/constructed/understood. If everyone is unique and in that sense different – in multiple ways- from everyone else, how is it that not all differences trigger discrimination? Moreover, it is by now widely accepted in

the sociological and policy literature that identity (ie sameness and difference) is context-dependent (so, I may feel the same as other Europeans when in Australia, but different from them when travelling in continental Europe). Of course, new circumstances, and social change, may create anxieties in people, but as Cattle recognises the social circumstances of the people involved – the degree to which they are in control of their lives especially – appears to be a variable in how anxious they become. The kind of structural approach to understanding racism (and other kinds of discrimination) sketched out in my earlier work and supplemented by the discussion earlier in this commentary is, in effect, an historical and materialist approach – in which discrimination is related to power-infused social relations arising out of the way production, exchange, civil society and the state are organised and interact. Within this approach, difference is created, and is mutable, and is related to the exercise of power (including in this, resistance to oppression or domination) (Cooper, 2004, chapter 1). This suggests ways in which some kinds of difference may tend to become significant. They will be related to the way the various societal spheres are organised (so that, for example, the commodification of Africans was the beginning of a distinctive kind of racialisation of them). In addition, following Goldberg, we might expect differences which can be portrayed as detracting from the humanity of individuals to be especially persistent and significant in justifying inequalities. Post Enlightenment racial hierarchies are typically associated with assertions of essential or contingent failings to reach the threshold of full civilisation ; many have argued that sexism is rooted in a view of women as closer to Nature than a fully rational being should be, too much influenced by the body than the mind (eg Lister, 1997; McDowell, 1999a); and of course disabled people have been characterised in a similar way (Hastings and Thomas, 2005).

So much for the broader context within which planning is conducted. What about planning itself? Consistent with my general theoretical approach I have sought to understand the slow progress made within planning by the race equality agenda by trying to understand the way planning work is organised and the kinds of pressures planners and planning organisations are under. The context is important, namely the general retreat of planners and the

planning system from the kind of broad social concerns of , say, Ebenezer Howard and Patrick Geddes , to a professionalised 'turf' in aspects of the management of the built environment ; in that process interest in, and confidence in dealing with , issues in social welfare has evaporated (Thomas 1999; Onuoha and Greed, 2003) . Arguably, RTPI's (2001) ' A New Vision for Planning' has begun to reverse this by suggesting that planners need to concern themselves with qualities of places, interpreting this as the way social and spatial dimensions of life intertwine and affect each other in specific localities. Within such a perspective, welfare is an important strand. But the evidence referred to in earlier sections of this commentary suggest that there is a considerable way to go before planners and urban regenerators 'on the ground' make these connections. As part of an explanation for the resilience of established, narrower perspectives I have argued that the conflict-ridden, legally-framed operational context for much local planning work gives rise to an occupational culture in which concepts associated with equal opportunities have precious little purchase (Thomas, 2004a). There remains considerable work that could be done, however, to explore how the daily practices of planning and categories enshrined in them can unwittingly support racially unjust outcomes.

At this point I will turn to the second component of any analysis of how to change the practice of planning : what kinds of levers can effect change in public administration in the UK? Some thoughts flow from the analysis of earlier paragraphs, but before turning to them I will explore a consideration that has featured in prescriptions for making planning more sensitive to promoting race equality for the last twenty five years : make national government guidance and leadership in this field clearer and firmer (RTPI/CRE, 1983; Krishnarayan and Thomas, 1993; Thomas, 2000; see also Greed, 2005). One might argue that over the last ten to fifteen years this has happened : the inspection regimes of local government have included some 'equalities' indicators (Thomas and Lo Piccolo, 2000), the race equality legislation has been strengthened considerably (Thomas, 2004b), devolution in Scotland and Wales has included statutory commitments to promoting equality (Thomas, 2008) , and – most directly of all – in England national government has produced guidance on how to sensitise planning to the needs

of a socially diverse society (ODPM, 2005). Moreover, the national legal context for promoting equal opportunities is significantly more sophisticated in 2009 than it was thirty years earlier (Thomas, 2008). Two changes can be identified as especially significant :

- the duty on public bodies to promote equality (including race equality)
- the creation of a single body – the Equality and Human Rights Commission - to promote and root equality in British society.

Reeves (2005 :203) writing before the new body was set up had great hopes that a single body would be well placed to address intersectionality (though she did not use that term). It is early days to assess progress, and Reeves' hope is reasonable in relation to organisational logic. But commissions of this kind are also subject to governmental pressures and to lobby groups who have developed and perhaps benefited from uni-dimensional identity politics (Cain and Yuval-Davis, 1990). It is perhaps ominous that the Equality Commission which has operated for longer in Northern Ireland and been credited with achieving much in relation to addressing religious bigotry has also been criticised for selective attention in relation to equalities (Wilson, 2007). Specifically, it has been criticised for ignoring issues of class inequality ; racist violence in Northern Ireland in June 2009 illustrated that working class resentments and racism may remain as deeply rooted there as in working class areas of northern towns and parts of London (BBC News, 2009).

These developments do hold out the possibility of change, if used properly. However, they co-exist with a clearly and crudely racialised state response to global flows of (poor) people, to terrorism, and to the apparent increasing salience of religion in the lives of at least some minority ethnic people (Kundnani, 2007; though see Hussain, 2007, for caution in relation to the extent and significance of this change). As I have suggested elsewhere (Thomas, 2008) overall, there is considerable ambiguity about governmental messages on anti-racism , and that is unlikely to create confidence in planners, or a planning system, that has never been comfortable dealing with issues that are irrevocably politicised. This may explain why competent

professionals appear to have such difficulty , still, in grasping what promoting race equality involves, as was noted in an earlier section of his commentary. Of course, much has changed over thirty or forty years in Britain but change is consistent with racism persisting, but simply adopting different guises (Herbert, 2008; Rattansi, 2007) . It seems clear to me that the idea that there is some kind of hierarchy of worth of peoples based on natural characteristics (whether these manifest themselves in cultural terms, religious terms, physiologically, or otherwise) and that those not at the very pinnacle of the hierarchy are deficient in some core aspect of humanity (are not really human, as Mills (2004) puts it) remains at the heart – albeit often implicitly – of the way a society like Britain is organised. In this sense, Britain's 'dangerous places' (Campbell, 1993) and its supposed underclass (Morris, 1994) are often construed in racialised terms – ie as involving people who are inherently different and/or deficient. And discussions like those of Kundnani (2007) show that racial thinking and racism remains an essential part of any credible explanation of key elements of public policy.

In relation to planning, it means that work needs to continue at a number of levels :

- to continue the task of unearthing how planning meshes with (but can also disrupt) broader fields of racialised power;
- to encourage planners and others engaged in the planning system to acknowledge the centrality and pervasiveness of racial thinking and racism in contemporary Britain (my preferred method of doing this is to make it clear that the working assumption in struggling for change has to be that individual planners and politicians are generally well-meaning, and that all of us – of all ethnicities, races , creeds etc.- are in the same racialised boat initially, but must take opportunities to improve our understandings and practices) ;
- to give particular attention, when pursuing these points, to understanding the daily routines and categories of the planning system – how they arise and are sustained – and crucially their implications for promoting race equality. This would be an extension and deepening of the kind of work reported in Thomas (2004a) , where it was argued

the working practices of planners were inimical to giving equal opportunities any great priority, yet were also intelligible responses to the circumstances in which they worked. This kind of understanding provides a basis for reflection within the profession and the planning office as well as intervention from without.

- to encourage a greater understanding that addressing the legacy of historical injustice cannot be undertaken using tools/processes which are themselves implicated in that injustice. It is at this point that liberal approaches deviate from CRT-influenced approaches. In planning, it may involve, for example, reviewing the significance of legal and policy procedures which regard individuals as non-corporeal legal subjects rather than real people in particular social contexts (see Lo Piccolo and Thomas, 2000 for some discussion of this).
- to make the increasingly sophisticated regulatory and guidance regime that is now a framework for all public policy, including planning, have more 'bite'. This means, among other things : better resources in training for planners in areas of race equality; more resources for organisations outside planning who can challenge planning's record in relation to race equality – eg the Equality Commission, and also organisations of black and ethnic minorities; tougher sanctions for local planning authority who do not mainstream equalities – including but going beyond race equality- in all aspects of their work (policy, development management and recruitment).

These bullet points recognise that fundamental social change involves changing mentalities, and the practices they underpin and are underpinned by, as a part of changing power-relations. The ultimate goal is that racial categories themselves be dissolved in everyday life, yet monitoring current inequality itself helps bolster racial categories, and – as Bagilhole (2009) recognises – can cut across recognition of the significance of intersectionality. This creates a dilemma for those promoting race equality, and one that can only be managed by keeping in mind the longer term goals so that short term necessities (such as ethnic monitoring) do not become fetishised.

The bullet points also indicate some avenues which arise directly from the trajectory my work has taken. But in addition, as mentioned earlier, there is a rather different research trajectory which I have not explored, by and large, which is beginning to receive some attention in relation to racism and diversity. This looks at the way planning activities at a local level can influence the locally distinctive social relations in particular places. This approach meshes with the increasing significance accorded in professional and governmental pronouncements in the UK about planning's role in place-making, which was referred to earlier. Fincher and Iveson (2008) review a great deal of the relevant theoretical and professional literature in their discussion. Wary of the theoretical and political shortcomings of conceiving of people and societies in terms of fixed, essentialised identities, often organised in some kind of implicit hierarchy of significance, they suggest that planning needs to be sensitive to three 'social logics': redistribution, recognition and encounter. The first two logics draw on the kinds of discussions found in Young (1990) and Fraser (1995), the third on theorists as diverse as Jane Jacobs and Richard Sennett as interpreted and used by the likes of Ash Amin (2002). Their book is an interesting exploration of how local planning intervention might help create circumstances in which there is a greater degree of material equality between citizens; a greater degree of respect for the particularities of people; mutual recognition, through encounter, of the existence of people from whom one is different; and less ignorance of them (including less ignorance of their humanity). The book is rich in examples, but a number of points emerged, for me, as especially significant, in the light of my concerns over many years:

- from the outset they argue that their scope extends well beyond land use planning, and they have a wide range of examples, from child care to libraries to infrastructure. This raises an interesting issue as to whether there is merit in focusing narrowly on land use planning, as my work has done. No one denies that the nature of a place, or a person's life, is subject to myriad influences, and that intervening in any one of these is best undertaken with an awareness of this complexity. In addition, as discussed earlier, I have long argued that planners need

to be far more confident in, and sensitive to, broader discussions of race equality and discrimination. Finally, planning changes, and prescriptions about any element of practice need to be aware of the possibility of transformation of planning itself. Yet, as argued earlier, the creation and management of place is part of the complex social process in which concrete identities are created which involve gender, class, race, age etc – which are intersectional. Thus in principle a focus on place can help public policy grasp the complex reality of multi-faceted inequality, and then address it. More mundanely, I have tended to the view that there are very many planners who are specialising in land use related matters, and there will always be such specialists. I was speaking to them. Perhaps this is too conservative a view.

- Fincher and Iveson (2008) conclude that progress in promoting greater justice within and through planning depends upon creating a supportive institutional structure, and on quite a high degree of awareness of the nature of the problem being tackled (see, eg, pp 215-221). This has always been central to my concerns too.
- they also note that their review of the evidence suggests that material inequality has been harder to address than issues of recognition (pp220-221). Young (2007) herself has suggested that social structures which perpetuate material inequalities require more attention from those concerned about race equality. This must involve an analysis of the dynamics of how material inequality is generated, and in that analysis, I contend, the focus must be on processes of production, and reproduction, and concepts of class, race, age, impairment and gender will come to the fore in our understanding.
- the reality of entrenched racism emerged in Fincher and Iveson's discussion of Amsterdam (pp 100-102) where a policy of favouring activities in which people identified themselves in ways which crossed racialised boundaries risked obscuring the brute fact that in their day to day lives on the street people were understood and treated in racialised terms. Of course, this is not a reason for governance

agencies to be complicit in entrenching racial thinking (Amin, 2002) , but the lived, material (and dynamic) reality of racism must not be forgotten as various initiatives to loosen its grip are attempted.

- yet Fincher and Iveson have a case in focusing attention on the local. The more just society must be struggled for at all (inter-locking) spatial and governmental scales (national wage negotiations, or planning policies have their own obvious importance). But the transformational potential of local social relations has to be acknowledged (Amin, 2002), and the concrete project as a focus for taking vital steps forward celebrated (Marable, 2004).
- in emphasising encounter and conviviality , Fincher and Iverson highlight the significance of public space in defining the terms of (some important elements of) belonging to a common social entity, be that called a 'community', 'polity' or something else. The academic and professional debates about public space are vast, and it is now widely accepted that public space is a contested and value –laden term (eg McDowell, 1999 b; Smith and Davidson, 2009). There remains much to be understood about how and why planners define and implement public space in concrete instances.

Concluding remarks and priorities for future research

This commentary has :

- identified the main themes in the work submitted for the degree of PhD;
- argued for their originality and their continuing influence in the field of planning;
- noted the research upon which they were based and the evidence this provides of my capacity to design and conduct research projects;
- suggested ways in which the body of work relates to some important contemporary discussions within and outside planning, including debates and discussions not considered at length in the submitted work itself.

The commentary has also identified some avenues for future research.

Among these, the two most significant, I would suggest, are :

- ethnographic research within planning offices, which can examine the routines, categories and routinised world-views of planners and others in the planning system. This kind of research might look not only at why planning offices have certain kinds of procedures (always demanding representations in writing, for example) but also how they construct ideas (and typologies) of the planning applicant, the objector, the community activist and so on. In addition, research could investigate how ideas such as 'public space' are used and interpreted by planners and other actors in the planning system. These practices and categories may involve unwitting 'racial thinking' ; they may at other times simply lead to systematically different – but unintended – outcomes for different ethnic (and other social) groups. Why they might arise, and why they persist , remains an important question for all those wishing to understand and change planning. As discussed earlier, such research provides an opportunity to try to link explanations of varying scope – for example, grand theories about social dynamics with explanations of how organisational dynamics influence behaviour. It also provides opportunities to get beyond crude categories of race/gender/etc to understand the specificity of practices and their (intersectional) implications in place.
- in the UK , continuing research into the impacts of legislative and institutional innovation in promoting race equality, at all spatial scales. This is particularly important now that a single equalities commission has started work and a new opportunity to address inequality in a holistic manner has thereby opened up. Anecdotal evidence suggests that each sectional interest in the equalities world – those concerned with gender, race, disability, religion etc – fear that their concerns may be overlooked as the new commission gets under way. It is important to see how the reality unfolds; and also whether organisations such local planning authorities are improving in their sensitivity to legislative

requirements such as race equality (and other equality) schemes. Action Research can be especially exciting and useful in relation to these kinds of issues – and can also serve to remind us that race equality should never be just an academic interest.

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Legal Discourse, the Individual and the Claim for Equality in British Planning

FRANCESCO LO PICCOLO & HUW THOMAS

ABSTRACT *This article explores some of the constraints in fashioning a British planning practice which supports a particular kind of multicultural society. Its argument is that juridical principles enshrined in statute and legal practices can be congruent with, or contradictory to, public policy initiatives supporting multiculturalism, and that this is especially significant in regulatory practices, such as the British planning system, where juridical influence is, historically, strong. The article examines various juridical conceptions of difference and equality and their policy implications. An examination of a specific initiative to recognize cultural diversity follows. This concludes that juridical principles influential in British planning are inconsistent with the initiative, and a failure to address this issue in political and professional arenas has undermined its efficacy. Nevertheless, some progress may be possible, as discussed in the article's concluding sections.*

Introduction

This article explores some of the constraints on fashioning a planning practice which attempts to support a particular kind of multicultural society. It concentrates on the British case but will be of interest to all those debating the role of planning in a multicultural context. The starting point is the existence in contemporary Britain of a wide variety of cultural communities (i.e. groups of people having distinctive sets of values, beliefs and, to a varying extent, social practices, which are important to their members' sense of identity, worth and well-being). Some of these cultural communities may, of course, be built around values and ways of life which are for some reason ethically unworthy of toleration or support, but the article does not focus on these. Rather, it is concerned with cultural communities such as those typically associated with minority ethnic groups, but not, it should be noted, exclusively associated with them.¹

In contemporary debates about multiculturalism a number of approaches to, or models of, a multicultural society have been discussed (see, for example, Alibhai-Brown, 2000; Hansen, 2000). Their implications for planning have rarely been explored, and discussions of these matters within professional practice is not always well informed (Loftman & Beazley, 1998). This article addresses some of these shortcomings by considering some of the implications, legal (i.e. juridical) and policy related, of a particular model of multiculturalism. The model is not defended in the article, but is

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associated with a particularly prominent strand in contemporary British debates, exemplified most recently in the Runnymede Trust report on multi-ethnic Britain (Commission on the Future of Multi-ethnic Britain, 2000). The centrality of the model in current debates gives it an interest for planners whether they agree with it or not.

The view in this article of cultural groups is that they are socially constructed, that is, that they are dynamic social phenomena whose boundaries shift over time, and whose salience in the lives of members and non-members varies over time and place (Giddens, 1991; Laraña *et al.*, 1994; Melucci, 1989). Yet, at any given time, British life (and, indeed, that of any other country) will be characterized by a complex mix of cultural communities. How then are we to plan in a way which recognizes the importance of different identities and ways of life?

Bikhu Parekh (1998, p. 3) has recently argued for a "pluralist mode of integration" in Britain, a model of a multicultural society where the state intervenes in public and private life, with a particular intention in respect of minority groups, namely:

... to acknowledge their presence and to embody their values and aspirations. The prevailing political values, practices, symbols, myths, ceremonies, collective self-understanding and view of national identity should be suitably revised to reflect its multicultural character. 'We' cannot obviously integrate 'them' so long as 'we' remain 'we': 'we' must be loosened up to create a new common space in which 'they' can become part of a newly constituted 'we'. So far as the private realm is concerned, the state should not follow a policy of cultural indifference or *laissez-faire* as that would work in favour of the dominant culture. If the otherwise disadvantaged minorities are to survive and flourish, they need public recognition, encouragement and material support not in order to protect them for change but to create conditions in which they enjoy the security.

It is this model, which Parekh suggests has been developed by Taylor (1992) and Kymlicka (1995) among others, that is explored in this article, while acknowledging that it is not the only available model of multiculturalism. This article will explore how the pluralist mode of integration may be constrained by juridical interpretations of the salience of 'difference', and the implication of those interpretations. This argument is important both practically and theoretically as it provides a basis for developing planning policies which can underpin a particular approach to multiculturalism and also for examining the scope for policies and practices acceptable within more than one model of multiculturalism, as will be discussed in the concluding section. It is acknowledged that this is only a first step. In particular, the implementation of policy involves a complex interaction between activities (and pressures) at different levels of governance (see, for example, Cowell & Murdoch, 1999; Ham & Hill, 1993) which, *inter alia*, questions the significance of the distinction between policy formulation and policy implementation. The case study which is presented in the latter part of the article will touch on some of these matters, but the focus of the article is on legal discourse, which is of particular significance in shaping British planning practice.

There is a significant literature which considers the way the law has shaped aspects of British urban planning. Patrick McAuslan (1980) for example has suggested that the history of 20th-century planning can be viewed as the playing out of conflicts between three ideologies of planning law. Imrie & Thomas (1997) have focused on the way in which widespread perceptions of the law as a neutral arbiter in social conflict have assisted the state to manage conflicts associated with urban development. There are also

a number of examples of legal definitions of planning terms, for example, 'development' and 'gypsy', being imported into policy discourse (Home, 1994; Thomas, 1999) as if they are unproblematic 'givens'. Yet if the influence of legal (or juridical) discourse in British planning policy is pervasive, planning policy is also subject to political pressures, as well as technical and bureaucratic ones (Healey *et al.*, 1988), and this can involve attempts to import into planning policy constructions of equality and difference from outside the dominant juridical discourse.

The tension which results holds out a potential for developing pluralist policies on multiculturalism. Indeed, this article will contain an example of precisely such a policy initiative in relation to a particular linguistic group. However, it will be argued that the force of the initiative is blunted. In practice, its very wording is part of a process of management intended to preserve the primacy of a discourse within which law and public policy is deemed to be neutral in respect to cultural (and ethnic) differences. The article begins by analyzing four different systems of juridical interpretation of whether 'difference' matters in legal judgement, from which we can extrapolate the different roles of planning in relation to multiculturalism. As the four systems of juridical interpretation of the significance of 'difference' indicate, planning initiatives concerning cultural minorities may be, as a consequence, extremely different, and even contradictory. The article argues that a particular model has been extraordinarily influential in British planning, as the evidence of successive surveys of planning practice reveal (Krishnarayan & Thomas, 1993; Loftman & Beazley, 1998; Thomas & Krishnarayan, 1993). The resilience of the model is best demonstrated by episodes where, at first sight, planning policy appears to pursue a more pluralist objective. A closer examination reveals that pluralism is undermined in the very documents which set it out. The article concludes by discussing the best strategy for those struggling for a planning practice which supports a pluralist model of multiculturalism.

Assimilation, Integration and 'Difference': Four Systems of Juridical Interpretation

Following Ferrajoli (1993), this section analyzes four different systems of juridical interpretation of why 'difference' matters, from which the different roles of planning in relation to distinctive groups (so-called 'minorities') can be extrapolated. The key idea underlying these discussions is that what constitutes a relevant difference between individuals or groups in juridical and policy discussions varies systematically between juridical perspectives (or discourses). Difference, it can be said, is *constructed*, and the nature of the construction has implications not only for the use of the law, but also for policy debates influenced by a legal framework (and planning, we have argued, is one such area).

(a) Juridical Indifference towards 'Differences'

In this interpretation, cultural differences are neither valued nor undervalued, neither defended nor repressed, neither protected nor damaged juridically. They are, simply, not juridically recognized (i.e. they are, formally, ignored). In principle, individuals are considered as if devoid of a socio-cultural context, as abstract individuals or citizens. In this system, the destiny of differences constructed in other social practices, such as workplace organization, their survival or their revision, depends on relationships of political and economic strength between minorities and majorities.

(b) Juridical Differentiation of 'Differences'

Here, difference is recognized but there is a strong hierarchy of value amongst different identities. As a consequence of this, some differences have a privileged status, and are sources of rights and powers; they define individuals as powerful and privileged or as objects of exclusion and discrimination or, in extreme conditions, persecution (Alpa, 1993). Extreme cases include those where particular groups are regarded as chattels (possessions) of others. Less extreme, but with no less significance for the ordering of space, are politico-legal systems such as apartheid (Robinson, 1999).

(c) Juridical Homogenization of 'Differences'

This is a somewhat more complex phenomenon. The construction of difference outside juridical practices is recognized, in contrast to difference (a) mentioned above, but only in order to explicitly reject its significance in juridical discourse. All differences are ignored in the name of an abstract statement of equality, as it has been expressed since the 1789 'Declaration of the rights of man and citizen'. This statement is not the result of the development of knowledge of a plurality of subjects, but the consequence of a belief that is impossible to distinguish and accept differences. It is inspired by a particular interpretation of universalism (Bonacchi & Groppi, 1993; Veca, 1990). With reference to minorities and the 'acceptance' of their differences and identity, in nation-states this statement of equality implies toleration focused not on groups but on individuals, generally conceived stereotypically, first as citizens, then as members of this or that minority. In societies with a history of immigration, toleration still focuses on individuals, even if differences are seen in each case as a personalized (rather than a stereotypical) version of group culture (Walzer, 1997, pp. 25–31).

As in system (b), differences are undervalued or denied, but not (this time) in favour of some other differences which keep a privileged status (Alpa, 1993). Differences are not recognized in juridical discourse and every difference constructed in other social practices is denied in the name of an abstract assumption of equality, modelled for a unique universal subject. There is no privileged or discriminated status, there are no hierarchies, yet, in practice, differences are eliminated or, worse, repressed and damaged, in the framework of their general homogenization, neutralization and integration (Minow, 1990; Taylor, 1992, p. 63). In principle, there is no coercion of individuals, but there is a pressure to assimilate to the dominant nation or majority group (Walzer, 1997, p. 26).

A frequently discussed illustration of this approach is the way French nationality is constructed in juridical and political practices (Castles & Miller, 1993). So, for example, there have been strenuous attempts to ban the wearing of the *hijab* (headscarf) by Muslim girls in French state schools on the grounds of its being an affront to the neutrality of an educational system which, first and foremost, educates the citizen, not a Muslim or Christian citizen. As Parekh (1998) points out, because of custom and tradition, in practice such a ban goes hand in hand with allowing the display of other markers of religion (notably, crosses), which illustrates the potential for 'neutrality' to have discriminatory outcomes. Similarly in the UK there is evidence that the benefits of citizenship (such as access to state housing) have sometimes, in practice, been distributed according to culturally-specific norms unreflectively presented as universal (and hence neutral) (Thomas, 2000).

(d) Juridical Acknowledgement of the Value of 'Differences'

This juridical discourse constructs individuals as social beings, not as disembodied abstract individuals, but as constituted (at the very least in part) by their social context, their ties, their identities. This discourse promotes the defence of certain universal rights. Cultural differences will not put in doubt the importance of *habeas corpus*, for example. But this fourth system distinguishes "the fundamental rights from the broad range of immunities and presumptions of *uniform* treatment that have sprung up in modern cultures of juridical review" (Taylor, 1992, p. 61, emphasis added).

Within this system, a distinctive approach to anti-discrimination rights is formulated and promoted. The theoretical assumptions of these rights are fundamental to understand the acknowledgement of the value of 'differences' expressed by this juridical system. Westen (1990, p. 142) states that anti-discrimination rights also stand in a special relationship to equality. Like all rights, anti-discrimination rights require and result in equality, in the sense that they prescribe relationships based on a recognition of some fundamental 'sameness' among persons with particular traits. But, unlike other rights, anti-discrimination rights also aim towards equality in a unique way because they have as one goal bringing about a recognition of fundamental sameness between rights-holders and the persons on whose treatment their rights depend (Raz, 1986; Westen, 1990, p. 142). But this fundamental sameness is compatible with, and indeed in this discourse is held to entail, a valuing of certain *differences* between people, cultural differences in particular (differences, it should be noted, which cannot be understood without placing an individual in a social context).

In Britain, however, this juridical conception of difference has not been the basis of legal practice, least of all in those areas of law which outlaw discrimination. The Race Relations Act 1976, for example, has been framed, and subsequently interpreted, in a way which characterizes discrimination as a personal injury suffered by an individual as the result by action by another individual (in law, organizations are typically treated as individuals). The same juridical conception, considering racial discrimination as a personal injury, affects the New York Convention 1965, which ignores the collective dimension within which cultural identity of minorities has historically been developed (Salerno, 1990, p. 258). This is in contrast to a view of discrimination which sees it as a particular instance of a systematic pattern of oppression and/or conflict between social groups. At the same time this still falls within the nation-state norm. No recognition is accorded to the groups as a corporate body (Walzer, 1997, p. 29). Thus, class (i.e. collective) actions are not allowed by law, the scope to initiate pro-active investigative activity on the part of the Commission for Racial Equality is very restricted, and positive discrimination (affirmative action) is illegal (Lester, 1998). Race relations legislation is underpinned by juridical conception (c), and shares with the rest of the legal system (where conception (a) is stronger) the notion that, if individuals are to be treated impartially, they must be considered as abstracted from their social (and physical) context. This notion has a strong resonance in the planning system, first, because of the general significance of law in shaping practice (see earlier) and, second, because, as bureaucrats, planners value the notion of impartiality, and fear accusations of partisanship in favour of a particular group or person (Thomas, 1994).

Equality, Difference, Law and Planning

This brief discussion of four discourses allows us to understand the context within which

claims for equality on the one hand, and on the other for the recognition of difference, may be construed as contradictory. If the law (and public policy) is seen as responding to, and securing, a human essence which individuals possess when abstracted from their particular social circumstances and associations, as in juridical discourses (a) and (c), then consideration of social differentiation is going to be regarded as either irrelevant or, at best, as the trigger for unjust action by others which it is the role of law and public policy to rectify. In these latter cases, where individuals may be deemed to have suffered injury because people outside legal and policy circles have attached significance to certain characteristics, then redress, through the law or policy (according to juridical perspective (c)) will involve differential attention, so that the injured parties are treated as equals. But recognition of the individual's circumstances is a consequence, not of the valuing of difference as such, but of the desire to rectify a personal injury which (according to this perspective) is contingently related to a person's characteristics.

These two approaches, with their emphases on the abstract individual, are at variance with an approach which understands the individual as a social being, and an individual's welfare as bound up with the treatment of certain groups, a view which underpins juridical discourse (d) (Young, 1990). In the latter case, recognition of social difference is integral to securing equality of respect (and treatment). It is not simply something to be undertaken if others use social difference as a basis for unfair treatment. On the contrary, equality of respect demands a recognition of difference. In these cases, we might say that the claims of equality and claims of difference do not contradict each other but simply operate at different levels in juridical reasoning (Ferrajoli, 1993; Gianformaggio, 1992, 1993a,b).

As the four juridical constructions of 'difference' indicate, there is considerable scope for a variety of policy/planning initiatives concerning minorities. It cannot be assumed that planning systems through their contents, directives and programmes, should or could act in order to promote, say, a pluralist form of interpretation. Indeed, there is more evidence of the practices of planning systems being influenced by juridical approaches inconsistent with this form of pluralism.

In accordance with what is explained in conception (b), in some countries planning systems have accepted the juridical differentiation of differences, becoming a technique (among others) of spatial segregation, aimed at sharing and discriminating against ethnic, cultural and religious minorities (Hirsch, 1983; Somma, 1991; Wacquant, 1996). Colonial towns, South Africa, the occupied territories in Israel and many cities in the US during the first half of this century provide some examples of the use of zoning as a tool for ethnic discrimination within urban areas. As recent planning history studies indicate (Sandercock, 1998a; Thomas & Ritzdorf, 1997), the desire to regulate black residential patterns, enforcing a system of racial segregation, constituted a major objective of the early zoning and planning movement in the US, particularly in the South between 1910–40. The discriminatory consequences of planning practices are also fully described in Thomas (1995) and in Thomas & Ritzdorf (1997), considering both the time between the two World Wars and the era of public housing after 1937 and during the post-war urban renewal².

On the other hand, a mix of what is expressed in systems (a) and (c) influences planning practice in Britain and elsewhere. Qadeer (1997, p. 482), referring to Canadian examples, has outlined some of the concerns with these approaches:

Planning policies and standards ... are based on universalist criteria. Often they are backed by historic practices and established professional conven-

tions. Yet they originate from social patterns and cultural values of the dominant communities.

He argues that in practice these accord equal respect to the diverse ethnic groups in a multi-ethnic society (see also Gilroy, 1993; Krishnarayan & Thomas, 1993; RTPI, 1983; Somma, 1991). An indifference towards, or a denial of 'difference', can underpin the idea that the planning needs of minorities are no different from anyone else's, and consequently planning has no reason to pay any particular attention to these needs. This idea, an expression of the juridical indifference to (a) and/or homogenization of 'difference systems' (c), does not take into consideration that there are many ways in which minorities may have different needs. It is important to highlight the 'diversity', compared to the standards commonly adopted, of a large part of the needs expressed by minority groups. As pointed out by different case studies and analyses (Friedmann & Lehrer, 1997; Lo Piccolo, 2000; Qadeer, 1997), these needs relate to the specific character of each minority group. For example, in the case of ethnic minorities, the 'anomalous' percentage distribution of the different age groups, the particular structure of a large part of the families, the 'contradictory' role of women and the cultural and religious traditions all emerge as significant factors (Lo Piccolo, 2000, p. 96). Furthermore, varying burial customs require revisions in the regulatory standards for cemeteries and operations of crematoriums. Other examples of services for which demands are mounting are multilingual kindergartens, heritage language courses, banquet halls and social clubs. Many of these institutions and services require physical development, and others may necessitate changes in the policies for public grants (Qadeer, 1997, p. 491).

According to Qadeer (1997, p. 492):

the needs of ethnic communities are accommodated through amendments, exceptions, or special provisions to plans, policies or programs. Despite its acknowledgement as a social condition, cultural and racial diversity is not reflected in planning policies. Planning standards and criteria continue to be based on unitary conceptions of citizens' needs. Systematic attempts to forge pluralistic visions of urban plans and programs are only haltingly emerging.

Within this approach, planning policies (as with many other public policies) are meant to be universally the same (in their ways of delivering services and offering opportunities). They are meant to provide an identical, and consequently 'equal', basket of rights and possibilities, ignoring the distinctness of individuals and/or groups (Taylor, 1992, p. 38). The culturally based preferences of ethnic groups often fall within the purview of building, safety and public health codes, as well as planning standards, particularly for occupancy densities, household use, and the definition of a family. Often these do not accommodate ethnic minorities' preferences. Case studies reported in Thomas & Krishnarayan (1994), Qadeer (1997) and Lo Piccolo (2000) illustrate the divergence between the norms presumed to be universal and the minority groups' choices for home and family. In relation to ethnic (and racialized) minorities, the planning approach is commonly referred to as a 'colour blind' approach.

'Colour blindness' (which in the case of planning involves treating everybody the 'same way', regardless of race or ethnicity, thus allegedly avoiding any possibility of discrimination) is an attitude still present in a significant number of British municipal planning departments, and among planners in general (Loftman & Beazley, 1998; Krishnarayan & Thomas, 1993). It reflects the strength of juridical discourses (a) and (c) above, and the way that these intersect with pressures on planners and local councils to

be clearly neutral in their roles as public agents, leading to a privileging of a conception of neutrality which involves abstracting individuals from their socio-economic (and cultural) context.

The next section will examine an attempt to move from this position of alleged 'neutrality' in planning.

Planning in the Face of Minorities: The Case of the Welsh Speaking Community

Although the notion of impartiality is ideologically important, legal discourses do not develop in a social vacuum. There is an extensive literature which explores the ways in which legal constructions are influenced by social context (see, e.g. Griffith, 1991; McAuslan, 1980). Imrie & Thomas (1997) have explored the ways in which the notion of legal objectivity, standing outside political disputes, has been used to divert opposition to urban regeneration proposals. Perhaps it is then even less surprising that national planning policy guidelines are subject to contradictory pressures. Of particular interest, in the context of this article, is guidance originally issued by the Welsh Office³ which, uniquely for the UK, recognizes the existence of a distinctive cultural minority as being material to decision-making in planning.

The guidance in question concerns the future of the Welsh language (spoken in 1991 by just under 20 per cent of the population of Wales, one of the constituent countries of the union which is the UK), a future acknowledged to be bound up with the language's continued use in everyday life (Aitchison & Carter, 2000). Communities where the language is in daily use are therefore vital to its future, and since 1988 planning authorities have been advised to take into account the implications of developments, such as housing developments which may attract non-Welsh speaking newcomers, on such communities, as Welsh speaking communities. This guidance is the result of sustained political pressure, the details of which will not be reviewed here (see James & Williams, 1997).

However, it is important, for our purposes, to note that the struggle for planning policies sensitive to the future of the Welsh language was (and indeed, remains) part of a wider struggle to assert the distinctiveness of a particular cultural group (and the salience of this difference to political and public policy debates). This has resulted, *inter alia*, in state support for a Welsh-language television channel, and a legal framework for use of the language in public and commercial life. Moreover, the struggle continues, with agitation for greater state intervention in the property market in order to secure the integrity of this cultural minority (Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg, 1999).

These undoubted successes for Welsh language activists have not been won easily, and the future of the language (and, hence, certain spatial communities, and cultural communities) remains a major fault line in Welsh politics (Aitchison & Carter, 2000). In such fraught circumstances, Thomas (1994) has argued, a conception of equality which focuses on the individual devoid of any social context can appear attractive to planners (and bureaucrats more generally). Such a conception is of course consistent with juridical interpretations (a) and (c), which, at various times, have been influential in shaping planning law and practice.

On the one hand, then, there is a lively debate about a form of cultural pluralism. On the other, a well-established juridical discourse (and associated planning practice) does not recognize cultural groups as having a special significance within the planning system. Moreover, these pressures and practices tend to operate at different tiers of government (although not exclusively so). Thus, the erosion of Welsh-speaking com-

munities caused, according to some, by the influx of non-Welsh speakers to an area is an issue which periodically flares intensely into local politics. There have been suggestions that these political concerns have engendered a partiality to local people within the operation of the planning system in some areas (Tewdwr-Jones, 1997). It is at central government level that legal discourse appears to have the most influence, shaping, for example, the very definition of key terms and underpinning the application of ideas such as procedural impartiality and natural justice. Yet this local/central distinction must not be overplayed. Despite local discretion, the UK planning system remains extremely centralized (Tewdwr-Jones, 1999). Deviations from norms of neutrality are especially vigorously policed by central government and inquiries into 'deviant' authorities show that they tend to be the result of a temporary dominance of local political pressures over the national norms and priorities, which are translated into the local arena by a number of devices, notably the advice of professional planners (Lees, 1993). Juridical discourse, then, remains a potent influence over the British planning system as a whole.

The central question for this section is how has a planning system heavily influenced by a juridical discourse which constructs the individual in abstract terms, a discourse which is echoed in professional norms and governmental policy advice (Thomas, 1999), accommodated the potentially subversive influence of recognizing the particular requirements of a linguistic/cultural group? The question will be addressed, first, by examining the way in which the policy advice has been written. Then there will be a brief comment on how it has been applied. The original advice was contained in a government Circular (W.O 53/88), but this has recently been re-drafted, with little change, as a draft Technical Advice Note (TAN) 20. The analysis considers the policy context for the TAN, before concentrating on its opening paragraphs, for it is in these that key messages are conveyed.

The first point to be made is that the guidance of the TAN is provided as *technical* advice, deliberately distinguished from policy advice. The policy advice (contained in a 'Planning Guidance' document) states, in relation to the Welsh language, that:

where use of the Welsh language is a component of the social fabric of a community it is appropriate that this be taken into account in the formulation of land use policies. Where a planning authority considers it appropriate to take account of the needs and interests of the Welsh language it should include in the reasoned justification of its development plan an explanation of how its policies reflect those matters. (Welsh Office, 1999b, p. 3.8)

This statement can reasonably be interpreted as seeking to sensitize the planning system to cultural diversity and encouraging the system to support a particular, minority, way of life. This is a statement based on a pluralist set of political values. Yet the TAN, as its name implies, trades upon a distinction between value-issues and technical issues, a distinction central to modernist conceptions of the planning project (Beauregard, 1989), a project in which the technical sphere has been claimed as the legitimate area of influence for professionals. It can be suggested that the use of the distinction, in this context, is intended to convey that what follows—advice on underpinning a particular linguistic community—is still, somehow, a value-free activity. This has a great importance in the volatile political context surrounding the Welsh language.

Early on, the TAN contains two paragraphs which provide background information on the Welsh language. However the provision of this information is not neutral. Rather, the background is given in such a way as to make a particular kind of sense of the advice which is to follow. Of special interest is the way in which the policy is presented as

'mainstream'. In the first of the two paragraphs, the phrasing of the information presented about the numbers speaking Welsh suggests that the language is spoken by a minority, but a growing one. The paragraph states that 20 per cent speak the language, but implies that this may be an under-estimate of its social-significance, "as many others have some knowledge of the language". Moreover, the percentage may be increasing as (many others) "are in the process of learning it". The TAN goes on to counter an anticipated reaction that the future of Welsh may only concern people in some kind of linguistic ghetto, for the language (it is claimed) is learnt by many people who have moved to Wales from other parts of the UK and elsewhere. It can be argued that this wording is intended to counter the view that the TAN is providing special attention of some kind for a minority group, i.e. is giving the group some special status.

The second paragraph of the section on the Welsh language asserts that the future of the Welsh language depends upon "thriving" Welsh-speaking communities; and their well-being "will depend upon a wide range of factors", particularly education, community activity and a sound economic base. The land use planning system, it is implied, is not being used as a substitute for action in these other fields; rather, it is complementing them in its own. The scope of planning, then, is not being extended, or, at least, that is what is being suggested. It remains a narrow, technical activity with no brief to 'develop' or cater for particular groups or communities.

The next paragraph reinforces this message that the TAN's advice is not radically broadening the scope of planning. The first sentence of this simply paraphrases advice given in a 1992 government publication, *Development Plans: a good practice guide* (DoE, 1992), namely that authorities should consider the impact of planning policies on different groups in the population. Welsh language speakers constitute such a group "where the use of the language is part of the social fabric of the community" (a phrase left unexplained, but the very inclusion of which makes it clear that the needs of the Welsh language should be a concern of planners in relatively few circumstances, at least at present, given the proportion speaking Welsh).

In its first four paragraphs, then, the Technical Advice Note has, through its choice of words and phrasing, sought to suggest that a concern for the Welsh language is a technical matter which does not involve giving undue attention to a particular minority group, but in fact can be construed as a particular instance of a more general approach to planning. So what at first appears to be a clear breach with the dominant juridical discourse of British planning and its construal of equality and difference is presented as part of that very discourse.

It is this fundamental contradiction which explains the lack of vigour displayed by local authorities in exploring the scope for using the planning system to sustain Welsh language communities. James & Williams (1997, p. 281) conclude their review of development plans in Wales by arguing that there was "a consistent interest in the Welsh language as a planning issue, a response to local popular pressure, but no evidence of a sophisticated development in professional thinking on the topic". The difficulty in 'developing professional thinking' is bound up with the dominance in professional life of juridical discourses inconsistent with the significance being attached to cultural identity by 'popular pressure' and by *ad hoc* government advice on the language. Earlier in the 1990s Thomas (1993) reported on the extent to which Welsh local authorities were using the government's stated advice in relation to planning and the Welsh language in decision making on planning applications. He found a reluctance to rely on that advice to support decisions. Although it was difficult to draw definitive conclusions from a postal survey, it was argued that the local planning authorities were sensitive to the

ambiguity of a message to recognize cultural difference from a government which in every other aspect of planning policy was espousing a quite different juridical conception of difference.

The example of planning and the Welsh language illustrates the strength of a particular juridical discourse within British planning. The analysis in the earlier part of the article examines the barrier within this discourse to a pluralist conception of integration and equal opportunities. However, discourses and social practices are neither unchallenged nor monolithic. Political pressure in relation to the Welsh language has forced successive British governments to make explicit the need for planning to be sensitive to the existence and future of a particular cultural group. If generalized, this approach would promote practices inconsistent with the dominant juridical conceptions of equality and difference. In order to avoid this consequence, an attempt is made to present the policy advice relating to planning and the Welsh language in terms consistent with the dominant discourse, even though its political support is actually inconsistent with such a reading. The result is tension, a tension which, *inter alia*, has dissuaded local planners from placing weight on this particular piece of central government advice (Thomas, 1993). In the centralized British planning system, it is extremely unusual for government advice to be underplayed at the local level (Cullingworth & Nadin, 1997). It can be plausibly explained in this case as a consequence of, first, local government planners' gauging accurately the (low) degree of commitment of central government to advice which was underpinned by juridical principles contrary to those influential in the remainder of the planning system; and, second, local government planners' own unease about these 'deviant' principles.

Conclusions

A key purpose of the article has been to provide a basis for a discussion of the prospects, in Britain, of a planning practice which can foster pluralistic multiculturalism. The analysis suggests that a central objective in this strategy must be to loosen the influence over planning practice of juridical conceptions of equality and difference which are inconsistent with pluralistic integration. The case of the Welsh language demonstrates that, without severing this link, struggle in the political arena alone cannot deliver the kinds of changes needed in planning. (On the other hand, without political struggle change is impossible.)

An important feature of the case study is the suggestion that the influence of a particular juridical conception of difference is exercised through its being internalized by professional planners. In this particular example, the courts have not been directly involved in any way. Thomas's (1994, 1999) argument has been adopted that the work-setting and roles of the majority of planners, as state bureaucrats in complex, volatile political circumstances, predisposes them to favour juridical conceptions of difference which de-contextualize individuals, and which are often conservative in their consequences. Often (although not universally) the conservative approach is supported by local politicians.

Working for change, therefore, must involve re-thinking the way in which public officials are viewed. It must involve allowing state officials to engage in the delicate, necessarily empathetic and sometimes messy, time consuming and risky task of getting to know people as socially-embedded, not as abstractions (Healey & Gilroy, 1990). Sandercock (2000) has recently commended an approach to planning in multicultural settings which appears to incorporate some of these ideas, an approach she terms

'therapeutic', where the focus is on listening and allowing oneself to be transformed by what one hears. Yet, making sure that this approach does not threaten some of the core values claimed for traditional bureaucracy, fairness and objectivity, for example (du Gay, 1999), is a skilled task. This article's argument is that, on one conception of difference and individual identity, fairness *requires* this empathetic approach, but putting these principles into practice is a difficult skill to acquire. Yet something like this is undoubtedly underway in many aspects of contemporary planning in Britain, for example through the pro-active engagement of officers and community groups in urban regeneration or environmental activism, but it is patchy, often untheorized, and rarely considered in relation to the regulative functions of the state. Healey's (1997) pioneering work is an exception to this, although it represents, at present, one possible framework (albeit a rigorously supported one) for exploring the issues highlighted in this article. Yet if a loosening of juridical influence is a longer-term goal, in the short to medium term more limited changes may still be possible which would be regarded as positive by those seeking a pluralist multiculturalism⁴. In the Welsh context, since the issuing of the draft TAN, there have been institutional and political developments of considerable potential for changing the relationship of planning officers to the public at large and, in particular, beginning to free them from the grip of an aspiration to a certain interpretation of bureaucratic neutrality. The most significant development is the adoption by the National Assembly (a newly established elected body given the responsibility for administering the planning system in Wales on behalf of the UK government) of a more positive attitude towards the promotion of equal opportunities and the promotion of the Welsh language.

One of the major themes running through all aspects of the Assembly's work is to be "the promotion of a culture in which diversity is valued and equality of opportunity is a reality" (National Assembly of Wales, 2000). It is not yet clear what the precise ramifications of this will be for the way planning is conducted (not least because 'equal opportunities' is itself a contested term, Thomas, 2000) but already a group of advisers to the Assembly Minister responsible for planning has been asked (by her) to consider, as a matter of urgency, what changes can be made in the short term to sensitize government guidance such as TANs to the new emphasis on the significance of equal opportunities. It appears that the Assembly will signal to local councils and their professional planners that equal opportunities is to be given more weight in planning practice than hitherto. This, in itself, does not guarantee a transformation of the terms in which planning relates to individuals, for terms are contested and there will likely be implementation gaps as local councils interpret any new advice. Moreover, anecdotal evidence suggests that the advisers themselves feel constrained by juridical influence in defining the legitimate scope of planning. However, one part of this new process will probably involve pressing planners and councils to engage more positively with Welsh speakers by requiring the planners to consider more systematically whether, in a given case, the Welsh language is indeed part of the 'social fabric' of particular neighbourhoods. (This phrase, it will be recalled, is the key one in legitimizing planning intervention in specific localities to support the Welsh language.) Such engagement has enormous potential. It requires that planning officers understand the role of the language in the lives of a certain group of people, which means trying to understand peoples' lives, as *they* live them. That in turn should mean appreciating the role of the language as a modality for an individual's relationship to other Welsh speakers, to non-Welsh speakers, to their histories and possible futures. Such an analysis embeds the individual in a very specific social context and, it can be argued, begins to undermine

the historical consideration of individuals in the abstract, de-contextualized terms which is inconsistent with the pluralist model of multiculturalism.

Acknowledgements

Earlier versions of this article were presented at the Conference on Discourse and Policy Change, University of Glasgow, Scotland, on 3–4 February 1999, and at the XIII AESOP Congress on Community Based Planning and Development, Bergen, Norway, on 7–11 July 1999. Although the article should be considered a result of the common work and reflection of the two authors, Lo Piccolo took primary responsibility for sections two and three and Thomas for sections one, four and five. We are grateful to the Editor and two referees for their comments on earlier drafts.

Notes

1. The terms 'culture' and 'community' are extremely complex. For the purposes in this article, McDowell's (1994, p. 148) views are accepted that:

culture is a set of ideas, customs and beliefs that shape people's actions and their production of material artifacts, including the landscape and built environment. Culture is socially defined and socially determined. Cultural ideas are expressed in the lives of social groups who articulate, express and challenge these sets of ideas and values, which are themselves temporarily and spatially specific.

As for 'community', concern is with circumstances in which people feel part of an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1991), i.e. relate their own identity and well-being to a particular set of characteristics assumed to be shared with others. It is, of course, possible to be simultaneously a member of a number of imagined communities; and, also not to desire, or to aspire, to membership of a community for which one is, *prima facie*, 'eligible'.

2. The first great migration of southern blacks to US northern cities and the first major race riots immediately after the First World War produced the planning response of residential controls. In the development of public housing during the post-war urban renewal, residential segregation was reinforced and ghetto boundaries consolidated as politicians and planners worked to keep black housing projects out of white neighbourhoods.
3. Until 1999 the Welsh Office was the UK government department responsible for a range of policy fields in Wales (including planning); recent constitutional changes have transferred these responsibilities to an elected National Assembly for Wales.
4. Parekh (1998) points out that there may be some overlaps in policy prescriptions between the models of integration, even where they have radically different foundations of principle; which suggests that there may be scope for pragmatic shorter-term accommodations involving policy changes at various levels of governance open to those who in the longer term want very different juridical approaches to be forged. There can be no universal prescription about what these possibilities are. What is offered in this article is an illustration of one shift in planning which takes advantage of a changing governmental context. With no *guarantee* of success, it represents an interesting move in a long-term battle.

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From: Pattison, S and P. U. R (eds) Values in Professional Practice Oxford: Radcliffe Medical Press, 2004

CHAPTER 11

Values, working lives and professional socialisation in planning

Huw Thomas

Introduction

This chapter examines the way values embed themselves within the working lives of professional town planners. It will tend to focus upon a particular key aspect of planning – the consideration of planning applications. I will explore some of the implications of the embedding of values in attempts to change professional values and attitudes. It draws on research projects into various aspects of professional life conducted over a number of years (though not with this chapter in mind), personal experience of professional practice and generally unsystematic discussions with students who have been on year-long professional placements as part of their studies at Cardiff University. (I should point out that both male and female students were involved in the discussions, but there were no minority ethnic students, nor disabled students.) The chapter consists of well-informed speculation rather than rigorous testing of a narrowly defined hypothesis, with the hope that it will stimulate discussion and, in time, more rigorous treatment of the topic.

The background to the discussion is the attempt by the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) – since at least the early 1980s – to persuade its members to take the promotion of equal opportunities more seriously in their day-to-day work. There is scope for debate about how single-minded the Institute has been in trying to change the attitudes of professionals. But even if it is conceded that equal opportunities has never been its top priority, the Institute can still point to a series of initiatives relating to sexism, racism and promoting physical accessibility in the built environment. It has commissioned studies on ways of increasing the proportions of planners from black and ethnic minorities. It has also supported the work of two

standing committees ('panels' in its organisational vocabulary) with a brief to oversee its activities on race and gender.

However, all the relevant evidence shows that planners do not regard the promotion of equal opportunities as an important part of their work; indeed, most planners barely understand what promoting equal opportunities means (Little 1994; Thomas 2000). It has been suggested that this gulf between the professional institute and its members reflects the sensitivity of working planners to local political priorities (Thomas 2000), central government policies and guidance (Loftman and Beazley 1998), and/or assumptions embedded in the legal system which frames all planning intervention (Lo Piccolo and Thomas 2001).

This chapter complements these discussions by considering how the idea of equal opportunities might find a place, or fail to do so, in the day-to-day routines of planners – routines which will be responsive to a number of factors, including, but perhaps going beyond, those just mentioned. The assumption underlying the discussion is that 'work experience is of central importance' in the development of workers' consciousness and understanding of the world (Dale 1976), and that central to what is explained is the experience of work itself.

Equal opportunities, professionals and their values

'Equal opportunities' has become jargon. It might be helpful to say a little about what it might mean and how it might relate to values of professionals. The term is interpreted in a number of ways, but there is an important distinction between a concern for fairness to *individuals* who are involved in certain processes and procedures (the focus for action is then ensuring that relevant criteria alone should influence their treatment) and a concern that a *certain pattern of outcomes for groups* be established (the focus for action becomes defining a just distribution and using appropriate mechanisms, e.g. quotas or a questioning of the very activity itself, to achieve it).

These perspectives are part of broader (political) understandings of how unfairness and injustice are generated. Putting the matter crudely, the former position sits easiest with a view of racism and sexism as inappropriate behaviour by particular individuals. The assumption is that, although individuals are socialised in certain ways, they can still be persuaded or coerced to change their behaviour; once this is done, then the problem is solved. The latter position sees discriminatory acts as manifestations of systematic injustices which shape the very way in which society is organised, the way people are brought up and educated, and so on. Rectifying the behaviour of individuals, or tinkering with procedures, is necessary but not sufficient for addressing this systemic injustice.

There has not been widespread discussion within the RTPI of the different conceptions of equal opportunities. It appears, however, that the first view is implicit in much of what the Institute has done – for example,

advising planners on how to organise the translation of technical material. The implication being that procedures which assume fluency in English may put some citizens at an unfair disadvantage, but that once the procedure is improved then the demands of fairness will have been met. One might have thought that this kind of concern would be easily accommodated by professionals inasmuch as it is the less radical of the two approaches. However, I will suggest that in a somewhat unexpected way, it is this approach which may be the more difficult for planners to adopt as a good way to practise. I will suggest that resistance to a pretty thin conception of equal opportunities is best explained by reference to occupational cultures of planners, how they regard what they know and how they make sense of their working lives.

Acquiring knowledge in planning

In the UK, planning has been a graduate-entry profession for decades. That has not prevented a chasm developing between university education and professional practice. This is a relatively recent phenomenon. The divide has grown as university teaching of planning has come to be the preserve of career academics, with a concomitant sharp decline in involvement by practising planners. This pattern began in the late 1960s, and has become universal. The emphasis placed by universities on research activity and on the professionalising of university teaching (e.g. by the founding of the Institute of Learning and Teaching) has simply strengthened a trend that has been affecting the training of planners for many years (Thomas 1980).

The perceived theory–practice gap

A common view in professional practice – shared by many academics – is that there is a ‘theory–practice gap’ (Allmendinger 1998). One consequence of this is that the relevance of university education for professional practice can be questioned. One of the most common initial comments of students who have completed a ‘sandwich’ year in professional practice is that their university education did not prepare them properly for practice; the more truculent make it plain that they see it as having been ‘irrelevant’.

It is tempting to dismiss these concerns as the fruit of profound philistinism, but I believe that to be misguided. A more persuasive explanation of these sentiments is that the very clear reorientation of university education towards academic norms of achievement and conduct has exposed an important feature of planners’ professional culture – namely, the primacy accorded to experience rather than scholarly research, as a source of knowledge. It is likely that many, perhaps most, professions in the UK share this trait.

Direct experience versus university education

Sinclair traces the introduction and promotion of the idea in medical training that certain important kinds of knowledge can only be acquired through direct multi-sensory contact between the individual practitioner and an individual patient (Sinclair 1997). He argues that there remains a tension at the heart of medical training and practice between the respect accorded to direct individual experience and the importance of science (and the idea of knowledge as impersonal) as a basis for the status of the modern medical profession.

There is no equivalent study of planning, but there is plenty of anecdotal evidence of the respect accorded to practical experience. Moreover, in planning, the countervailing weight of science/scholarship is nothing like as great as that in the medical case. Planning's history and current practice is littered with public controversies which cannot be resolved by any kind of conclusive proof and, indeed, in some cases revolve around contested evidence, e.g. in relation to whether road-building increases or alleviates traffic congestion. I suggest that part of the attraction of experience is that it can appear to provide a basis for the confidence and certainty in judgement that is a mark of the competent planning professional. (Atkinson [1984] makes a similar point on clinical training for medical students being a training in dogmatism.)

The perceptions of undergraduate town planners

Reflecting upon a year in professional practice 'sandwiched' into their university degree, undergraduate planners emphasise how strange and new the first experience of entering the planning office was. It takes no prompting for some sharp distinctions to be drawn between what they were taught in their three years in university and what they learned in the office. 'Practical planning knowledge' is the phrase used by one student to describe what the year of experience taught her, as opposed to 'just being told' about things in the university.

Analytical distinctions (between policy areas, for example) which dominate the academic curriculum are compared unfavourably with the way they experience things as 'linked up' in their office placement. The university education is universally regarded as unsuitable. A typical comment is: 'We joined the planning course to become practical town planners.' It is by no means clear to student planners how a social science based university education helps them.

The contestability of theses in the social sciences must be a serious liability for those who are seeking practicality and certainty. In this view of what constitutes worthwhile knowledge, the existence of competing justifications for promoting equal opportunities already places a question mark over its status as professionally relevant knowledge. My experience of

teaching a module on equal opportunities to planning students is that most enthuse about learning how to apply standards of accessibility when evaluating buildings. However, they are at best bored, and often made anxious, by the sometimes passionate arguments which arise around how disability should be defined, and the implications of different approaches to definitions for the promotion of equal opportunities.

Active learning on the job

A striking feature of student accounts of how they learn during their professional placement is how (selectively) active they are in the process. Students realise quite quickly that they must take initiatives to ensure that they can perform adequately in the office. For example, for all five students in one focus group, careful observation of more senior officers was an important way of learning skills, both mundane and sophisticated (e.g. answering the telephone in an appropriate way, or negotiation). However, other forms of active learning appeared to be beset by more anxiety – learning ‘through necessity’ was offered as a description by one person, and there were wry smiles of recognition as an anecdote was offered of a panic-filled afternoon searching through files for information for a senior officer.

In my experience, this approach to learning is considerably more active than the approach adopted by the same students in relation to their full-time university studies. I would speculate that this is a combination of the way lecturers present themselves (as experts, uniquely able to define the contours of a subject or specialism) and a view held by students of theoretical knowledge as something to be absorbed passively, prior to use in practice, its usefulness presumably varying directly with its degree of certainty (a perspective Sinclair [1997] found in trainee doctors). Engagement with, and questioning of, theory – an activity valued by academics – has no place in this view of knowledge and its acquisition.

In the practice setting, no less than in the university, active learning does not extend to questioning the knowledge being offered. One female student spoke of how key lessons had been taught by someone who ‘sat me down, patted me on the head and told me’. (Many other students had identified a sympathetic individual in the office who would teach them important aspects of the job.) As the quotation implies, these relationships impart more than just technical information about planning – the manner of the teaching helps initiate the novice planner into a set of social relations through which planning is undertaken in that setting.

The importance of the culture of the work setting

When a group of students midway through a year-long placement discussed what they had learned so far, central to the session were variations on the

theme of 'you have to know your office culture' (as one put it). Communicating with colleagues and people outside the office was part of this ('appreciating where everyone's coming from' said another). The student planner is learning to fit into a set of social relations which, inevitably, are power-laden, and very likely share at least some of the limitations and injustices associated with the wider social context. But questioning any perceived flaws – for example, by drawing attention to sexism or racism in the workplace – will threaten the delivery mechanism which is teaching the new planner how to do the job; moreover, as we will see in the next section, there are strong pressures on planners to stick together in the workplace.

'Under threat': the occupational context and culture of planners

In an account of social workers specialising in child care, Pithouse (1994) describes how a particular kind of collegueship (his term) was forged which helped the workers 'construct their activities as orderly and creditable' in an often hostile and uncertain environment. Planners, too, operate in an environment which can fairly be described as threatening, if not always actually hostile. Key characteristics are:

- Making plans and making decisions on planning applications creates benefits for some and costs, or losses, for others. Often there is a great deal at stake for individuals and groups. There are no reliable data about physical attacks on planners but they appear to occur pretty regularly, and there has been at least one fatal assault in the last ten years. One of the student planners admitted being threatened with death by a disgruntled member of the public, and many others recalled being intimidated by planning applicants or members of the public.
- There are very occasional rumours (and seemingly very few instances) of corruption, but an understandable public perception that planning could be corrupt (given the amounts of money to be made from favourable decisions).
- Formal responsibility for decisions rests with councillors, who become interested in scrutinising (and attempting to influence) planners' judgements. This comes as a shock to many student planners – one commented, 'I didn't connect planning and politics before' – which probably reflects how they wished to perceive planning, rather than what was actually in their curriculum or textbooks.
- There are a number of opportunities (defined by law) for members of the public to make representations to planners, and, subsequently, test planners' judgements.
- Testing of planners' judgements is still dominated by a judicial (and hence adversarial) approach – the majority of planners will have given

evidence as expert witnesses to some kind of public inquiry (and been cross-examined) at some time during their careers. Many experience this regularly. Being asked/allowed to present and defend a planning case, either by exchange of written submissions or in person at a hearing, is regarded as simultaneously traumatic and a great opportunity – a kind of ‘rite of passage’ – by student planners.

- The technical content of professional practice is not great and swathes of planning standards and guidelines are unsupported by research evidence. Monitoring and evaluation are rarely undertaken with any rigour (Reade 1987). All this leaves planners vulnerable when challenged.

Planning office culture

I suggest that some key factors have encouraged planners to develop an occupational culture which has features inimical to taking promoting equal opportunities seriously.

The first of these is *a dominant concern with process and procedure*. This provides a bulwark against accusations of partisanship, and also a very real protection against attempts on the part of less powerful interests to unduly influence planners’ judgements. (In truth, very powerful interests often insist on being accommodated and leave it to the planners to work out how to ensure that the usual procedural niceties are observed).

Secondly, there is *a sense of sharing a beleaguered position, and of being open to unfair attack for mercenary and self-interested reasons*. Planners tend to develop either or both of the following reactions to the foibles of the public, councillors and developers: a righteous indignation or a blackish humour. The sentiments of American planners recorded by John Forester (1993) would be well understood by UK planners: ‘If something goes wrong, the planners did it. If something goes right, the City Council members claim credit for it.’ This sense of identity is strongest among those groups of planners most often and most directly in the firing line – namely, those dealing with planning applications (McLoughlin 1973) – but is also evident elsewhere. One student planner mid-way through a placement year in an economic development unit found the most surprising (and, he said, ‘shocking’) aspect of professional practice was that ‘a load of slagging off goes on’, which I would interpret as the development and consolidation of collegueship through a defining of demonised ‘others’.

These two features help explain a curious aspect of planning offices already referred to in this chapter, namely, the very great effort expended on teaching new entrants the procedures, processes and standards of their new office (Nicholson 1991). In a hostile world, new recruits have to be schooled in the ways of their office and taught to accept them; then they can contribute to, and benefit from, the atmosphere of (beleaguered) collegueship. This is the experience of placement students – their major lessons are in

learning protocols of dealing with councillors, fellow officers, planning applicants and other members of the public – cf. Baum on a similar US experience (Baum 1997).

I would speculate that the greater the adversarial content of the work of a group of planners, the more likely they are to inflect their collegueship with stereotypically masculine behaviour and attitudes. Whatever the accuracy of the speculation, some planning offices certainly have very stereotypically gendered behaviour. This has come out quite clearly in the experiences of two female students who recently spent consecutive years in a development control section where all the other professional staff were men. One was accounted a great success by her colleagues and manager. She was unaggressively flirtatious, and presented an inability to plan her time and express herself formally as an endearing dizziness. (It had earned her quite a poor degree.) She was 'looked after'.

The second student did not wish to be looked after, but also rejected other roles on offer, e.g. becoming 'one of the boys'. She had a stressful year, feeling that she was not fully accepted as a colleague, that she might be let down by co-workers and was not being encouraged to seek assistance from her manager. Her practical and emotional support came from female support workers – administrators and secretaries who seemed to regard the gendered 'games' of the male planners with a mixture of exasperation and contempt.

The gendered nature of planning life also emerged in accounts of conflict with the public. For women, sexist abuse ('you old slag', and so on) was not uncommon; one consequence was to emphasise gender roles within the office, as (male) colleagues took care to 'protect' their womenfolk by anticipating visits and meetings which might be problematical.

Conclusion

A wealth of research evidence shows that promoting equal opportunities is not regarded as important by professional planners. The particular concern of this chapter has been why student planners who have undertaken, or are in the midst of, work placements appear to find it difficult to say anything about equal opportunities when discussing their experience of work, even though they have only recently studied equal opportunities in university. They seem to struggle to find a way of using the concepts and concerns associated with the promotion of equal opportunities to make sense of their work experiences. The students quoted above, who had so many vivid things to say about their introduction to professional life, typically fell silent when asked whether issues associated with equal opportunities arose in their placements.

The possible inference of this discussion is that the values and concepts associated with promoting equal opportunities struggle to find any kind of purchase in the life of the professional planner – first, because planners

valorise experiential knowledge acquisition, and secondly, because the occupational culture of planners contains values and attributes inimical to the concerns of equal opportunities. The combination of these factors squeezes equal opportunities off the conceptual and normative map of novice planners as they struggle to come to terms with their introduction to practice.

Planners value knowledge that can guide (and justify) professional practice. This means that contestable social science will always appear a poor basis for practice compared to the apparent certainty and specificity of that which is directly experienced. For novice planners, the intellectual and normative contestability of equal opportunities immediately devalues it as knowledge for practice, and its absence from the concerns of existing, experienced practitioners – valued sources of applicable knowledge – confirms its marginality as a source of professional knowledge.

Equal opportunities does not figure in the instruction experienced planners impart to newcomers because planners have developed an occupational culture which emphasises the importance of procedural correctness (fine-tuned to suit local pressures and sensitivities), of neutrality and a studied impartiality, and of the need to constantly guard against (and protect each other against) hostile others motivated by self-interest. They are predisposed to be suspicious of a call to promote equal opportunities which demands changes to procedures (albeit changes which it is claimed are designed to secure fairness), which imply that individuals and/or groups have either been unfairly treated or might be so treated in the future, and casts a shadow over (stereotypically masculine) attitudes or behaviour which are culturally encoded as associated with standing up for oneself in the face of unfair criticism.

The concerns associated with promoting equal opportunities can appear to emanate from a very different kind of world to that in which planners operate. Planners know that which they experience – they *know* that procedures are applied impartially; they *know* that they are often the butt of unjust criticism and hostility; they *know* that the ideas and concerns associated with equal opportunities do not seem to make any better sense of these experiences than the occupational culture already in place.

If this analysis is reasonably accurate then the promotion of equal opportunities within planning may be made easier by:

- ameliorating the adversarial nature of the process
- reducing the pressure of scrutiny on planners by councillors
- limiting the time planners spend in the more adversarial and heavily scrutinised aspects of the occupation.

Such changes might, at least, allow for some change in the occupational culture of the profession, though of course they might not be desirable changes for other reasons.

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ARTICLE

British Planning and the Promotion of Race Equality: The Welsh Experience of Race Equality Schemes

HUW THOMAS

Background and Context: Race and Planning in the UK

This paper examines the significance for the promotion of race equality in planning of a specific change in the local government context which has the potential to transform the relationship between planning and race equality. New duties to promote race equality have been placed on local authorities (and other public bodies) in the United Kingdom (UK) by amendments to the Race Relations Act. These new obligations are corporate duties in the sense that the local authority is the entity held responsible for fulfilling them, but they can be expected to have an effect on all aspects of the authority's activities, including its work as a planning authority. This paper analyses a sample of Race Equality Schemes (RESs) (in effect, action plans) prepared by Welsh local authorities in accordance with the Act to see what evidence there is of planning being more sensitive to promoting race equality. In drawing conclusions it must be borne in mind that the sample of schemes is limited. This can be no more than a preliminary assessment, therefore.

The argument of the paper is that, even taking into account the novelty of what is being asked of local authorities, it is disappointing that generally schemes have little to say about planning, which means that planning is likely to remain peripheral to race equality initiatives, and race equality, in turn, is more likely to remain peripheral to planning. Also of concern are the technical limitations of the schemes, the existence of which suggests that many local authorities could benefit from further advice and, perhaps, resources, in this area of their work. On a more positive note, many local authorities give every indication of recognising that there is progress to be made, and evince a commitment to improvement in relation to promoting race equality. These conclusions are consistent with the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE)'s own review of the extent to which public bodies (of which local authorities are only a subset) were drawing up RESs compatible with its advice (CRE & Schneider-Ross, 2003). This more CRE-focused concern provides a useful complement and context for the more planning-focused concern of the present

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paper. The remainder of this section of the paper introduces the new legislative regime and sketches the rather slow progress since the 1970s in increasing the importance of race equality within the planning system.

Research has found that with conspicuous exceptions the planning system in the UK has related uneasily to statutory and policy concerns about racial discrimination and racial tension. The UK has had legislation outlawing racial discrimination since 1965. Moreover, since the 1950s, concern about racial tensions, particularly when associated with violence against people and/or property, has captured the attention of politicians, the media and influential policy advisors at national and local level, with some regularity (Scarman, 1981; Campbell, 1993; Cattle, 2001; Ouseley, 2001; Solomos, 2003). Many areas of social and economic life have transformed their procedures and approaches to their work to take account of a changed, and constantly changing, policy climate—personnel practices, the administration and practice of teaching, and policing practices are three of the more prominent examples of change (Ball & Solomos, 1990; Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2003). The changes may not always have won universal approval, but the key point for the present purposes is that they illustrated a sensitivity on the part of those involved in those policy processes of the need to take account of the ‘race relations agenda’—notably, being sensitive to the possibility of direct and indirectly discriminatory practices and, second, as part of this, the dangers of drawing up policies which marginalise the concerns of minority ethnic groups (Thomas, 2000).

The planning system appears to be among the least sensitive of all policy areas to these concerns. External observers have been astonished at the way in which debates and discussions about racism and discrimination in planning lag behind and seem detached from those in other policy fields (Moore, 1995). The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI), the professional institute for UK planners, has given a lead to the profession by providing evidence-based advice about promoting race equality within, and through, planning (CRE/RTPI, 1983; Krishnarayan & Thomas, 1993). Yet, successive analyses of the operation of the system, involving reviews of documentation, and questionnaire surveys of, and interviews with, planners and users of the system, have painted a rather depressing picture of persistent reluctance to institute procedural changes which have become the norm in very many policy fields (such as monitoring of outcomes for different ethnic groups of bureaucratic processes) (Krishnarayan & Thomas, 1993; Loftman & Beazley, 1998; Ellis, 2000, 2001; Thomas, 2000). In addition, there is a palpable unease among planners about discussing the implications for planning of a concern for race equality; making the conceptual connection between race equality and planning still seems difficult for many planners, which some have argued is one outcome of the way the professionalised occupation has drifted away from a serious engagement with promoting social welfare (Thomas, 1999).

Against this rather depressing background, some commentators have suggested that the pressure on local authorities to take corporate approaches to the challenges of governance may encourage, or force, planning departments to emulate the practices of more progressive colleagues. In this context, a ‘corpo-

rate approach' is an approach to governance which views a local authority as (potentially or actually) a single integrated (corporate) entity—with corporate objectives and goals—rather than a collection of individual departments with a series of individual, possibly unrelated, goals and objectives. It has been suggested that if the local authority were to make the promotion of race equality a priority within an effective corporate approach to governance then each part of the authority—including that responsible for planning—would be obliged to play a full part in achieving that goal. For example, Best Value, a system of externally audited performance measurement with a strong corporate dimension, has been seen as having this potential (Thomas & Lo Piccolo, 2000).¹ Yet even optimists accept that Best Value is an indirect approach for seeking improvements in connecting planning to a concern for race equality, simply because that is not its primary function, nor is it the popular perception of its role. Moreover, reviews of local authority activity in promoting equal opportunities (in England and Wales) over the last few decades have found a patchy picture, within and between authorities (Audit Commission, 2002; Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2003). In recent years, however, a far more direct legislative requirement has emerged, which appears to herald a new era in the way the planning system must relate to the demands of promoting race equality. This paper presents a review of some of the initial effects of the legislation on local government planning.

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and Race Equality Schemes

There is understandable cynicism among those active in the struggle for race equality when there are references in the media or political discussions to 'new beginnings' or 'landmark reports' and the like. The significance of the Macpherson Report (Macpherson, 1999) into the poorly conducted police investigation of the murder of a young Black Londoner, Stephen Lawrence, was that it had been preceded by years of accusations of a racist culture being widespread within the Metropolitan Police (i.e. a way of doing things and seeing the world which had racial categories and stereotypes deeply embedded in it). Macpherson drew on this experience and understanding, and explained the shortcomings of the investigation by reference to such a culture, described as a form of *institutional racism*, rather than to isolated technical mistakes.² The prescription for improvement, therefore, involved transforming organisational culture. This kind of analysis echoes that underlying an increasingly influential approach to promoting equal opportunities, especially significant in discussions of sex discrimination—namely, the promotion of *mainstreaming* (Rees, 1999; Booth, 2001). In relation to gender, for example, "Mainstreaming policies are those which respect and respond to differences, rather than seeking to assist women to fit into male institutions and cultures by ... [becoming like men]" (Rees, 1998, p. 40). This is a complex task, but as Reeves (2002) points out, there are some straightforward starting points—in the case of mainstreaming gender equality, these include the collection of data disaggregated by gender so as to allow an assessment of differential impacts of policy and of different needs; taking steps to ensure men and women are involved in decision making; identifying measurable goals and

outcomes; and devising policies clearly sensitive to any needs which differ by gender. Organisational change can be incremental, and there should be evidence of movement in the right direction even at the early stages, which a review of documentation such as conducted in this study could pick up. The goal of mainstreaming is the rethinking and redesigning of organisational practices, and an attendant transformation of organisational culture and policies. The principle—at least in relation to sex discrimination—is now accepted in European Union programmes (Braithwaite, 1998).

It is not implausible to suggest, therefore, that the Macpherson Report's emphasis on transforming practices and organisational cultures entered public policy discussions at a propitious time. The way in which the UK Government had to strengthen what was widely perceived as an initially overcautious response to the report bears out this analysis (Thomas, 2000). The final response of the government was to revise the existing legislation outlawing racial discrimination in ways which provide some basis for a transformative approach to organisational culture. Moreover, the legislation considered local authorities as corporate entities rather than as contingent collections of services, and so seems to tie planning firmly into corporate obligations and strategies, and reduce the likelihood of the planning functions of the authority being considered as somehow irrelevant to promoting race equality. In that way it is not unreasonable to see it as building on the kind of corporate approach to promoting equal opportunities that has potentially been available through inspection/management regimes such as Best Value (Audit Commission, 2002).

Two aspects of the legislative changes are particularly important. First, there is a statutory duty on public bodies (including local councils in their roles as local planning authorities) to promote race equality, and a commitment to enforcing the duty, through the activities of the CRE. This has the effect of placing the instigating of *change* on a par with the work of *reacting* to instances of discrimination which has tended to dominate the work of the CRE in the past (CRE, 1992). It signals that fostering change for the better, even in the apparent absence of actionable incidents, is as significant as reacting to injury. Second, one of the instruments through which specified public bodies will set out their systematic approach to promoting race equality, and also subject their approach and achievements to scrutiny, is by the preparation of RESs. For local authorities, which are among the bodies that have to produce RESs, these are to be corporate documents, in which the council as a whole shows how it intends to discharge its legislative duty to promote race equality across all its activities. The CRE has produced a Code of Practice which public bodies are obliged to follow in pursuing their duties under the Act (CRE, 2002), and this includes advice on the RES.

It is clear that the revised race relations legislation has the potential to force laggard public services, such as planning, to learn from more experienced services about how to promote race equality, and—perhaps indirectly—to learn from policy networks of which they have not hitherto been a part. But this depends, first, on the Act 'biting' in local government, and second, on the connections being made between the corporate drive to promote race equality and the specific concerns of planning. Part of achieving this will involve making

conceptual and policy connections between the kinds of things the planning system is involved in and the promotion of race equality. RESs will be a vital part of this process, and examining them provides a good indication of progress to date. This paper reports on a review of a sample of first-round schemes, prepared by the statutory deadline of 31 May 2002, in order to evaluate what progress is being made. The analysis is of plans as published, with a limited amount of supplementary informal discussion with equalities officers in local government circles in Wales. The study has its limitations, therefore. For example, some of the RESs may be reviewed in the near future (although there is unlikely to be major change in most before 2005). Perhaps more importantly, the paper concentrates on strategies and plans, rather than actions; it is the latter which will be needed to bring about change, and the gap between rhetoric and reality can be large. As one council officer puts it in an Audit Commission report:

Generally we don't have a problem with writing policies—the difficult thing is making things happen afterwards. If you hand out a load of policies, staff just look at you blankly and say 'Yes, but what do I actually need to do here?' (2002, p. 64)

This paper's analysis of RESs provides no answers to the question of whether action is ensuing, but it does provide an assessment of whether there is a firm basis for action—in particular, whether there is a usable plan in place at all, and second, whether the conceptual and policy connections between planning and the promotion of race equality are beginning to be made. The widespread failure to grasp how promoting race equality can connect to planning (the kind of issue alluded to in more general terms in the quotation above) has fettered the work of the RTPI, and others, as they have struggled to increase the salience of race equality in professional practice (Thomas, 2000); RESs appear to provide a good opportunity to highlight what race equality means for planning (and, indeed, any other local government function). The creation of any benefit for planning is predicated on the quality of the schemes in general, and therefore much of the paper evaluates the schemes as a whole, not simply their references, or lack of them, to planning.

The sample for the paper consists of 15 Welsh local authorities (two-thirds of the local authorities in Wales).³ This sample provides a mix of urban and rural authorities with populations ranging from under 100 000 to around 300 000 people, in a region whose devolved elected assembly has had since its founding in 1999 a legislative duty to promote equal opportunities. The National Assembly of Wales has taken this seriously, and at national (Welsh) level the organisational infrastructure to promote equal opportunities is certainly in place (Chaney & Fevre, 2002). In some ways, then, both the UK and Welsh policy context for promoting race equality is supportive; the paper's analysis will consider the nature of RESs produced under these circumstances, and the way they deal with planning. The next section outlines the legislative context for the schemes in slightly more detail and the advice offered to local authorities in relation to them.

Race Equality Schemes

In 2000 the Race Relations Act 1976 was amended so as to place what was termed a 'general duty' on a wide range of public authorities to promote race equality. 'Public authorities' included local authorities, so the planning services of local authorities are subject to the new statutory obligations. The general duty requires public authorities, in everything they do, to have regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination
- promote equality of opportunity
- promote good race relations.

These phrases are not without ambiguity, but for the purposes of this paper the key point is that the amended act, and its general duty, supplements the reactive and individualistic orientation of the 1976 legislation with a new concern for creating an institutional/societal context within which race equality can flourish. In concrete terms that means that, for example, it is no longer enough for an organisation to have complaints or grievance procedures in place for victims of racism. Such measures are important, and still legally required, but public authorities are now also required to satisfy themselves continuously (independently of whether any complaints are received) that their working practices and organisational culture are such that discrimination is unlikely. The expectation is that organisations will institute training programmes, reviews of procedures, and other initiatives to satisfy themselves and external scrutineers that race equality is being promoted. This concern with institutional practices and cultures—formal and informal ways of doing things—stems directly from the Macpherson Report's conclusion that organisational cultures, including such things as canteen banter, can be (sometimes unwitting) vehicles for unfairness within an organisation and in the way it delivers a service. Prejudicial stereotypes, for example, may develop unreflectively, and be widely shared, and have real—and unfair—effects on how certain service users or colleagues are treated. From this perspective the corporate implications of the legislation are also evident—if 'the organisation' is defined as the local authority as a whole, then no part of it can be allowed to retain or develop practices prejudicial to race equality.

A large subset of public authorities also has specific duties defined by the amended legislation. In the case of local authorities (and many other bodies) the specific duty is to draw up and implement an RES which will set out how the authority intends to discharge its general duty—i.e. what it intends to do to tackle the undoubtedly challenging agenda set by the Act. The CRE, the governmental body policing the Race Relations Act, produced a Statutory Code of Practice to assist authorities with this duty (CRE, 2001, 2002).

The Statutory Code of Practice advised local authorities about what the RES should contain. In brief, this was to set out:

- (1) functions and policies that are relevant to their duty under the Act (e.g. highway maintenance may not be regarded as relevant, while social services and education will be relevant). In a plan of action, priority must be given to the most relevant functions;

Welsh Experience of Race Equality Schemes

- (2) arrangements for consultations on policies and arrangements for assessing their likely impact on the promotion of race equality;
- (3) arrangements for monitoring policies for adverse impact;
- (4) arrangements for publishing assessment, consultation and monitoring reports;
- (5) arrangements for making sure the public has access to information and public services;
- (6) arrangements for training staff.

Every scheme examined had something to say about each of these points, but how much varied enormously, with schemes ranging in length from 5 pages to over 80 (the schemes at either extreme were both for rural, Welsh-speaking authorities). Most schemes (13 out of 15) contained a reasonably detailed action plan setting out things to be done over the next few years. A minority included actions by service delivery departments/functions in this, but most included only corporate functions (e.g. corporate recruitment practices or corporate public relations practices). Perhaps this reflects the haste with which many schemes seem to have been prepared and the lack of any corporate tradition or foundation for this kind of work.

The next section will first consider the general approach to undertaking the schemes, before considering the particular ways they engage with planning. Like most documents, particularly those written by public bodies, the schemes may well have been written with more than one audience in mind (Healey, 1986; Scott, 1990; Hastings, 1998)—for example, in this case, the CRE, but also leading local politicians and council committees. Therefore, the schemes may be intended to be read in more than one way. In this paper they will be read from the perspective of someone interested in the extent to which they assist the promotion of race equality within and through the planning system. Consequently, the focus will be on the following.

- How much of a commitment or priority does the scheme seem to enjoy within the council's activities as a whole?
- How helpful is the scheme to those who wish to promote and check on activity—for example, does it identify officers responsible for action, does it identify targets, deadlines and priorities?
- How transparent is it in justifying its targets/priorities; is there evidence of the kind of systematic evaluation of policies and procedures required if mainstreaming of race equality is to occur (Audit Commission, 2002)?

Throughout, it should be borne in mind that the timetable for producing schemes was extremely tight—the CRE was still consulting on its code of practice in early 2002, despite the need to publish schemes by end May of that same year (CRE, 2001). To be sure, the consultation draft and other material gave some good indications of what would be involved in drawing up a scheme, but one can understand the reluctance on the part of authorities to go too far before definitive advice was available. Yet, even if these circumstances are taken into consideration, the variety of schemes is still striking.

An Analysis of Race Equality Schemes

Commitment/Priority

One way in which the importance of the scheme is established is in the way it is introduced. As Hastings puts it, the introductions to a policy document “are crucial ... in the way that they orientate the reader or set the scene for them ...” (1998, p. 198). In the case of an RES, two aspects of the scheme play a part in helping to establish the corporate significance of the document. First, there is the presence (or otherwise) of a preface or introduction by a senior councillor and/or officer. There is no suggestion that these senior figures actually prepare the document, of course, but their signing their names constitutes a degree of corporate endorsement of its importance. Four schemes were introduced in this way, typically with statements from the chief executive and/or council leader.

The signature of a senior politician or officer may at most *symbolise* corporate importance; embedding the scheme in a narrative about the trajectory of the council in relation to promoting equal opportunities and/or race equality goes further and can encourage the reader to share a particular corporate view of the importance of the scheme. By way of contrast, schemes which have no narrative of this kind do nothing to counter a reader’s impression that the scheme is a discrete piece of work, potentially divorced from the mainstream of the authority’s concerns.

For example, in Swansea’s scheme, the first three sections are entitled ‘About Swansea’, ‘The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000’; and ‘Action to Date’ (a section which sets out the actions the city council took in response to the Macpherson Report). Together, these take up only two and an half pages of a document of 43 pages, but they locate the detailed scheme which follows within an account of the city and the council’s work—and in so doing begin to suggest that the scheme is an integral part of the governance of Swansea. In Powys County Council’s scheme, something very similar is provided (this council is responsible for a very different kind of area—rural, while Swansea is largely urban). Unlike Swansea, the council does not make detailed claims to have some kind of track record in race equality initiatives, but it does spend over two pages relating the scheme to the council’s general policies on equal opportunities and social inclusion, and sets all of this within a description of what it sees as the salient demographic characteristics of the area. When read alongside a foreword from the senior councillor responsible for equal opportunities, the impression is given of a serious engagement with the new duty. By way of contrast, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council’s scheme simply states the statutory duty which has led to the drawing up of the scheme, and then outlines the scheme. Implicitly, the scheme is already presented as external to the authority’s trajectory and main concerns as an agency of governance.

These simple narratives can pick up hints of tension in the council’s attitude to the duty when read in the knowledge of local politics. In the case of Ceredigion County Council, the scheme is prefaced by a statement of commitment to equal opportunities, but in a discussion of the county’s demography and policy—not dissimilar in scope and length to Swansea’s—it emphasises the importance of the defence and promotion of the Welsh language within the

county and quotes legal cases which (it says) allow certain posts to be advertised for Welsh language speakers without falling foul of the race relations legislation. This level of detail, placed in an otherwise general introduction, suggests that there is concern somewhere within the council about the possibility of the promotion of race equality undermining a commitment to promoting a particular linguistically defined culture (see James & Williams, 1997). Again, the impression can be given that promoting race equality is not really being inserted into the mainstream of the authority's activities, as a principle running through everything, but rather is viewed as a potential irritant in relation to existing corporate priorities.

Usability/Helpfulness of the Schemes

The schemes clearly exhibit the influence of the CRE's advice, with a broad pattern common to each. For example, at the very least each lists corporate aims in relation to race equality, corporate policies relevant to race equality, sets out a plan for complying with the authority's general duty under the act (see earlier) and assesses the relevance of each of its functions in relation to the promotion of race equality. Yet, two things strike the reader forcefully on reading the schemes. The first is the variation in their length, remarked upon earlier. A word count was not undertaken, but it is quite evident that they vary a great deal. The variation cuts across urban/rural divisions, and which political parties are in control of the council. The second is the absence of systematically collected data relevant to the duties placed on authorities under the Act—for example, to use in the process of assessing how functions are performing in relation to promoting race equality, or the impact of policies on different ethnic groups. This shortfall is acknowledged in a number of schemes, with Torfaen going as far as to label its scheme an interim scheme and Merthyr Tydfil calling its scheme a draft scheme. These are among many who explicitly commit themselves to an annual review, which—it is to be hoped—will lead to a strengthening of schemes both technically and in terms of evidence base.

The length of a scheme, in itself, need not be an indicator of quality or commitment, but at an extreme it can affect transparency and usability. In Ceredigion, for example, the basic pattern is followed, but “the relevant strategies and plans of the authority” are simply listed (50 in all) with not even a hint of why they are ‘relevant’, whether some may be relevant in different ways to others, and what this might mean to the scheme. Swansea's RES begins to do precisely that by providing tables which relate council plans and policies to particular concerns of the RES—and the statutory duty to promote race equality—such as consultation practices, monitoring practices and access to information. In relation to the question of relevance, Monmouthshire County Council provides a level of transparency greater than that of all the others in the sample by reproducing the returns of all directorates to a questionnaire designed to assess the relevance of their functions to the duty to promote race equality.

Both Swansea's and Ceredigion's plans are among the two-thirds of the sample (10) who identify an officer responsible for the RES as a whole. Another identifies officers responsible for pursuing individual initiatives within the

TABLE 1. Numbers of local authorities whose RES had certain characteristics
(numbers in brackets indicate partial fulfilment)

Precise description of action	Performance /output indicators	Timetable/ deadlines	Clear responsibilities	Some targets
13	5 (8)	8 (4)	5 (1)	3

Note: Number in sample = 13.

Source: Author's survey.

scheme, and one identifies a councillor as responsible for the scheme. In most cases, therefore, it is possible for someone to follow up an interest in an element of the scheme. Perhaps this is as well, because the majority of schemes are weak in their treatment of what will get done and when.

A useful and serious action plan is one which contains the following five elements: precise description of action, deadline/timetable for action, precise outcome/performance indicator, performance target over a given period of time, and identification of person/group responsible for action (see, for example, Maychell & Pathak (1997, p. 3) in relation to action plans in schools following educational inspections).

Table 1 shows that evaluated against these criteria the 13 schemes which had some kind of an action plan were patchy. Most specified reasonably clearly what actions were contemplated in pursuit of the promotion of race equality, but performance/output indicators were often vague or non-existent. Cardiff's scheme, for instance, states that the council will target advertising of posts at minority ethnic groups by, inter alia, "expanding on the use of local community papers, newsletters etc. ..." (p. 25). However, no indication is given of how progress is to be measured, no timetable or deadline is given (other than that the plan is for the period 2002–2005), and no target set for, say, numbers of community newsletters to be used, or proportions of minority groups to be targeted in this way. In short, it is difficult for anyone to know whether the council is living up to what it is claiming to want to do. Other action plans share these drawbacks to varying degrees. There is also variation within individual schemes, as if a variety of hands had been involved and insufficient overall editing/control exercised. Thus some plans have a clear timetable in some parts and are vague in others. This may well indicate tensions within a council in relation to the importance of promoting race equality. One equalities officer commented that, one year into the statutory regime, there remained 'pockets within the authority' which were unenthusiastic about what was required of them, while others had been very enthusiastic and exercised initiative in developing ideas relevant to their policy areas.

It is difficult to produce a water-tight classification of complex policy documents, but drawing upon the kinds of considerations set out in this section, a three-fold classification of local authorities is suggested.

- (1) Authorities who appear quite confident (and have some experience) in pursuing an 'equalities agenda', and whose RES is presented as the latest stage in a (fairly) well-established process. There are no more than two or three such authorities in this sample.
- (2) Authorities who appear less confident, and indeed in some cases say so, but are, to varying degrees, conspicuously positive about the RES and its implications.
- (3) Authorities who appear to have no great experience and/or confidence in promoting equal opportunities, and produce schemes which are formally complete but have serious examples of the flaws mentioned above. Why this is so requires further research—for example, is it caused by a lack of importance being attached to the work, or a general lack of resources, or some other reason?

The distinction between groups (1) and (2) and group (3) might well revolve around the significance attached to the RES, with the former suggesting, through the structure and content of their schemes, that promoting race equality matters to the local authority, and the latter suggesting that the scheme is simply one legal obligation among many that the authority faces. In some ways the findings provide some hope for the future. A good proportion of authorities are giving an appearance of commitment to promoting race equality; the quality of RESs may be variable, but there is a basis for progress, if pressure (and encouragement) from the CRE and other bodies is brought to bear consistently, a finding which the CRE's own review confirms (CRE & Schneider-Ross, 2003). On the other hand, mainstreaming involves considerably more of a corporate commitment than is required simply to write a reasonable action plan, and the failure of quite a few authorities to do even that is a measure of how much ground remains to be covered.

On balance, then, a mixed but not terribly positive verdict on the question of the extent to which the new legislative approach to promoting race equality in Britain has begun to 'bite'. How much of such 'bite' as there is has been felt by planning?

Planning and the RES

The key indicator of what effect the new legislative and policy environment is likely to have on planning is the degree of relevance which the schemes deem the planning function to have, i.e. the degree to which they regard planning as "relevant to the general duty to promote race equality" (CRE, 2002, p. 23).

Only 11 of the schemes actually provide a breakdown of services/functions according to relevance, which reflects the overall commitment to the RES, and the quality of what is produced. One scheme claimed that planning was not relevant, a finding which seems completely uninformed by, and runs counter to the findings of, a number of studies cited in the introductory sections of this paper (CRE/RTPI, 1983; Krishnarayan & Thomas, 1993). Table 2 provides a description of the conclusions of the two-thirds which regarded planning functions as relevant and also incorporated a breakdown of council functions by

TABLE 2. Numbers of local authorities assessing planning functions as relevant to general duty to promote race equality

	Relevance		
	High	Medium	Low
Development control/enforcement	3	2	5
Unitary development plan/forward plan	1	5	4

Note: Number in sample = 10.

Source: Author's survey.

relevance. Two things stand out from Table 2: first, that there is great variety in the assessments of relevance produced; and second, that despite this variety, overall, planning is not regarded as highly relevant. On the other hand, there is some comfort to be gained from the finding that where an aspect of planning is seen as relevant to the general duty to promote race equality then it is development control which is so identified. This might reasonably be interpreted as an acknowledgement of the potential for institutional discrimination in the way planning procedures are pursued, something which planning officers have, historically, been reluctant to accept (Thomas, 1994).

Some variation in the assessments of relevance is to be expected, as they were intended to reflect local concerns and priorities (CRE, 2002), but that development control should be a low (third-year) priority in the city of Swansea, a medium priority in the city of Cardiff and a high (year-one) priority in the rural authority of Gwynedd (while in largely rural Pembrokeshire development control is adjudged a low priority) is an outcome which requires at least some explanation. This is where the lack of any explanatory/justificatory context, a feature of all schemes to some extent, is such a drawback to their credibility—it is difficult not to feel that the priorities of the schemes are as likely to reflect intra-authority horse trading as a reasoned evaluation of the relationship between planning functions and the promotion of race equality.

Conclusion

This paper provides an early assessment of an innovation in the promotion of race equality (the RES) which will undoubtedly develop over the years. The results need to be qualified by taking into account the small sample and the fact that the schemes studied were produced within a tight timetable. There is clearly a need for further research on the subject. Yet, even so, the assessment presents a sobering picture which is consistent with other early assessments (CRE & Schneider-Ross, 2003). It finds schemes which are, at best, formally competent, but generally lacking in explanation or justification. A number of schemes acknowledge that they are limited, for the moment, by a legacy of ignorance about processes and outcomes of relevance to drawing up a scheme—there is a widespread commitment to data gathering and monitoring, which may provide a

firmer and more sophisticated basis for future RESs. However, this source of optimism is balanced by the sizable minority of authorities whose schemes evince a lack of interest in and commitment to promoting race equality as a central component of their activities, i.e. as a mainstream activity. For them, this appears to be a further statutory duty with the letter of which they may comply, but the spirit of which seems to have left them unmoved. Perhaps most worrying of all is the lack of transparency in the schemes, and in particular the almost universal lack of reasons for choices. These characteristics make the schemes difficult to use as tools for holding authorities to account. In some the action plans lack the detail which would allow them to be used in this way; in most there are no reasons given for key choices the authority has made, so it is difficult to divine an underlying logic. Drawing up plans with these defects is easier if there is little or no consultation with organisations outside the authority who wish to use them as tools to check on progress. Anecdotal evidence suggests that very few, if any, local authorities in the sample consulted on the schemes—certainly, none contain any reference within them to consultation.

In these circumstances there is little likelihood that RESs will provide the kind of leadership to planning services that was outlined in the paper's introductory section. It is possible that planning functions in any given council may be involved in scrambling up the learning curve with the rest of the authority, but there appear to be only a few where there is enough corporate confidence in the promotion of race equality to provide a lead for planners. So, the need for national guidance specifically for planners (as opposed to general advice to public bodies (CRE & Schneider-Ross, 2003)) remains as great as ever. This needs to come from government departments, professional organisations and local government organisations. In addition, it is imperative that RESs are subject to consultation and scrutiny by local and national race equality organisations, so that the issue of their usability becomes paramount and they are more than just paper exercises.

Acknowledgements

The author is grateful to Gareth Barton for help in collecting material for this study, and to Vincent Nadin and an anonymous referee for constructive criticism from which he has tried to benefit.

Notes

1. Best value is cited as an example of an instrument for planning, managing and evaluating the performance of local government which is based on the view that local authorities should be regarded primarily as integrated bodies seeking to achieve particular objectives and/or address particular problems, rather than a collection of departments with responsibilities defined individually by statutory and/or policy demands. Because this approach to governance is increasingly influential, there are other examples of policy planning and appraisal which could be cited and which would be interesting to research in respect of their potential for promoting race equality (e.g. Community Plans and Sustainability Appraisals). In each of these there may well be opportunities to identify and share good practice in mainstreaming race equality.
2. Institutional discrimination is defined by Macpherson as: 'The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes or behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting

prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness, and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people. (1999, p. 28)

3. The local authorities whose schemes were analysed were: Bridgend County Borough Council, Caerphilly County Borough Council, City and County of Cardiff, Carmarthenshire County Council, Ceredigion County Council, Gwynedd Council, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Monmouthshire County Council, Neath Port Talbot Borough Council, Pembrokeshire County Council, Powys County Council, Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council, City and County of Swansea, Torfaen Borough Council, Vale of Glamorgan Council.

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Neil Harris and Huw Thomas

Planning for a diverse society?

A review of the UK government's Planning Policy Guidance

The assessment of how policies impact differentially upon different groups within society has become an increasingly important feature of public policy. The paper presents the results of the application of a diversity proofing template to the UK Government's Planning Policy Guidance series. The template and approach are modified ones based on a series of similar techniques in other policy fields. The results of the exercise demonstrate the highly variable consideration given across the series to the different and specific needs of women and men, ethnic minorities, disabled people, older people, and children and young people. The paper suggests that the series could be significantly improved to respond to the realities of social diversity in modern Britain and advises on how the planning system can actively cater for such diversity.

The assessment of how policies impact differentially upon different groups within society has become an increasingly important feature of public policy. This can be explained both as a concern of public bodies not to impact negatively or disproportionately upon a particular group as in the case of racial discrimination or, alternatively, to ensure that positive action measures have the desired and intended effect for a target population. The context for such concerns is the increased recognition of the diversity of modern societies, in which complex manifestations of gender, race, age, faith and sexuality create a differentiated public to which policy is addressed. This is partly an issue of achieving effective policy implementation, yet it also highlights a series of moral and ethical dimensions in relation to planning and the built environment. Braithwaite (1998, 6) reminds us that 'Development which meets the needs of some groups in society better than others is morally unacceptable'. Diversity proofing is one method of assessing public policies to examine whether they are sensitive to the differing and complex needs of a diverse society. This paper reports on the application of a diversity proofing method to the UK government's Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) series. The purpose of the paper is to assess the extent to which the series of documents is sensitive to the needs of a diverse society, and to provide a 'worked example' of a particular tool for assessing such sensitivity.

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Paper submitted January 2004; revised paper received July 2004 and accepted August 2004.

The PPG series was first introduced in 1988 as a mechanism to ensure the clearer articulation of central government planning policies and priorities. Government circulars had previously been used for this purpose, although a review found these to be deficient as a vehicle for the clear expression of government policy. The series has been relatively successful in its intended function and has been broadly welcomed by practitioners. However, critics point out that the series has centralised power and control, allowing central government to exert significant influence over local planning authorities. The series was introduced as nine documents, although it has subsequently expanded to 25 separate documents. Some documents have been revised twice, while others, including some on important planning issues, are increasingly dated. The series is recognised in England as the principal source of government guidance on the use and development of land and the wider planning system. It is influential in framing local planning policies and individual planning decisions and is therefore a key determinant of land use patterns and the form of the built environment. It is currently being reviewed as part of a wide ranging recasting of the planning system and the documents are being revised as Planning Policy Statements (PPSs). The new documents are to be focused more closely on presenting key policies and objectives for the planning system. This provides an important opportunity to consider how the series might become more sensitive to the needs of a diverse society. It is expected that the revised series might perform two key functions. First, it can define the challenges and opportunities of a diverse society. Second, the series can both demonstrate and legitimate the connection between planning and diversity. It can do this both in general terms and also specifically in relation to certain key topics, providing examples wherever appropriate. It is therefore appropriate that the series should be subject to diversity proofing to assess whether the policies and guidance contained within it are sensitive to the characteristics and needs of a diverse society.

The paper first addresses a series of important developments in the legislative and policy context related to social diversity. It then identifies historically how planning 'in the public interest' has acted as a convenient veil for the representation of particular groups or interests. The practice of policy proofing is then outlined as a methodology for assessing the impacts of policies on different groups or interests that are subject to special consideration, either as a matter of legislation or policy interest. The remainder of the paper reports the findings from applying a diversity proofing template to each of the documents in the PPG series. This exercise was conducted as part of a research project addressing diversity issues across the planning system, which included a questionnaire distributed to local planning authorities (ODPM, 2003). The project was commissioned by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister as part of a package of measures to improve knowledge and understanding of diversity and planning, including the preparation of good practice guidance.

Most studies have focused on articulating diversity or equality issues at the local or

neighbourhood level, where gender-sensitive and other related approaches are contended to be most significant and effective. However, higher-level and strategic policy documents can be especially important in allocating resources (Reeves, 2002) and, in the case of the PPG series, in legitimating actions and decisions at the local level. The approach outlined in the paper is also of interest for its address of the prevalence of a spectrum of diversity concerns within an entire series of documents. This contrasts with a great many other approaches that have focused primarily on the representation of one particular defined group, such as women, ethnic minorities or children. The approach presented here therefore allows for a comparative assessment of how certain groups are taken into account or emphasised and others are not.

Diversity, public policy and planning

Diversity is an increasingly common term in policy development and therefore needs some qualification. The approach in this paper responds to two key interpretations of the term 'diversity'. First, there is social diversity interpreted as an outcome of systematic and persistent inequality. This perspective on social difference (or diversity) recognises that because social relations are power laden, so will be the social divisions and differences, and any associated stereotypes, that are produced through social interaction (Jacobs and Fincher, 1998). Certain kinds of social difference and division harden through systematic and cumulative practices to become 'substantial, entrenched and patterned differences between people that run through a society and which influence their present and future prospects' (Braham and Janes, 2002, xiii). It is these kinds of division, associated with systematic inequality and injustice, that have been axes of political mobilisation and struggle, sometimes resulting in legislation and other policy initiatives. Awareness of the complexity of diversity, interpreted in this way, has increased in recent decades, as social divisions based on gender, sexuality, disability and age have become arenas for political mobilisation. There is also growing awareness of the complex geographies of difference - for example, that the nature of gender, and its associated inequalities, may differ from place to place (McDowell and Massey, 1984). The implications of this discussion for the practice of policy proofing is that the categories of social diversity employed need to be recognised only as those shown to be significant at a given time and place. Any distinctions made must not be regarded as denoting some kind of unchanging essential categorisation of social diversity. In this paper we have restricted ourselves to those selected aspects of social diversity which are currently widely accepted as significantly related to inequalities of chances in life and power at the aggregate, national level. Other categorisations will be more significant at different times, in different localities and at different scales. For example, different kinds of distinction may have to be drawn if local policies are being proofed, or where important local distinctions need to be defined within

categories of gender and ethnicity. Key groups are therefore used advisedly within the paper, recognising their limitations across all scales and issues. This is illustrated well by one of our key groups, children and young people. In his seminal study of children in the city, Ward (1978, vi–vii) cautioned against treating children as a homogeneous group, identifying that there are important differences between children of different ages and backgrounds. He also noted the different patterns of city use when childhood is differentiated by gender. The validity of a particular definition of a ‘key group’ is therefore dependent on a number of contextual factors.

Within the British planning system the promotion of equal opportunities has been an important vehicle for addressing diversity-related issues. This has been reinforced by a series of recent developments. The programmes developed by Labour governments since 1997 have been important in raising the profile of equal opportunities across a range of policy sectors, including planning, as has the allocation of a legislative duty to promote equality of opportunity to the devolved and elected bodies in Scotland and Wales. The Macpherson Report (1999) has also dramatically affected the context for public administration and public policy development. The Report concerns an investigation into the incompetent police inquiry into the murder of a black teenager. It has impacted on legislation through a dramatic strengthening and reorientation of the law against racial discrimination. Yet its implications for public policy extend well beyond the issue of race. The report’s findings of ‘institutional racism’ within the Metropolitan Police have been generalised to a wider public policy context to assess whether certain values are embedded within institutions that discriminate against identifiable groups within society, whether based on race, ethnicity or other characteristics. This resonates very clearly with ‘mainstreaming’ in the field of gender equality, whereby equal opportunities are promoted across a wide range of public concerns and integrated into everyday policies and practices (Rees, 1998; Reeves, 2002). Rees (1998, 26–48) shows how, in the field of education and training, the focus of concern has shifted from assisting disadvantaged individuals and groups so that they fitted organisational criteria, to designing organisations and processes which do not put individuals or groups at an inappropriate disadvantage. Inevitably, this involves a culture change in the organisation. These debates on institutional racism, gender mainstreaming and the promotion of ‘everyday life’ perspectives combine to emphasise the importance of being sensitive to social diversity in both devising and implementing public policy. This convergence goes some way to explaining the prevalence of the term ‘diversity’ in recent discussions of promoting equal opportunities (Booth, 2001; Paton, 2003).

Promoting equal opportunities as the sensitising of public policy to social diversity is now commonplace, yet is not without its own risks. For example, there is a danger of slipping into a moral relativism which refuses to question aspects of social diversity which are themselves unjust or discriminatory (Malik, 2003). However, an understanding

of diversity which sees social difference as constructed in social interaction (Jackson, 1989) runs less risk of essentialising and romanticising difference.

The second interpretation of diversity used in the paper recognises the complexity of social and economic life in contemporary Britain, and the ever more obvious redundancy of notions of typicality in relation to daily patterns of life. As Healey (2000) has pointed out, past assumptions about the spatial patterns of people's lives have always proven dangerous and are likely to be even more misleading today. A proofing procedure cannot capture all the complexity of social and economic life, but it can guard against particularly important stereotypes or simplifications -- for example, it can ensure that policies are sensitive to the needs of those with working patterns that do not comply with 'the normal working day'. This aspect of the proofing process needs to be adapted to suit the particular circumstances and concerns of the agency undertaking the proofing.

The central concern of the paper, then, is the need for public policies and processes to deliver benefits to every member of the public, unless their purposes are specifically and openly declared to be otherwise. The effective sensitisation of public policy to the characteristics of a diverse society is not only a matter of redressing inequality focused on identifiable groups, such as women, or of ensuring equality of representation. It is primarily a matter of social justice (Braithwaite, 1998, 6). The process of policy formulation, the policies themselves, and their delivery must be sensitive to the social diversity of modern Britain. Yet the attainment of diversity-sensitive policies and procedures is not likely to be easy to achieve within the framework of the British planning system. The British planning system operates within the constraints of a particular discourse on the public interest and nature of the individual (Lo Piccolo and Thomas, 2001; Healey, 1995) and has been criticised in a well-established literature (Simmie, 1974; Reade, 1987). However, critiques of the development, employment and perpetuation of stereotypes in policy making are much less developed. Stereotypes, related for example to gender, are prevalent both in general discourse and within the field of planning (Darke, 1996, 96). Stereotypes are typically ascribed to particular social groupings, although they may also be related to the way aspects of social life are conducted, such as stereotyping work and employment around 'the working day'. Analyses of the planning of new towns in the 1960s and 1970s argued that their layout was influenced by certain unexamined assumptions about how people would live in them. Central among these assumptions were the ubiquity of the nuclear family, and the ascription of gender roles and consequent balance of power within such families (Lewis and Foord, 1984). The stereotyping of household organisation created plans, subsequently realised in urban forms, that are less usable by households which did not conform to the stereotype. Hellmann (1977) similarly railed against the use of stereotypes in architecture and urban design, arguing that actual users of contemporary buildings were more varied

than the modernist-inspired 'modular man' used in the design of buildings. Importantly, he also argued that potential users – those that would use the building were it physically possible to do so – were even more diverse. The effective design of buildings and spaces should take into account the diversity of people and users as they are and avoid the use of some stereotypical person or ideal. These arguments are now widely accepted within the fields of architecture and urban design through the concept of 'inclusive design' and are beginning to shape practice (Imrie and Hall, 2001).

Positive developments in respect of physical embodiment are not always replicated in other areas. The continuing limitations of contemporary British planning threaten to disengage land use planning from the Labour government's drive to ensure that public services are delivered in a way which is sensitive to social diversity (Audit Commission, 2002). It is essential that planning services are clearly able to demonstrate a sensitivity to social diversity, particularly at a time when there are ambitious claims being made for the potential of spatial planning as an integrative mechanism and an instrument of effective community governance (Vigar et al., 2000). This is particularly the case in instances where there is a demonstrable relationship between aspects of inequality, such as race inequality, and spatial patterns (Heikkila, 2001).

Approaches to policy proofing

Government and other public bodies have developed a series of different approaches to the proofing of policies, including rural proofing and gender mainstreaming. Many approaches are driven by the desire to ensure that policies, procedures and implementation comply with specific items of legislation. Examples include the practice of gender impact assessment that aims to ensure compliance with the Sex Discrimination Act (1975). Other approaches, such as rural proofing, focus on geographic areas and communities characterised by particular features or ways of life. Yet even where proofing is initiated to comply with legislation, it can facilitate policies that are fair to those that the policy impacts upon, regardless of the lawful status of policies. Consequently, policy proofing may be used to facilitate socially just policies even where there is no formal, legislative context.

The components of different approaches to policy proofing vary. Nevertheless, a series of common elements or stages can be identified (see Table 1). The separate stages indicate that policy proofing is a technique best applied in the course of policy formation, although it can also be usefully applied to the revision of existing policies. The first stage in a typical proofing exercise is to define clearly the aims and objectives of the particular proposal or policy initiative. For example, a particular initiative may aim to increase the use of public open space by ethnic minority communities. Once such aims and objectives have been defined, the intended impacts on different

Table 1 Common stages in policy proofing exercises

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- The aims and objectives of the policy initiative or proposal are clearly defined.
 - The intended impacts on different groups or communities are defined. Impacts are recognised as being either positive or negative.
 - Consideration is given to the means by which the policy will be implemented or how information will be conveyed to the proposed audience.
 - An assessment is made of the likely impacts on different groups or communities. This may in some cases involve assessment in the form of a checklist and the collection of key data.
 - Alternative policies are considered that may enhance some of the positive benefits or mitigate negative impacts of policy implementation.
 - Monitoring and evaluation of policy are undertaken as it is implemented, particularly for its impact on identified interests or communities.
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Source: derived from authors' review of policy literature.

communities can be established. Consideration is given at this stage to the importance of the mechanisms for implementation, including how to target communities. Proofing exercises can therefore be as much about how a policy message is communicated as it is about the content of that message. The remaining stages focus on assessing the likely impacts of policies and whether policies may be redesigned to enhance the positive outcomes of policy intervention. This is an *ex ante* exercise that is compared with the actual impacts of policies during the course of implementation. These later stages demand that sufficient data are collected. For example, much of the gender mainstreaming work requires that various statistics on monitoring and implementation are capable of being disaggregated by gender and, in other fields, by ethnicity. Research reveals that such data are often neither systematically collected nor readily available (Reeves, 2002, 203).

This paper reports on the diversity proofing of the government's PPG series. The series comprises 25 separate documents addressing a variety of issues including housing, renewable energy, town centres and retailing, transport and the historic built environment (see Table 2). The series provides guidance on the range of considerations that local planning authorities should address in deciding planning applications and preparing other planning policy documents at lower spatial scales. The above summary of approaches to policy proofing and appraisal suggests a number of limitations to the diversity proofing of the PPG series. First, the series is often not explicit in defining policy objectives and is even less explicit in stating the intended outcomes of policy implementation. The content of the series is frequently of the character of advice rather than clearly stated policy objectives. The series rarely promotes intended impacts for identified groups or communities (although see below) and is typically directed at the public defined in very general terms. Second, proofing is most effective if applied in the course of policy development, although it may also,

Table 2 The documents comprising the Planning Policy Guidance series and reviewed as part of the diversity proofing exercise

Title of document	Issue or revision date
PPG 1 General Policy and Principles	February 1997
PPG 2 Green Belts	January 1995
PPG 3 Housing	March 2000
PPG 4 Industrial and Commercial Development and Small Firms	November 1992
PPG 5 Simplified Planning Zones	November 1992
PPG 6 Town Centres and Retail Developments	June 1996
PPG 7 The Countryside – Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development	February 1997
PPG 8 Telecommunications	August 2001
PPG 11 Regional Planning	October 2000
PPG 12 Development Plans	December 1999
PPG 13 Transport	March 2001
PPG 15 Planning and Historic Environment	September 1994
PPG 17 Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation	July 2002
PPG 18 Enforcing Planning Control	December 1991
PPG 19 Outdoor Advertisement Control	March 1992
PPG 20 Coastal Planning	September 1992
PPG 21 Tourism	November 1992
PPG 23 Planning and Pollution Control	February 1997
PPG 24 Planning and Noise	September 1994
PPG 25 Development and Flood Risk	July 2001
Documents for which no relevant statements or issues were recorded	
PPG 9 Nature Conservation	
PPG 10 Planning and Waste Management	
PPG 14 Development on Unstable Land	
PPG 16 Archaeology and Planning	
PPG 22 Renewable Energy	

with limitations, be applied retrospectively to extant policies. One of the key limitations arising from this is in the appraising of the impacts of different policy options. Finally, limited attention is given within the PPG series to the 'delivery' of policy. The consequence of these limitations is that the review of the PPG series has required an adapted proofing approach.

An initial approach attempted to define clearly the policy objectives of each document in the series and the intended impacts of those objectives. This proved to be particularly difficult in view of the nature of the series. Consequently, an alternative approach based on a template was used. The template is presented as a worked example in Table 3 and, like many other related proofing tools (Reeves, 2002, 202), is essentially simple in conception. The template consists of three related components.

The first identifies key groups framed around gender, disability, ethnicity and age, and asks whether policies are sensitive to these groups. The groups were selected as being ones which are widely agreed to be illustrations of social diversity interpreted as related to inequality, as discussed earlier (ODPM, 2003). This is one reason why these groups are also those which have been the subject of legislative provision and concern for minimising discrimination. As discussed earlier, in a different socio-economic context different groups might be selected for this component of the proofing. The second part of the proofing template is designed to consider the diversity of contemporary social and economic life, and its implications for varied use of the built environment. It enquires whether certain kinds of stereotypes are implicitly driving policy – for example, stereotypes of ‘normal’ working patterns, with shift workers, night workers and others having flexible patterns being marginalised as ‘exceptional’. The final component is concerned with the application of procedures and the potential for inadvertent discrimination. For each component, the table provides columns to record references (to relevant parts of the PPGs) and identifies opportunities for improving the sensitivity of the PPG. A template was completed in turn for each document in the series, except for cases where no comment was possible or expected to be relevant (see Table 2). Explicit references to key groups were noted, as were references to the different areas of socio-economic activity. Omissions from the series were based on an understanding, derived from a review of literature, of the needs and characteristics of different groups.

Diversity proofing: findings from the review of the PPG series

The findings of the diversity proofing exercise are reported in two sections. These sections reflect the two different conceptualisations of diversity discussed earlier in the paper. The first section discusses the ‘key groups’. The second section addresses socio-economic aspects of diversity that are not subject to the same legislative context as the key groups. Conclusions are provided for each section before the overall conclusions of the paper are presented, reflecting both on the practice of diversity proofing and the results of applying that framework to the PPG series.

The ‘key groups’ findings: gender, disability, ethnicity and age

This section reports on the address of key groups closely related to or associated with the promotion of diversity. This included reviewing the PPG series for the extent to which it recognised and referred to the different and/or specific needs of men and women, disabled persons, ethnic minorities, children and young people, and older persons. These are some of the main group identities relevant to consideration of

Table 3. A worked example of the template used in the diversity proofing exercise based on Planning Policy Guidance: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (PPG 17) published July 2002

	References	Opportunities
<p><i>Key groups</i></p> <p>Refers to and recognises the different needs of women and men</p>	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to include guidance on the assessment of provision of and needs for women-only facilities • Importance of safety considerations in use of public spaces may be extended to include gender differences
<p>Refers to and recognises the different and specific needs of disabled persons</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local authorities to ensure that all new facilities are accessible for people with disabilities (para. 20[ii]) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to strengthen consideration of access to existing facilities by disabled persons
<p>Refers to and recognises the different and specific needs of ethnic minorities</p>	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional consideration of combined gender and ethnic minority characteristics in use of open spaces and recreational facilities
<p>Refers to and recognises the different and specific needs of children and young people</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open spaces and recreational facilities recognised as having an important role to play in the social development of children of all ages • Security and personal safety to be considered, especially for children (para. 20[vii]) • Open space defined to include provision for children and teenagers, including play areas, skateboard parks, outdoor basketball hoops, and other more informal areas (e.g. 'hanging out' areas, teenage shelters) (Annex para. 2[vi]) 	-
<p>Refers to and recognises the different and specific needs of the elderly</p>	-	-

Economic, social and access considerations

Recognises the differentiated nature of work and employment (e.g. part-time work, flexible employment; home-based employment, long-term unemployment)

Recognises the differentiated nature of recreation, leisure and cultural activity (e.g. different linguistic and ethnic cultural activities, youth activities, deprived communities)

- Identifies that recreational visitors can play an important role in the economies of rural areas
- Promotes consideration of recreational opportunities and areas of open space in commercial and industrial areas (para. 20[v]) and town centres
- Opportunity exists to differentiate further between different kinds of work and employment, with additional consideration of those forms that combine several different roles with work responsibilities
- Enhancement of requirements to monitor use of open spaces and recreational facilities by different categories (e.g. ethnicity, gender and age)
- Possibility of inclusion of guidance on the multiple categories of visitors, with information on different visitor purposes and related characteristic profiles of visitors
- Recognition of distinctive open space and recreational needs in geographic sub-areas beneath the district level
- Sports and recreational facilities identified as providing opportunities for social interaction in deprived communities. Impact of new facilities on social inclusion to be assessed (para. 20[x])
- Assessment of requirements to be undertaken at the level of the local community (typically at district level). Additional guidance provided in a companion document. National standards are recognised as not able to cater for differing demographic profiles within local areas. Community Strategy to be an important input to assessment of needs
- Highlights that 'assessments of need should cover the differing and distinctive needs of the population for open space and built sports and recreational facilities' (para. 3). Reference is made to employees, visitors and residents as relevant categories
- Identifies the potential incidence of conflicts between different users of open space and recreational facilities (para. 5)
- Open spaces and facilities of particular value to a community to be given appropriate protection. Informal and formal events identified as of community relevance include 'religious and cultural festivals, agricultural shows and travelling fairs' (para. 11[ii])
- Small-scale structures in existing open spaces may be allowed where these would support existing recreational uses (examples provided include interpretation centres, toilets and refreshment facilities) (para. 16)
- Recreational needs of visitors and tourists to be considered
- Particular considerations identified for urban fringe and rural areas, in addition to protected areas
- Open space defined widely to include allotments, civic areas, 'hanging out' areas, community resources for religious festivals etc.

Table 3 (contd.) A worked example of the template used in the diversity proofing exercise based on Planning Policy Guidance: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (PPG 17) published July 2002

	References	Opportunities
Recognises the differentiated nature of access, mobility and engagement with the built environment (e.g. different groups' use of public or private spaces, car-dependency, impairment, illness)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility to sports and recreational facilities noted as contributing to quality of life and well-being, and also preventing illness • Promotes accessibility of facilities by walking and cycling, with intensively used facilities to be planned close to public transport facilities • Accessibility audits of facilities to consider location and costs (e.g. charges for facilities) • The mobility needs in the local population to be taken into account in encouraging better accessibility of existing facilities (para. 18(ii)) • Good design to be encouraged to reduce crime so as to improve use of open spaces (para. 18(iii)) 	
<i>Procedural issues</i> Recognises and cautions against inadvertent and unlawful discrimination in the application of planning procedures (e.g. monitoring of impacts, identity of users etc.).	-	-
<i>Additional commentary</i>	-	

diversity. They are recognised as being socially constructed phenomena and often articulated with or mediated through other social relations (Heikkila, 2001; Lo Piccolo and Thomas, 2001; Beall and Levy, 1995; Reeves, 1996).

Gender

The first aspect of diversity defined along the lines of key groups relates to gender. Reeves (2002, 199) highlights how many disparities between men and women impact directly or indirectly on spatial planning activity. Reeves demonstrates through a series of studies how many aspects of daily life are gendered, including the labour market, health, and education. Men and women have different expectations and uses of the built environment that are frequently derived from a typical gender division of labour (Beall and Levy, 1995, 29; Little, 1994, 51), but also relate to a wider and more complex series of relationships. Booth and Gilroy (2001, 218) summarise a number of established critiques that highlight the relationship between city form, the separation of land uses and functions, and the building of cities around the gender roles ascribed by men. For Darke (1996, 89), the city is 'man-shaped' and the dichotomised nature of the public and private realms is contended to be at the heart of many of the problems of 'women in the city of man' (Greed, 1994, 173). This usually leads to urban structures, including transportation systems, which are not well adapted to the needs of women (Hill, 1996, 113).

Accepting these arguments, the diversity proofing exercise reviewed the documents on the extent to which they refer to and recognise the different needs of women and men. The only two documents that make any reference to gender as a specific issue are those concerned with providing advice on the development of policies and strategies in relation to regional planning guidance and development plans (PPGs 11 and 12 respectively). The concerns in these documents are to allow for involvement of women's groups in the preparation of policies, and to consider the impacts of policies or proposals on men and women as groups within society. Gender is addressed only in procedural terms as an issue of consultation and monitoring. This is positive and provides valuable opportunities for highlighting the complexities of women's patterns of activity and assessing the impact of planning policies on women (Booth, 1996).

Yet it is disappointing that the series has nothing of substance to offer on the issue of gender. The series reads as though it has difficulty in elaborating or identifying how gender may be relevant as a land use planning issue, despite some limited recognition that it somehow has some bearing on the planning process. There are numerous practical opportunities for making the series more sensitive to gender issues. These include recognising refuges for victims of domestic violence as a distinctive form of housing, the relative importance of part-time, flexible and voluntary work (Yeandle, 1996), the significance of caring roles which may be combined with work, and perceptions of safety in public spaces (Morrell, 1996; Little, 1994). Gender auditing of

transport provision is another area that the series could promote as a positive contribution to addressing gender as a relevant land use planning issue. The distinctive travel and mobility characteristics of women, including greater reliance on public transport and a greater complexity of multi-purpose trips, are an important consideration for which there is a great deal of evidence and argument (Hill, 1996).

Disability

Disability is a clearly prominent concern within the planning system. Yet debates concerning disability, accessibility and the built environment have evolved significantly over the past three decades. The principal change has been from a position of accommodating the needs of people with disabilities (Hellmann, 1977) to recognition of the disabling characteristics of the built environment. This later perspective recognises that the built environment and the manner in which land uses are organised actively disable people or, expressed in a different way, create disability (Imrie and Hall, 2001). This contemporary perspective avoids portraying disabled people as clients with 'special needs' who, unless given a voice in the planning and development of the built environment, risk becoming marginalised and patronised (Gleeson, 1998). It is now widely accepted that the creation of an inclusive environment – one which is designed and developed from the outset so as to be accessible to all – should be a goal of planning. Legislation such as the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 has reinforced the idea that catering for disabled people as an afterthought is not good practice. Planning guidance should reinforce this still novel perspective by taking every opportunity to remind planners of the need to consider access for the whole population from the outset, and to involve disabled people in policy formulation. PPGs with a clear procedural dimension – such as those on regional planning and development plans – mention the need to take into account the needs of disabled people when drawing up policies, but say nothing about the importance of engaging with disabled people. Pioneering work in this respect was done in the 1980s in Sheffield, in its consultation on city centre plans (Alty and Darke, 1987). Advice also has a valuable role to play in helping the planning system address specific practical difficulties encountered in translating the ideal of creating an inclusive environment.

Disability is one of the few diversity considerations that permeates the PPG series. No less than nine of the documents in the series make reference in one capacity or another to disability issues. The statement on general policy and principles (PPG 1) identifies that planning and the control of new development can be used as an opportunity to secure a more accessible environment. Similarly, the relevant document on housing (PPG 3) advises local planning authorities to take into account the housing needs of disabled people in policy design. Provision for and consideration of the needs of disabled people are very strongly highlighted in the document concerning town centres and retail developments (PPG 6), focusing on general issues of mobility,

access and the availability of appropriate parking facilities. Other documents in the series, including those on recreational facilities and also conservation of the historic environment (PPGs 17 and 15 respectively), specifically highlight the importance of accessibility to new developments by disabled persons and ensuring dignified and easy access to buildings and facilities. Guidance on the content and preparation of regional planning guidance and development plans (PPGs 11 and 12) also refers to assessing the impact of strategic planning decisions on disabled people, taking into account the needs of disabled people and facilitating their engagement in planning processes. This is, to some extent, a very positive assessment of the series, particularly in comparison with other categories such as gender. By comparison, disability is relatively well addressed within the PPG series. Yet the concept of disability that informs the series is an essentially physical one that focuses concern on narrow issues of physical access and mobility. Also of concern is the focus of such policy guidance on new developments, which are addressed to the relative neglect of the existing built environment. A contemporary perspective on disability also highlights the disabling qualities of the existing built environment and its tremendous legacy of inaccessibility. Some of the buildings contributing towards this are of special historic or architectural interest, and afforded additional protection. The preservation of the historic built environment, seen one way, perpetuates the values of societies that systematically failed to address disability and access. Yet planning authorities, and others, need advice on how to reconcile the policy objectives of government in these cases. PPG 15 on the historic environment goes some way to address this issue by reminding planners of the importance of the principle that disabled people should have easy and dignified access. Firmer guidance on just how important that is would be helpful, with encouragement to use imagination to secure good access.

Race and ethnicity

Race is another aspect of diversity that has a legislative context. There are also several practical reasons for attending to the way that the planning system relates to black and ethnic minorities. First, there is both systematic and anecdotal evidence that certain ethnic minorities' lifestyles and patterns involve distinctive use of space. A straightforward illustration of this is provided by the strong relationship between ethnicity and religious faith. There is considerable evidence that planning applications submitted by ethnic minorities for new places of worship have often engendered misunderstandings, mistrust and ill feeling among applicants, planning authorities and third parties (Gale, 1999; Thomas, 1994; 2000).

Policy guidance on development plans (PPG 12) recommends that local authorities should consider the relationship of planning policies and proposals to social needs and problems, including impacts on groups such as ethnic minorities and faith groups, in designing plan policies. Likewise, guidance on the preparation of regional

plans (PPG 11) states an expectation that regional planning bodies will consider the potential impact of different strategic options on different groups in society, including ethnic minorities. However, this general concern is not reinforced in guidance on retailing and town centres (PPG 6), despite ethnic minorities often having distinctive shopping patterns, sometimes involving extraordinary cross-country journeys to secure particular needs (Taylor et al., 1996). The PPG simply makes no reference to this and creates an impression of a system concerned with responding to the needs of a standard shopper. There is a similar silence in guidance on countryside planning (PPG 7), where sport and recreation are recognised as providing new uses of land for the benefit of both residents and visitors (para. 3.13). Research evidence has long established the reluctance of ethnic minorities to visit the countryside (Malik, 1992), the widespread unease they feel there (Coster, 1992), and the vitriol associated with racism in rural areas (Jay, 1992). The continued promotion of countryside recreation will disproportionately benefit the white majority unless complementary action is taken.

The second reason for addressing the relationship between planning and ethnicity is administrative or procedural in character. There is an increasing body of evidence that bureaucratic processes are prone to distribute benefits in a racially discriminatory way. Direct discrimination – treating a person differently on the basis of race or ethnicity – is one factor at work here. Investigations of services such as estate agency and policing show the need for continuing vigilance to eradicate such attitudes. This is particularly the case when frontline officers have the authority to exercise significant discretion, as is the case in a number of planning functions, including enforcement. The Macpherson Report (1999), discussed earlier, is of direct relevance here. A workplace culture incorporating prejudicial stereotypes of ethnic minorities had become so pervasive within the Metropolitan Police that it structured the operation of the police, leading to unprofessional, inefficient and unjust policing. Macpherson discussed this in terms of ‘institutional discrimination’. Successive reports for the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) emphasise that racial discrimination is as much a possibility within the planning system as it is within any other bureaucratic process (CRE and RTPI, 1983; Krishnarayan and Thomas, 1993). Evidence now illustrates that such office cultures can develop in planning departments (Beebeejaun, 2003; Slade, 2000). It is therefore important that monitoring of the planning system establishes the pattern and distribution of benefits and costs, and identifies any prima facie evidence of direct or indirect discrimination. Yet surveys consistently show that planners and planning authorities are largely ignorant of the case for recognising the possibility of discrimination. Consequently, mechanisms for establishing the incidence of discrimination, such as monitoring and disaggregating the granting of planning permission and the taking of enforcement action by ethnicity, tend not to be instituted (Thomas, 2000). PPG documents addressing planning procedures – principally

those on regional planning (PPG 11), development plans (PPG 12) and enforcement (PPG 18) – do not highlight the possibility of racial discrimination, inadvertent or otherwise, within the planning system. While PPGs 11 and 12 advise local planning authorities to take the needs of ethnic minorities into account while drawing up policies, they imply that this task is an essentially technical one, and that given the requisite expertise and goodwill a planning authority can tap into community views. Such a view simply ignores the picture of organisational dynamics that allows for the possibility of a planning department, section or group, developing a way of working that to them appears natural and unexceptionable, but which systematically disadvantages ethnic minorities. In these circumstances planners will take themselves to be following the advice of PPGs, as they interpret it, while still putting such minorities at a disadvantage.

References to ethnic minorities within the PPG series are primarily concerned with the issue of monitoring the impacts of planning policies and decisions on different ethnic minority groups within society. Consideration of ethnic minorities is largely portrayed as an issue of policy implementation and appraisal. In the same manner in which gender issues are addressed primarily as an issue of monitoring, the series exhibits difficulty in identifying any substantive planning and development issues of particular relevance to ethnic minorities. The exception to this is the relatively narrow references to gypsies and travellers within government policies addressing Green Belts (PPG 2) and housing (PPG 3). There are numerous opportunities for the planning system and the PPG series in particular to address issues of direct relevance to ethnic minorities that extend beyond advice on arrangements for monitoring. These include, for example, consideration of and reference to housing issues such as extended family housing and the operation of housing associations catering specifically for ethnic minority groups, through to recognising the disproportionate significance of self-employment to black and ethnic minority communities. The particular recreational needs of and facilities required for women from certain ethnic minority communities represent another opportunity for inclusion, where combined gender and ethnic minority issues contribute towards a series of distinctive needs and patterns of use (Green, 1996, 142). A further example may be the possibility of recognising in advice on town centres and retailing (PPG 6) the wider significance of local centres for ethnic minorities in catering for specialist goods, including food and clothing. Of wider political significance, policy guidance on conservation of the historic built environment (PPG 15) could recognise that conservation is an activity that is deeply embedded in particular values and that conservation, including landscape conservation, typically promotes a particular series of cultural and ethnic values that may not be shared by all groups within society (Gold and Burgess, 1982).

Children and young people

The penultimate category or group in the diversity proofing exercise is children and young people. This is a particularly important group 'because their needs are the least considered by planning and design in cities' (Churchman, 2003, 99–101). The review of the PPG series broadly confirms previous findings. This reflects children's positions as 'outsiders' within the world of planning, a section of society that is afforded limited influence and consideration (Matthews, 1995, cited in Woolley et al., 1999a, 259). The issue of why it is that children are practically ignored in consideration of town centres is an interesting one. There are a number of suggested reasons for this oversight. These reasons include adults' failure to recognise the significance of development through play and the securing of independence, the perception by adults of childhood being a temporary or passing phase, or even the limited purchasing and political power of children (Churchman, 2003, 102).

One of the more recently issued PPG documents concerns planning for open space, sport and recreation (PPG 17). It takes seriously the diversity of informal recreational needs of children, noting how appropriate provision of open space and recreational facilities can be important in the development of children and young people. The document advises planners to consider and include provision for children and teenagers, referring specifically to skateboard parks, teenage shelters and 'hanging out' areas, with the latter emphasising the importance of less formal spaces for recreation. The same document also includes concern for the particular safety and security of children and young people within the built environment. This contrasts starkly with advice on town centres and retail developments (PPG 6) which conveys a picture of town centres as essentially adult, child-free spaces. Children and young people are absent from its considerations. It even refers negatively and almost disparagingly to the possibility of neighbourhood nuisance if amusement centres were to become a focal point for gatherings of young people. Leisure and recreation activities within town centres are also largely oriented towards the city and town centre as adult spaces. It is peculiar that this should be the case, as the limited evidence that is available identifies that city and town centre spaces are often regarded as dangerous or even violent by a significant proportion of children (Woolley et al., 1999b, 291). Yet attention to children is largely about parental usage of town centres with accompanying children. Children are portrayed as passive accompaniments to otherwise adult activities. Development is recognised as offering the possibility of securing more accessible physical environments for people with young children, yet there is no reference to making the built environment more accessible for unaccompanied children. The government's planning policies on transport are similarly devoid of reference to children and young people, yet children and young people do have particular transport and accessibility needs, including travelling independently without being accompanied (Churchman, 2003, 100). This includes such daily activities as

travel to school, as well as other activities such as visiting friends and other places of attraction. In conclusion, the PPG series echoes other aspects of environmental planning that reflect 'only adult values and patterns of activity' (Woolley et al., 1999a, 259) and in which the recognition of children as valuable members of the community in their own right is limited (Driskell, 2002, 22).

Older people

If children and young people are practically ignored in some of the most important of the documents in the PPG series, then at least older people receive more extensive, but still rather limited consideration. Various documents within the PPG series refer to the particular needs and issues related to older people, reflecting the importance of an ageing population structure in Britain and the various important and challenging policy issues across a number of fields, including in planning, that follow on from this. Gilroy (1999, 64) outlines some of these challenges as they affect planning, housing and transport. She highlights that planners have frequently been left without any significant guidance or advice on dealing with these multifarious challenges, and unhelpful stereotypes of older people's lives have flourished as a consequence. References in the PPG series include the need to take account of older people's particular housing needs (PPG 3) and to facilitate provision and access for older people through traffic management and improvements (PPG 13). In addition to this, advice on the preparation of regional planning guidance and development plans encourages local planning authorities to consider the impacts of policies and proposals on older people and accommodate their social needs. Yet it is in relation to guidance on transport and planning that older people are absent. Other opportunities for explicit consideration of the needs of older people include the role of promoting good health through the provision of suitable recreational and leisure facilities.

Key groups: summary of findings

The most significant findings of the proofing exercise, based on the address of the identified key groups, are threefold. First, and perhaps most obvious of all, is the absence of any rationale which acts as a thread holding together the consideration of the planning system's response to social diversity, as represented by the totality of PPGs. There is no single, definitive statement in any PPG of government policy on planning and diversity. Consequently, individual examples of sensitivity to diversity, of which a number were unearthed by the proofing, may be influential in their own right, but – in the absence of any policy context relating to diversity – lose much of their capacity to help educate planners to take diversity in general more seriously. A clear statement is required of government policy, a statement that also traces the conceptual and practical connection between managing land use and sensitivity to social diversity. PPG 1, outlining general policies and principles, is the most natural location for such a statement.

Second, and not unexpectedly, the treatment of diversity issues is highly variable across the PPG series. This is to be expected, given that the series has been developed over 15 years, with revisions of individual PPGs being prompted by new circumstances within the relevant policy area rather than by more general considerations. This is another strong argument for having a definitive statement relating to diversity, which could be updated and strengthened without requiring a revision of all documents in the series. Some documents that have been revised recently, for example that on open space, sport and recreation (PPG 17), demonstrate an active consideration of the needs of a range of different groups, most notably for children and teenagers. Others appear dated and do not reflect current concerns about diversity. A good example of this is the government's planning guidance on industrial and commercial development and small firms (PPG 4) which reflects a narrow definition of work and employment. Overall, the series does demonstrate a greater awareness of the diverse needs of different groups within society as it has been revised and updated yet there remain rather surprising gaps. Government guidance on the countryside (PPG 7) contains no references to any of the key groups identified in the proofing template. Yet it was issued in 1997, by which time there were well-established discussions about the differentiation of the rural population – for example, along lines of gender (Little, 2002), income (Allen et al., 1998) and ethnicity (Jay, 1992). This is the more worrying as there have been studies in which rural districts are identified as least developed in pursuing equal opportunities (Halford, 1987, cited in Greed, 1994, 6).

Finally, where sensitivity to social diversity appears within a PPG, some aspects are more thoroughly considered and, presumably, better understood than others. Consideration of access in the built environment – which is presented largely as a concern for disabled people – stands out in terms of both the attention devoted to it, and the apparent confidence with which the topic is handled. The latter judgement is, admittedly, difficult to substantiate with simple illustrations, but is based on the way that considerations of access permeate the PPGs since the mid-1990s. This may well reflect a greater policy awareness of access issues following the passing of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Whatever the cause, what stands out is the statement of general concern to improve access in PPG 1, which is then related to the specific policy concerns of individual PPGs as appropriate. Readers of the PPGs are left in no doubt that access in the built environment matters; and that is the model that could be followed for diversity more generally.

Diversity proofing: recognising the differentiated nature of economic, social and accessibility issues

The preceding section reported on the extent to which the PPG series recognises and refers to the particular needs and issues of what are commonly referred to as 'identity'

groups. To align the concept of diversity with such defined groups is a useful starting point and an illuminating exercise. However, such an approach fails to capture a different understanding of diversity as discussed earlier in the paper. Effective planning for a diverse society cannot be based simply on an understanding of such groups and their particular needs. A more thorough approach must also recognise that diversity cuts across and extends beyond defined groups, and that planning structured by implicit or explicit stereotypes can manifest itself in a variety of assumptions about patterns of social, economic and cultural life. The analysis of key groups as part of the proofing of the PPG series was therefore complemented with an assessment of the extent to which it was sensitive to diverse patterns and interpretations of employment, work, cultural recreation and engagement with the built environment. Each document was assessed based on its recognition of the differentiated nature of, for example, work and employment, in which consideration of part-time work, flexible employment, 'home working' and even long-term unemployment would be addressed.

Work, employment and economic activity

Booth and Gilroy (2001, 217) have promoted the acceptance of new definitions of 'work' as part of addressing gender issues from an 'everyday life' perspective. Traditional definitions of work fail to recognise, or risk understating, the various productive efforts and activities of a significant proportion of women (Braithwaite, 1998, 6). This is an important issue, not restricted to gender, that the PPG series should reflect. Various documents within the PPG series highlight the merits of encouraging a range of employment opportunities, providing for choice in the types of employment available, and broadening the local economy in both urban and rural contexts. Agriculture and forestry are identified as being of particular significance within rural and urban fringe economies, and farm shops are referred to as an appropriate form of diversification in rural economies. Likewise, tourism is acknowledged as a significant contributor to rural and related economies, opening up new opportunities in the labour market. Yet the broadening of local economies is not developed in a manner which addresses which forms of employment and which sectors might significantly widen opportunities for participation in local labour markets, including specifically participation by traditionally excluded groups. On occasion there is some sensitivity to diversity. Home working is recognised in the relevant document on industrial and commercial development (PPG 4), citing both childminding and the establishment of a home office as usually appropriate to working from home. Guidance on telecommunications and planning (PPG 8) similarly recognises the potential of the sector to facilitate home working. Key worker housing is another employment-related issue that features within the series (PPG 3), thereby connecting certain aspects of the labour market with associated land use

planning issues. Concentrations of persistent or high unemployment, in either urban or rural contexts, are referred to as the basis for considering the spatial targeting of business and employment opportunities. Guidance also suggests that particular kinds of employment may also be channelled to particular locations. However, there are several opportunities within the series where greater emphasis could usefully be placed on considering how employment opportunities, if considered alongside accessibility and transport issues, could be proactively used to widen opportunities for participation in the labour market.

Overall, the concept of work (not simply employment) that permeates the series is very much one based on a relatively narrow definition of gainful employment to the exclusion of other, less formal means of activity that could be captured by a broader and more encompassing definition. Activity within the voluntary sector is not widely addressed, although there is consideration of the involvement of the voluntary sector in the preparation of regional planning guidance, alongside evaluation of whether economic growth is being pursued in a manner that promotes a fairer society. The advice on regional planning guidance suggests that social impacts and the effect of different employment opportunities are considered as part of the process. Patterns of work that depart from a stereotypical definition are typically restricted to consideration of those with a particularly rural character, such as agriculture or forestry. Little is said of different working patterns such as shift work in the manufacturing sector, including the distinctive transport needs and patterns of such persons, and the relevant PPG on industrial development (PPG 4) refers negatively to weekend working in relation to its impact on local amenity.

Social and cultural activity

There are references throughout the PPG series to ways in which planning can increase choice in relation to various aspects of life, but there is little stated which encourages planners to be sensitive to the possibility of patterns of life which they may not have come across or envisaged. Without such explicit guidance, expanding choice may still be interpreted in a way that employs unexamined stereotypes. Mixed use development is highlighted as a means of promoting the provision of a range of leisure and community facilities (PPG 1), but, set in isolation, this kind of advice may lead to insensitivity to the need for minority groups sometimes to live in enclaves so as to better support important leisure or cultural facilities (notably religious facilities). More helpful is the kind of advice on sport and recreation (PPG 17) which states that sports and recreational facilities are valuable in facilitating social interaction in deprived communities, and local authorities are advised to assess the impact of the provision of new facilities on addressing social inclusion. Local planning authorities are also advised to tailor the provision of facilities to the different demographic profiles and needs within localities, highlighting the differing requirements of employees,

visitors and residents. Localities are generally identified as districts or local authority areas, yet there is opportunity to revise the series to recognise the possibility of distinct recreational needs within sub-areas at a smaller scale.

The possibility of conflict between different groups in relation to provision and use of facilities is also recognised, but the lack of a strategic policy statement relating to diversity for the series as a whole leads to tensions within the guidance offered. In PPG 17, public open space is defined in a very wide sense, to include not only formally designated public spaces but also less formal 'hanging out areas', for example. Yet in PPG 6 recreational and leisure facilities within town centres are generally recognised as formal and the less formal use of spaces by groups within town centres is not recognised. Again, it is the recreational needs of children and young people, including provision of play facilities, that appear to be overlooked within the context of town centres. On occasion the stereotyped views of middle-aged planners are all too apparent: graffiti is referred to within the series as a 'problem' of town centres. Of course graffiti is not always acceptable, but it can also be recognised as an element of youth culture that could be usefully managed rather than eradicated.

Access, mobility and engagement with the built environment

As previously stated, the importance of creating an accessible built environment is the only message relating to diversity which can reasonably be said to permeate the series. New development is recognised within the series as offering the opportunity to secure a more accessible environment for everyone, while also noting wheelchair users, elderly people and disabled people as particular beneficiaries. Yet the practice of 'urban design' that is promoted by the series consists of a set of primarily physical relationships impacting upon the use of space. It does not encompass a broader and more 'social' conception of urban design and the issues that result in differentiated use of the built environment. By this we mean that access and mobility remain unrelated to their purposes - doing, or being frustrated from doing, certain things. The PPG series is a great opportunity for government to encourage planners to think of mobility and access in relation to a diverse, dynamic society. Hill (1996, 124-25) refers to a new agenda that avoids a narrow focus on mobility, but instead has as its focus the improved access to social, economic and environmental opportunities. There is evidence of some sensitivity in this respect, but scope for a more systematic treatment.

New development is encouraged to be provided where there is a choice of mode of travel and it reduces the need to travel, especially by car. In PPG 13 on transport, the negative implications for social inclusion of promoting development inaccessible by means other than the private car are recognised, with particular emphasis on rural areas. The continuing provision of food stores in smaller towns and district centres is also identified as being of particular significance in catering for the needs of people

with mobility difficulties or impairments (PPG 6). In order to better complement physical transport infrastructure, telecommunications developments could be more explicitly recognised as having significant implications for those largely restricted to the home for reasons of disability, illness or otherwise.

The ambiguity of the series' overall orientation to, and interpretation of, diversity is illustrated by policy guidance on housing (PPG 3), which includes a series of messages designed to facilitate the emergence of mixed communities. It states that housing provision should not reinforce social distinctions, yet it is not clear if this refers to the way that location of housing can affect access to community and leisure facilities and to employment areas, or whether it is born of a desire to reap the alleged benefits in social cohesion and community building that social mix can provide (Urban Task Force, 1999). Moreover, the PPG stops short of encouraging the deliberate confrontation of such distinctions through planning for housing. Indeed, emphasis is placed within the same document on housing respecting and enhancing the local character. It identifies the importance of housing in defining wider lifestyle patterns, and encourages choice of both housing and lifestyle. This direct reference to lifestyle is a curiosity within the series, and is one of the very few references which address the concept. Reference is made to the importance of affordable or special housing needs in both urban and rural contexts, although the reference to special housing is not subsequently clarified. The overall message is confusing.

Proofing for sensitivity to socio-economic diversity

The second component of the proofing reinforces the conclusions drawn from the first stage. The preceding sections provide examples to illustrate these points, which will simply be stated here. Three important characteristics of the PPG series taken as a whole emerge. First, the absence of an understanding of, or approach to, planning for diversity which then suffuses the series as a whole. This creates tensions and ambiguities within the series. Second, consideration of diversity is variable across the PPG series. Finally, where diversity is considered some aspects are more thoroughly thought through than others – thus accessibility, albeit interpreted rather narrowly, is reasonably well considered and consistently emphasised; but there is little sensitivity to the implications of cultural diversity.

Planning for a diverse society?

Planning for a diverse society is a useful but challenging concept. It can assist in moving planners beyond traditionally identified groups or labels to a more complex and sensitive approach of diversity awareness. It can highlight that traditional groupings, as socially constructed phenomena, cut across one another. For example, age, ethnicity and gender combine to create a complex array of different lifestyles

(Gilroy, 1999). This paper presents and examines the results of an exercise that subjected the government's PPG series to a diversity proofing assessment. The PPG series is an influential suite of national policy documents which frame policy development and action at lower levels of the planning system. Many commentators have argued that PPGs are central to promoting a planning system more sensitive to diversity and equal opportunity (Greed, 1994, 184; Krishnarayan and Thomas, 1993). This study therefore recognises that effective planning for a diverse society demands that such national policy statements are addressed and revised, and that it is not only at the local level that sensitised policy can be delivered. The exercise is innovative and exploratory, requiring an adaptation of established practices of proofing, while remaining true to its underlying principles. The exercise has demonstrated that the systematic review of the series is capable of revealing some strategic failings within the series, both in terms of addressing identity groups effectively and evenly, and also in dealing with specific areas of socio-economic and cultural activity. It also highlights opportunities where the series could be revised to become more sensitive to the varying characteristics of a diverse society. The diversity proofing of policies has therefore proven itself to be a useful and productive exercise, both within planning and with wider application.

Proofing allows a balanced evaluation of the strengths and limitations of current national guidance, so that positive features can be developed, and important weaknesses addressed. It does this by forcing those engaged in proofing, as well as the audience for the proofing, to clarify their expectations of the guidance and also clarify their understanding of how planning policy and practice can relate to a more diverse and fair society – this is the task undertaken in earlier portions of this paper. A systematic review reveals that the series is not insensitive to the significance of some aspects of social diversity. But its value is diminished because it neither explicitly addresses diversity as a concept and its significance for planning, nor makes this a central principle of planning policy. This would involve a general discussion of social diversity and its spatial implications, and illustrations in meaningful detail of how diversity concerns should relate to and influence planning considerations. At present, issues of relevance, even when acknowledged are undermined by the general failure within the series to explain convincingly how they are relevant and can be addressed.

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Acknowledgements

The authors acknowledge the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister as sponsor of the research on which this paper is partly based. We also acknowledge the assistance of our colleagues in partner institutions, Elaine Batty, Christine Booth, Lorna Dargan, Rose Gilroy and Rob Imrie. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has commissioned a good practice guide on diversity and planning as a consequence of the research. It is targeted primarily at local authorities and seeks to explain the relevance of diversity to planning. It also provides case studies demonstrating some of the positive achievements in addressing diversity issues. The same department has also established an external reference group consisting of experts on diversity and planning issues to comment on revisions to the new series of Planning Policy Statements.

ARTICLE

The Business Case for Equality and Diversity: A UK Case Study of Private Consultancy and Race Equality

ELAINE HUTCHINGS & HUW THOMAS

Introduction

This paper will consider some aspects of the way private planning consultancies in the United Kingdom (UK) are engaging with the promotion of race equality. In the UK, planning consultants now employ 24% of chartered town planners, and the trend is for this proportion to increase (Bailey *et al.*, 1998; Weaver, 2005). Planning consultants undertake work for the public sector (local and national government) as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and, of course, for companies and individuals. Yet this important sector of planning is little researched, especially in relation to the promotion of equal opportunities. The paper's findings and arguments about race equality contribute to wider discussions about the way planning can help respect social diversity and address the needs of a socially diverse society (e.g. Booth *et al.*, 2004; Harris & Thomas, 2004; Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), 2005).¹

For those promoting the importance of sensitivity to social diversity in contemporary life, a key question is how to argue their case, how to justify sensitivity to diversity. One approach is to present the matter as one of social justice; in effect, to link the current terminology of 'diversity' to a more well established terminology and discourse of the promotion of equal opportunities (Reeves, 2005). Equal opportunities is itself a contestable concept, in the sense that it can be interpreted in more than one way (Jewson & Mason, 1986; Miller, 2002), but central to all interpretations is a recognition of unfairness and a desire to address that. Consequently, the most straightforward rationale for promoting equal opportunities is one which relates it to securing fairness and justice. Whatever the debates about what promoting equal opportunities might mean and how it might best be achieved (Rees, 1998; Reeves, 2002), the link to fairness remains.

Yet it has long been recognised that relying solely on considerations of justice and fairness might not sway all those who need to be convinced of the case for

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promoting equal opportunities. In relation to the private sector, in both North America and the UK there has been a history of making out a 'business case' for equality, particularly since the 1990s (Ross & Schneider, 1992; Hansen, 2003). In the UK, under the Labour governments of recent years there has been renewed emphasis given by government departments and public agencies to the business case.

In essence, the business case argues that promoting equality or, latterly, recognising or accepting diversity, is good for business (Task Force on Race Equality and Diversity in the Private Sector (TF), 2004). This is clearly a different kind of rationale from that employed in an appeal to considerations of justice and fairness. The focus of the business case is the better functioning of the firm. (This appeal to better functioning applies, too, when the business case is translated into the public sector, though some nuances are also changed (see e.g. Morgan, 2003; Reeves, 2005, p. 12).) It should be noted that the 'business case' is about the *rationale* for sensitising practices to diversity; it addresses a different set of concerns to those associated with arguments about what the promotion of equal opportunities or sensitivity to diversity involves, and how best to go about it (once the case has been made and won). Thus the business case is different from, but wholly compatible with, a concern for mainstreaming, for example. Thus, in discussing the practice of architecture in the United States (US), Anthony (2001, pp. 30–35) argues that a business case for respecting diversity must be made to supplement the moral case. She also argues (p. 29) that organisations which claim to be swayed by the business case will then need to create an environment which respects diversity, for which piecemeal actions are not enough: "institution-wide, strategic initiative" must be exercised (p. 193), she claims, in a phrase which resonates with the argument for mainstreaming in Europe (Rees, 1998; Reeves, 2005).

The implications of emphasising this rationale for sensitivity to diversity are of particular interest to UK planning because, as implied earlier, planners employed in the private sector are playing an increasingly important role in UK planning (Davoudi & Healey, 1990; Johnston, 2004; Wainscoat, 2004). This paper does two things. First, it discusses the nature of the business case for sensitivity to diversity, and its limitations; second, it provides a preliminary assessment of whether the private consultancy sector in the UK is showing any signs of responding to decades of general encouragement to planners to take equal opportunities seriously, and more recent promotion of the business case by government and, indeed, the professional institute. The paper will consider these issues with particular reference to race equality. There are potential practical and theoretical dangers involved in focusing on one aspect of systematic social discrimination and disadvantage. A full understanding of the nature of social inequalities and how they are sustained must take account of the complex ways in which phenomena such as racism, sexism, heterosexism, ageism, disablism and disadvantage based on social class interact and are both shaped by and help shape each other (Thomas, 2000). Practically, this means that it simply cannot be assumed that policies and initiatives designed to address one kind of injustice and inequality are appropriate for meeting the needs of all those who suffer; for example, initiatives to address racial discrimination may have different outcomes for men and women or richer

and poorer people. These considerations limit the nature of the conclusions which can be drawn from the study reported here: its empirical component must be regarded as an exploratory study into one aspect of the operation of private planning consultancies in the UK, a study which does enough to show that there is an urgent need for more detailed and sophisticated research. Because the business case has been deployed in North America and elsewhere in Europe, the paper's arguments and findings should also connect with an audience outside the UK alone.

In the UK, much of the advice that has been given by professional organisations, statutory race equality organisations, national government and local government associations over the last 20 years in relation to race equality and planning has been largely targeted at local planning authorities and the public sector more generally (Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI)/Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), 1983; Loftman & Beazley, 1998; ODPM, 2004). It is also the public sector that has been the subject of most investigations of practices relating to race equality (Krishnarayan & Thomas, 1993; Loftman & Beazley, 1998; Ellis, 2000, 2001; Beebejaun, 2004). A modest exception was Thomas's discussion of a questionnaire survey of 32 planning consultancies undertaken in 1993 (Thomas, 1994), the sample being all those advertising in a particular week in *Planning Week*, then the journal of the RTPI. Out of the 12 responses that were received, only two had formal equal opportunities policies in relation to recruitment, "a stark contrast to the position in the public sector" (Thomas, 1994, p. 362). Despite the fact that some firms argued that their organisation was too small to employ formal policies, one of the two firms that did have a formal equal opportunities policy was a small firm with three professional planners who had introduced the policy as part of a quality control package to satisfy BS5750 (a widely accepted quality assurance standard). The other firm was a relatively large firm with over 15 qualified planners. As Thomas suggests:

 this patchy and erratic coverage suggests that equal opportunities in personnel matters is not high on the organisational agendas of planning consultancies, and we might expect explicit concern for the significance of equal opportunities (including racial equality) in planning to be even lower on the agenda, given its generally lower profile in the private sector, and government advice. (1994, p. 362)

Yet, a great deal has changed since the early 1990s, both in the higher statutory profile accorded the promotion of race equality in the UK, and in the increasing attention being given to the business case for valuing diversity. The next section will examine the nature of this case as featured in governmental and other publications in the UK, and its potential shortcomings. The remainder of the paper will consider the extent to which UK planning consultancies are beginning to recognise and understand issues relating to the promotion of race equality, and their application to planning. It will allow a judgement of whether the business case has begun to make an impression, and of how much needs to be done to effect change.

The Business Case for Equality and Diversity

The details of the business case may vary from one deployment of the argument to another, but there are core claims which tend to be repeated. Kirton & Greene (2005, pp. 201–204) summarise these as:

- an organisation sensitive to diversity can better recruit in a labour market characterised by diversity;
- employees are, in fact, diverse to some extent in any organisation, even the less enlightened, and sensitivity to this will maximise employee potential;
- an organisation sensitive to diversity will operate more effectively across cultural and national borders/boundaries;
- a diverse workforce, properly managed, has more likelihood of being creative, and also of being sensitive to a wider range of opportunities for the organisation.

(See also Bolshaw, 2004; Morgan, 2003, para 4.3.3; TF, 2004.)

The strands of the business case come together in the UK Department of Trade and Industry (DTI, n.d.) publication *The Business Case for Diversity and Equality*, which promotes the advantages of diversity within the workforce:

By employing more women, older people and encouraging a wider ethnic mix, a business is able to identify more closely with its customer base, draw from a broader range of perspectives, and won't be short of recruitment options. (DTI, n.d., cover page)

Publications with similar themes are widely available (several are posted on the Internet), and their messages are easily interpreted in a variety of business contexts, including planning. Those promoting the business case cite examples such as the London Underground where, as a result of changes in recruitment policy, 32% of its current employees come from ethnic minority backgrounds (Marchington & Wilkinson, 2002).

Another type of example is meant to illustrate the dangers of making a false move in this area. For Franks (2003), for example, the experience of the Ford Motor Company provides a clear example of how the public's views can be affected by the equal opportunities policy of a company. As Franks explains, the Ford Motor Company was, until recently, "widely recognised as having a progressive approach to diversity" (2003, p. 17). It was named as one of the 100 Best Workplaces in the European Union (EU) in March 2003, and in May 2003 it was ranked number one among American corporations on DiversityIncs's list of 'Top Companies for Diversity 2003'. The company, "motivated by the belief that diversity can be a source of competitive advantage in its global markets" (Franks, 2003, p. 17), has created a number of new approaches to help achieve this ideal. For example, it has conducted a baseline equality audit of the company on behalf of the CRE, and it also supports several ongoing training initiatives for ethnic minority groups.

However, Ford's commitment to diversity has received some unwanted publicity as a result of an advertising campaign in Europe, in which Ford's

agency used a photograph of workers at Dagenham in the UK that originally included five members of ethnic minorities. When the photograph was used elsewhere in Europe, the faces of those from ethnic minority backgrounds had been replaced with White faces on the basis that they did not portray the ethnic mix in Europe. Although Ford management apologised to the parties involved, the advertising campaign resulted in a controversial walkout that cost the company £2.8 million in lost production. More interesting, however, was the fact that “there were also indications that certain groups of consumers were boycotting Ford products” (Franks, 2003, p. 17).

The business case has been made in relation to the built-environment professions, particularly those with large proportions of members in private practice. A North American instance relating to architecture was quoted in an earlier section. In the UK, in recent years the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors has had a group working on ways of increasing the proportions of women and ethnic minorities in a profession where their numbers have been very low indeed. This push to ‘raise the ratio’ of previously underrepresented groups has had some success, and has involved promoting new ways of operating. Central to its rationale, however, is the business case, as a recent article by a leading proponent makes clear:

Employing women, older people or those from ethnic minorities is not just a nod to political correctness. Practising diversity in recruitment means that a firm will search for the best candidate from a much larger pool of labour.

“We have operated an equal opportunities policy for many years,” says Drivers Jonas managing partner Nick Shepherd. “We want to make sure that we are as diverse as the clients we serve. It makes good commercial sense to recruit and develop people with a wide range of skills and talents who understand the needs of clients.” (Dobie, 2005, p. 1)

In the UK, a key element of the business case as applied to race equality has been translated into a planning context by Krishnarayan & Thomas, who stated that, all else being equal, catering for the needs of a multi-cultural society is more likely to be successful if “multi-culturalism is a lived reality for its staff” (1993, p. 77) (the ‘all else being equal’ points towards the potential weakness of the business case, as will be seen).

The argument for promoting diversity as found in ‘the business case’ arguably marks a step beyond the kind of ignorance and indifference found by Thomas (1994), in planning, and Jenkins (1986) more generally. Yet it remains a highly contestable approach. Two criticisms are especially telling.

First, and perhaps most obviously, the downplaying of a moral/political dimension to the business case leads to unfortunate consequences if there is a calculation that in any particular firm the business case fails (Kirton & Greene, 2005). The first sub-heading in the executive summary of the report of the business-led and government-sponsored Task Force on Race Equality and Diversity in the Private

Sector asks 'What's in it for me?'. But this question is vulnerable to the charge put by Hansen:

Employers spend billions on diversity programs...but there's little evidence of improved business performance, financial results or accountability... (2003, p. 1)

The clear implication is—why spend the money?

This limitation in the business case stems from a misunderstanding of the dynamic of the inequalities associated with discrimination and under-representation of particular groups of people in the workforce or elsewhere, which is the basis for a second criticism of the position. The business case assumes that discrimination can be understood as a kind of system malfunction, so that tweaking the system can address it. Thus Kirton & Greene (2005, p. 204) suggest that if the business case is extended to include the argument that conducting a business ethically and with social responsibility is desirable or even obligatory, then it will be immeasurably strengthened. This argument has force to the extent that it provides some advice about strategies for pressurising companies into changing behaviour, but as a general prescription for respecting diversity it has a flaw: it fails to consider that systematic inequalities, both supporting and supported by a cultural and ideological apparatus which rationalises them to many people, may be functional for, and endemic in, Western capitalism. That is not a recipe for fatalism, simply a caution against trying to tinker with the business case. In such circumstances, the promotion of equal opportunities must be based on a case which emphasises struggle for change in the face of oppression and unfairness, and looks at the outcomes of initiatives to promote equality, rather than a case which appeals to the self-interest of those who are already doing well out of current arrangements and concentrates on their actions in trying to be fair on an individual basis (Jewson & Mason, 1986). Halford *et al.* (1997) show how the qualities associated with operating practices in organisations are culturally encoded as gendered, sexualised and (we might add) racialised (and often there are subtle interrelationships between these dimensions), and are related to the nature of the environment in which the organisation operates. Thus, to take their examples, in banking, changes in the nature of competition in the market might mean a shift from crude hierarchical, individualistic and patriarchal management models to softer values associated with team development and customer care. But these modes of working are still perceived as gendered, and—moreover—are supported only as long as they are functional in the fluid competitive banking environment. So, ways of doing things can be changed—but the office will still be gendered (and racialised) and, more or less, consciously discriminatory, unless there is a conscious, politically sensitive (in the broadest sense) attempt to link changes to broader societal changes.

Conscious of the limitations of the business case, the UK's CRE has sought to go a little further in promoting good practice on race issues among private sector organisations (*People Management*, 2003). In a recent scheme, for example, 200 companies were approached to adopt the racial equality duty which is laid out in the Race Relation (Amendment) Act 2000, and which currently applies only to the

public sector (Thomas, 2004). The outcomes of these initiatives remain very uncertain at a time when business values are valorised in the public sector modernisation programme of the government, leading to expectations that public services are more realigned with business values rather than the other way around. However, they do illustrate that the broad context within which planning consultancies are operating is changing. The remaining sections of the paper will examine the degree to which the consultancies are responding.

Race Equality and Planning Consultancies

It is against this background that the research reported in this paper was conducted. On the basis that promoting race equality should affect the activities of an organisation as both employer and service provider (Thomas, 2000), the project investigated planning consultancies in south Wales in order to:

- identify the extent to which private sector planning practices have sensitised their procedures in the workplace to the promotion of equality (e.g. equal opportunities policies, monitoring of applicants for jobs);
- identify how planning practices sensitise the conduct and focus of their planning work to the needs and aspirations of ethnic minorities.

These concerns are those which underlie surveys undertaken by Krishnarayan & Thomas (1993) and Loftman & Beazley (1998) of local authorities, but they have not been undertaken in the private sector, save for the limited work undertaken by Thomas (1994). There was no attempt, in general, to compare the earlier survey with this research because the small numbers involved in both research projects ruled out attempts to identify trends.

The consultancies constituted a 100% sample of those operating in south-east Wales (from the English border as far west as Swansea)—21 in all—as identified through the RTPI's regional list of consultancies. They were a mix of national firms with regional offices, and larger and smaller regional firms. Care must be taken in generalising to the whole of the UK from findings relating to one sub-region. There is no evidence that planning consultancies in south-east Wales are radically different from consultancies elsewhere in the UK; however, the significance of that statement is limited somewhat by the fact that little research exists into the operating practices and ethos of British planning consultants. Nevertheless, if there were major regional differences in operating practices of consultancies one might expect some anecdotal evidence to have emerged, and as far as we are aware none has.

A south Wales case study has an intrinsic interest in relation to promoting race equality because Wales has had a devolved tier of government (the National Assembly for Wales) since 1997, the constitution of which charges it with promoting equal opportunities through all its activities (Chaney & Fevre, 2004). To date, this has not had any significant impact on planning policy (Thomas, 2002), but it has created increased awareness of the political salience of equal opportunities in Wales as a whole (Chaney & Fevre, 2004). If planning consultancies anywhere were to be sensitive to the business case for promoting equality and diversity then one might expect it to be in Wales.

The websites of those companies which had them (17 in all) were examined, using a standard approach, and a questionnaire was sent to each of the 21 firms. The examination of websites surveyed whether they posted equal opportunity policies, encouraged job applications from ethnic minority groups, and promoted an image of multi-culturalism through the use of pictures and images. The questionnaire asked about company-wide equal opportunities policies, recruitment practices in relation to planning posts, the composition of the workforce, and the degree to which the firm's practice was sensitive to the multi-ethnic nature of the UK and, specifically, might be informed by knowledge of race equality principles. The response rate for the questionnaire was 43% ($n = 8$). This is a small number of responses, but it did consist of a variety of firms (national, regional); nevertheless, the study must be seen as exploratory. The information from websites and questionnaires was supplemented by semi-structured interviews with representatives from four of the planning consultancies. These provided an opportunity to develop a more nuanced understanding of the key themes and issues that were highlighted in the survey. In one firm there was an opportunity to discuss three specific projects in greater depth, drawing on documents and interview data. The discussion which follows is organised around major themes which arose from this multi-pronged approach to data acquisition.

Company-Wide Policy and Practice

All respondents had a general company equal opportunities policy. This compares favourably to the study conducted by Thomas (1994), where only two of the 12 respondents had a formal equal opportunities agenda. Likewise, nearly all of the responding consultancies (seven) had an equal opportunities policy specifically on employment. However, the commitment to actually monitoring the ethnic composition of both job applicants and the actual workforce was not as significant. Only one-third of the respondents indicated that monitoring the ethnic composition of job applicants took place within their consultancy, and only four of the consultancies (half of respondents) monitored the ethnic composition of the workforce. More significant, however, was the number of consultants that had a company equal opportunities framework for those responsible for recruitment. Seven out of the eight indicated that they did.

As websites are now a recognised source of information for potential clients and employees of companies, a review of the websites of all 21 companies was undertaken to see whether equal opportunities were given any kind of recognition there. Only four of the 17 with websites had posted an equal opportunities framework and, of these four, three had simply mentioned that they operated an equal opportunities policy. A major exception was White Young Green's website.² This website provided a very detailed framework on equal opportunities by setting out the details of the equal opportunities procedures on several elements including recruitment and training, access to training, religious and cultural needs, and the equal opportunities monitoring procedures. This may be regarded as standard equal opportunities material, but the failure of other companies to do even this suggests that promoting equal opportunities has not permeated every aspect of company life—it is not mainstreamed (Thomas, 2000).

Recruitment and Training

In the UK there has been a long-term under-representation of Black and ethnic minorities among planners (Reeves, 2005; Thomas, 2000). The findings from this study showed that this situation was replicated in the private sector. Only two people out of the combined total of 44 planners from all of the consultancies (4.5%) were from ethnic minority backgrounds. The fact that some of these planners were senior within their firms has to be set against the under-representation of ethnic minority planners. The findings suggest that Anthony's finding in relation to US architects may well apply also to UK planners: "Isolation in the work environment is a theme that pervades the experiences of under-represented [professionals] throughout this study" (2001, p. 133). Certainly, this is something which requires further research.

There is, however, some evidence to show that some consultancies are making determined efforts to improve the numbers of ethnic minorities working within the industry. A review of the consultancies' websites showed that of the four consultancies that have images of employees, two present an image that is culturally diverse. One of these shows its intentions to create an ethnically diverse workforce in an article called '*Planning—Taking a Fresh Approach*' (2004), which is posted on the website, and states that it follows an equal opportunities for all policy, "employing planning staff from many different social and cultural backgrounds" because their "diversity benefits the communities within the projects that they carry out"—a pretty classic statement of a business case for diversity.

One of the consultancies commented in its questionnaire responses that it was participating in a scheme called 'Tomorrow's Planners'. The scheme, which was launched in 2003, is "committed to increasing the representation of black and minority ethnic groups working in the planning profession to the point where it broadly reflects the make up of communities it is intended to serve" (Planning Inspectorate, 2003). The scheme, as Shepley (2003) states, has been established in recognition of the fact that there are good practical reasons why planning needs to be more representative of Black and minority ethnic groups, including the fact that a multi-cultural workforce will be better equipped to understand the needs of ethnic minority groups (the business case).

The scheme, which is open only to people from ethnic minority backgrounds, is based on a partnership with PATH (Positive Action Training Highway). The trainees enter into a three-year contract with PATH, and they are placed with a host provider and on a recognised planning course. While PATH provides administration monitoring and mentoring, the host provides a training allowance and a management fee to PATH. The planning course is taken in a local planning school. As Shepley (2003, p. 10) indicates, the "results are pleasing" because, over the last year, 20 people from ethnic minority backgrounds have been placed within planning.

Although it is disappointing to find that only one consultancy in the study area is participating in this scheme, it is more worrying to discover the general lack of knowledge amongst consultancies about its existence. None of the representatives who participated in interviews for this study was aware of the scheme, or how

they could actually become involved in the scheme. As one representative commented:

we are not aware of the benefits that ethnic minority groups might bring to a planning team... and we do not consider them [ethnic minority applicants] in any different way to any other applicant.

The number of staff who could actually speak ethnic minority languages was, however, more encouraging, though there was little evidence of systematic attempts to develop minority language skills as a company asset. One consultancy has two planning staff that are fluent in ethnic minority languages (Slovakian and Turkish), with another being able to understand Russian. Another consultancy has a member of staff who speaks fluent Vietnamese which, the company representative stated, opens up business to a greater pool of potential clients. However, this kind of business advantage appeared to be interpreted in relation to the rest of the world, rather than within the UK. As another respondent explained, unless the project involves work overseas, then the ethnic minority languages spoken by staff are unlikely to be used. This was a fact that was confirmed in interviews with other consultancies. This is a danger of the business case in a context where minority communities may be so economically disadvantaged as to be unlikely sources of business (most, though not all, minority ethnic communities in the UK are disproportionately likely to be poor—see e.g. Thomas (2000)).

The survey asked about race awareness/anti-racism training. It specifically asked whether there was a programme for this form of training either within the department or within the company. Only one consultancy stated that the firm provided this sort of training. However, the representative from that firm stated that anti-racism training has only just been established, and priority is currently being given to senior executives, personnel and other 'gate keepers', rather than planners as such. Nevertheless, if the training is successful it will become part of the training programme for all staff, including planners at all levels. Although it is impossible to draw any firm conclusions from this example, it could be suggested that it is the multi-national nature of the firm, with 3500 staff in the UK, which has resulted in a more diverse programme of training, which includes anti-racism training.

The picture for the moment is therefore not a reassuring one. Although the mechanisms are in place to facilitate the progression of ethnic minorities into planning, there appears to be a general lack of communication between consultancies and those people running ethnic minority recruitment schemes. There also seems to be a lack of understanding about the benefits of creating a multi-cultural planning workforce, and about the benefits of anti-racism training.

Planning Practice: Engaging Ethnic Minorities

It has long been recognised that a local planning authority needs to operate in a way that is "sensitive to the diverse needs and aspirations of its population" (Krishnarayan & Thomas, 1993, p. 49). This requirement has become even more significant with the passing of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, which has substantially increased what is required of local authorities in terms of the

positive promotion of race equality (Thomas, 2004). The logic of this position is that as more and more planning work is contracted out to planning consultancies, so they also should be sensitive to diverse needs and aspirations, and should understand the principles of promoting race equality. In the cases of the respondents in this study, an average of 44% of consultants' work is for public sector clients; this substantial portion of work is still a little less public sector work than some consultancies carry out—a recent national survey of 150 planning consultancies revealed that close to 60% of their work (by value) was for the public or voluntary sector or 'cross-sector partnerships' (Wainscoat, 2004). Yet the south Wales survey revealed that only two consultancies have staff who are familiar with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. In addition to this, in one of these cases it was noted that only one member of the planning team was familiar with the Act, and this was the head of human resources within planning, rather than a qualified planner.

This is particularly worrying because the survey indicates that public consultation, on behalf of local authority clients, forms a central part of the consultants' work—seven out of the eight consultants have been involved in a public consultation over the last year. Without knowledge of the Act, consultancies would be unaware of their duty to promote equality whilst carrying out the consultation process. As the government's 'specific duties' indicate, in carrying out activities such as public consultations, ethnic minority groups should be part of the consultation process. For example, there should be arrangements to ensure that ethnic minorities have access to information. In the furtherance of this, the success of a consultation also depends on the dialogue that is established between those people carrying out planning functions and the ethnic minority groups, and the manner in which the points of view of the ethnic minority population are translated into the planning system (Krishnarayan & Thomas, 1993). The survey asked those consultants who were involved in public consultations whether any steps were made either to monitor the ethnicity of the people that were involved, or to engage ethnic minority groups. The results showed that only two consultancies actively tried to engage people from ethnic minority backgrounds into the consultation part of the planning process, and only one consultancy monitored the ethnicity of those who were involved in the consultation.

However, that consultancy was open in saying that the level to which the company will promote racial equality will depend entirely on the requirements of the client. If in the brief the client states that ethnic minorities should be encouraged to participate in the project, then the company have to adhere to this. The representative provided the example of a retail impact study that was carried out for Sandwell Metropolitan Council in the West Midlands. The study involved asking the local community, through the use of questionnaires and workshops, about their opinions of the local shopping realm. The population has a very high proportion of ethnic minority residents, and therefore the company had to actively involve these ethnic minority groups. In order to achieve this, it had to appoint staff who could speak the appropriate languages, and who had a level of knowledge about the scheme and its impact.

Without specific sanctioning by the client, the extra costs associated with encouraging the participation of ethnic minority groups would not be incurred.

These costs include employing sub-consultants as interpreters, and printing leaflets and public display consultation boards in different languages. It was also mentioned that involving ethnic minority groups can be time consuming. In the case of the above project, trying to engage women and the older generation from ethnic minority groups took much longer than a random sampling exercise would have done, as these groups of people are on the whole more wary of answering questions and giving their opinions.

Yet it might be argued that the claim that consultants will tend to refrain from offering requirements other than those that are stated on the brief is disingenuous. Consultants typically interpret a brief, and—within limits—can suggest additional items for clients, and recommend ways in which should be carried out (Davoudi & Healey, 1990). Another consultant reported that it had done precisely this in relation to a consultation exercise in a rural area in south-west England (a part of the country notorious for a history of virulent racism (Jay, 1992)). The project manager from the consultancy had asked the client whether it was necessary to translate any of the key documents, and was told there was no need because the ethnic minority population of the area was below the national average. This view of when ethnic minorities should be taken into account has long been criticised (notably in RTPI/CRE, 1983), but the ignorance of the client was compounded by the ignorance of the consultant in this case.

The failure of planning consultants to understand the significance of the multi-ethnic context for their work can result in actions which amount to poor practice, but also practices with significant implications for minority ethnic groups. For example, a consultancy that was involved in public engagement on local planning issues and policies in a one-time mining village in south Wales framed one of its questions in a household questionnaire as follows: “do you think that more takeaways should be developed in xxxx?”, which unsurprisingly led to a negative response of 90%. This leading question was poorly worded by any standards, but might have been avoided had the consultants taken action to engage the views of the (small) minority ethnic community in the area; or, indeed, had the consultants been more sensitive to the significance of different economic sectors for different ethnic groups, a point that has been made repeatedly in well-publicised publications for at least 10 years (Krishnarayan & Thomas, 1993).

Although all of the interviewees acknowledged the fact that involving ethnic minority groups was not a priority, several of them drew attention to the issue of involving Welsh speakers in public consultation. This is a topic which is of particular relevance to Wales alone, and one that needs much greater attention than can be provided here (see Williams & James, 1997), but it has lessons for promoting race equality and sensitising to diversity. As the respondent from one consultancy indicated, the only project that had called for them to involve minority groups had been a recent consultation exercise in Porthcawl in south Wales, where there was pressure from the client to ensure not only that Welsh speakers were invited to present their views, but also that there was the facility to provide all of the information on the project in Welsh. The representative from another consultancy explained that there is a large amount of pressure on any project to ensure that the Welsh language is promoted. This is largely a result of the Welsh Language Act 1993, which states that both the Welsh and the English language

should be treated on a basis of equality. As such, for all of its planning projects in Wales, any public engagement such as questionnaires and leaflets, and any public consultation exercises, such as exhibitions, discussion groups and workshops, have to be available in both Welsh and English. This has not only ensured that Welsh speakers are more likely to be constructively engaged in the planning process, but also encouraged the employment of Welsh speakers in planning consultancies, as they can facilitate this process.

The specific legal status of the Welsh language is quite different from that of other minority languages in the UK. But what can be learnt from this episode is that it is the pressure from organisations such as the National Assembly that has ensured that companies are highly aware of their legal obligations to give parity to the Welsh and English languages. This implies that, in comparison, there is not enough pressure from the government, or from public bodies such as the CRE, to ensure that private companies such as planning consultancies are aware of their legal obligations regarding race relations. As the Welsh example shows, pressure in this form ensures that legal obligations are a priority, and that the costs associated with this obligation (e.g. translation, interpreter costs, etc.) are built into the planning of projects.

Conclusions

Promoting racial equality is a topic on which an observer can veer from cautious optimism to the deepest pessimism depending on whether signs of good practice are seen as readiness to change, or simply grudging reactions to external pressures. There are some positive aspects to the results of the limited survey of planning consultancies presented in this paper, but the overall picture is dispiriting. It shows that understanding of, and concern for, promoting race equality among planning consultancies is very limited. It illustrates, too, the limits of the business case for equality—at present, for planning consultancies there appears to be no business case for taking race equality seriously. The procedural and cultural changes associated with Statements of Community Involvement, and other innovations in the planning system in England and Wales, may change what public sector clients require of consultants (ODPM, 2004, para 7.2). But even if there is some change, it may not affect the large proportion of work which is undertaken for private sector clients. Nor will it necessarily have a direct effect on working practices and recruitment practices within the consultancies.

The importance of the incentive of the 'bottom line' in improving businesses' sensitivity to race equality must be acknowledged (TF, 2004). And in planning there is much that local authorities and national (and devolved) government can do to require better practice of consultants. In seeking to change the culture of planning, perhaps more could be done by the ODPM and other agencies to make it clear that the private sector culture needs to change too. There must be a clear and unambiguous responsibility placed on consultancies themselves to habitually work in ways which promote race equality. There are two arguments which can be deployed to persuade consultancies of this need.

The first, following Kirton and Greene's approach (Kirton & Greene, 2005), makes it a civic obligation or social responsibility, of the kind associated also with

becoming more sustainable. It is in this spirit that the Task Force (2004) asks that larger companies report publicly on their race equality strategies and activities undertaken as part of them. This kind of reasoning could be strengthened by appropriate legislative requirements. The second argument is that doing planning properly means being sensitive to the kinds of concerns that are involved in promoting race equality (Reeves, 2005). This is a point of view consistently advocated by the RTPI (RTPI/CRE, 1983; Krishnarayan & Thomas, 1993) but, as mentioned earlier, it has tended to be aimed at the public sector. The professional Institute needs to refocus its efforts in promoting race equality so as to explicitly include planning consultancies.

However, it must be recognised too that these efforts, important—even vital—as they are, are likely to succeed only if accompanied by pressure on the planning system in all its dimensions and phases to become more fair and just. Lasting change that is truly significant will also require that struggle within individual consultancies is part of a wider mobilisation for emancipation within capitalist societies. This wider political struggle is a vital adjunct and impetus for more progressive attitudes and practices within planning itself (Thomas, 2000).

Acknowledgments

The authors are grateful for the helpful comments of three referees and the editor on an earlier draft of this paper.

Notes

1. The terminology in this area of public policy has changed in recent years, in that the notion of diversity has tended to replace that of equal opportunities in general discussions (see Booth *et al.*, 2004), though the term 'equality' is still important in discussions of how to combat prejudice and discrimination—e.g. in relation to racism, sexism and homophobia. Booth *et al.* (2004, Chapter 3) found the term to be poorly understood by professional planners, and it appears to be used quite loosely. The change of terminology reflects complex and sometimes incompatible intellectual and political influences, including a concern to promote social difference as an analytical category which challenges the analytical hegemony of class (Fincher & Jacobs, 1998), identity politics (Young, 1990), and even a concern to address social tensions associated with religiously inflected ethnic divides (Reeves, 2005, pp. 15–16). For the purposes of this paper the significance of the change from emphasising equality to emphasising diversity is limited to recognising that the change can make it easier to make the 'business case' because the very term 'diversity', which is extremely ambiguous, has no obvious connection to considerations of equality and justice, and so these dimensions can be simply passed over.
2. See <http://www.wyg.com>

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ARTICLE

Race Equality and Planning: A Changing Agenda

HUW THOMAS

Introduction

This issue contains four papers that look at some issues related to how planning may be, and should be, contributing to the struggle for racial equality. Three of the papers deal with Britain, but most of the issues that are addressed will be familiar to readers in 'the West' (Pestieau & Wallace, 2003). This introduction sketches the changing context for discussions of planning and race equality in Britain. It is structured around four themes: changes in governance, legislative changes, the changing urban policy context, and the changing national planning policy context. Of course, some of these have a distinctively British dimension (such as the nature of devolution of power to elected assemblies in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales). But many aspects are shared with other countries (such as debates over how the cohesion of the polity can be secured while respecting cultural difference; and debates over the significance to be attached to religious identity). This is not surprising; after all, state apparatuses of a broadly similar kind are struggling to react to economic and demographic changes that are global in their reach. It is important that planners understand the distinctive histories of their own regions and countries, and how racial discrimination and racism is bound up with that; but this does not preclude the possibility of being stimulated by discussions of other regions and countries.

It is timely to look at Britain at around this time, given that just about a quarter of a century has elapsed since the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) co-authored with the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) a guide on *Planning in a Multi-racial Britain* (RTPI/CRE, 1983). Very much a professional initiative, the booklet seemed to be triggered by two things. There were the practical challenges that faced many planners in some of England's larger cities as they sought to help manage land-use patterns on which new kinds of demands were being made by increasingly well-established immigrant populations (and populations of immigrant descent); their experiences helped furnish the booklet with examples of how the planning system could become an arena for sometimes crude, and sometimes unwittingly discriminatory attitudes and practices—and what should be done to improve

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matters. Secondly, the booklet was a victory for the persistent, often vocal, minority of activists in the Institute who promoted a more radical professional agenda, an agenda that from the 1980s has had promoting equal opportunities—and especially gender equality—at its core. They have remained industrious ever since, and have (often) harried the Institute into usually being ahead of both the profession at large and the national government in its stance on promoting equality in general in relation to planning, and race equality in particular.¹

In 25 years there have been some major changes in the context within which British planners continue to address the reality of racial discrimination and injustice. One factor, however, has remained constant; namely, the significance of immigration in the politics of 'race'. In recent decades the focus of argument and struggle has varied—for example, the treatment of asylum seekers, or Islamists, or economic migrants from Eastern Europe (as at present). But the populist racialized construction has remained: Britain and its way of life under threat, a sensitivity increased by the bombings of September 11, and subsequent attacks in Europe (including in Britain). Politicians—national and local—have kept largely to the strategy honed since the 1960s: mollifying what they appear to believe is a 'naturally' negative response to 'the (racialized) stranger' by visibly (and vocally) tightening restrictions on entry to the United Kingdom, while ostensibly promoting race equality for the resident minority population (Thomas, 2000). This approach has had a new twist to its restrictive dimension in recent years, with the increasing attention being given to requiring new British citizens to share some basic 'British values'. This strand of policy was given increased prominence when violent disturbances broke out in some northern cities in 2001, while racist political parties made inroads there and elsewhere in England. Yet the reports into the disturbances (for example, Cattle, 2001) made it clear that one major issue underlying the disturbances was the frustration of working-class people—white and non-white—over their perception that they could not get any grievances couched in terms of unfairness between racialized groups discussed openly. As ever, mainstream political parties were trying to keep racial tension off the political agenda. Since 2001 there have been attempts to initiate a more open and mature discussion (for example, Cattle, 2001; Denham, 2001) but professing allegiance to some vague, but crude, notion of Britishness remains a potent political ploy. What this has meant for the planning system is that the task of trying to promote race equality within and through planning has continued to take place in a highly charged and sensitive political atmosphere.

If some elements of the context within which race equality in planning has been struggled for have remained the same, others have certainly changed. Public administration, including local government, has been transformed by new approaches to their tasks, and management. There has also been a major upheaval in the national policy context relating to race equality, particularly as a result of political mobilization following the death of black teenager Stephen Lawrence, the bungled investigation of his murder, and the subsequent Macpherson (1999) report on that investigation. There have also been new agendas growing around a concern to promote social and community cohesion, and urban renaissance. Within the past few years the UK national government has given some indication of taking the promotion of race equality in urban policy (including planning) more seriously than it has ever done

before (for example, Chanan, 2003, pp. 34–35), albeit within the ambit of a concern for ‘diversity’. Yet a few years ago, at least, it appeared that ordinary public and private sector planners remained uncertain about how the promotion of equality should relate to their work (Booth *et al.*, 2004).

The remainder of this introductory paper will sketch some of the key changes that have occurred in the context of race equality and planning in Britain. It will consider institutional change, legislative change, urban policy agendas, and the apparently increasing salience of race equality in national planning policy. It begins, however, with a discussion of a change that has affected most, if not all, countries in the ‘North’, and very many in the ‘South’; namely the increasing significance of the politics of difference (Sandercock, 2003).

Difference, Diversity, Multi-culturalism

Since the 1980s there has been increasing theorizing of, and political mobilization around, the significance of social difference, where acknowledging this significance is contrasted with analyses and political struggles organized around a single analytical category, typically class (for example, Fincher & Jacobs, 1998). For good or ill, the politics of recognition has influenced discussions of social justice and the nature of struggles to achieve it (Fraser, 1995, 2000; Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain, 2000). One strand in this shift of focus in discussions of struggles for justice and equality has been increasing attention to respecting ethnicity, culture and—latterly—religious faith in relation to countering racial discrimination. Important as it is to secure fair distribution of material goods, it is also important that there be respect for the myriad cultures that co-exist in contemporary cities (Young, 1990). Sandercock (2003) goes further and argues that stable co-existence of different cultures requires engagement between people who perceive themselves as different; recognition of the porosity and internal heterogeneity of cultures; and openness to the possibility (and historical reality) of mutual influence between them.

The use and management of space—the field of operation of planners—is central to these processes, and struggles. For example, it is only if there are spaces to which people of different cultures or ethnicity have *de facto* (not simply *de jure*) equal access that they will be able to encounter each other on constructive terms; so creating and managing truly public space is central to fashioning ‘cosmopolis’ (McDowell, 1999). More prosaically, the built environment is culturally inscribed, and it is the planning system that is the arena within which discussions and struggles take place over how the environment can and should change to reflect a dynamic cultural mix (for example, Watson, 1999). Sandercock (2003) points to examples of positive and creative action about these matters in civil society and agencies of governance in many ‘western’ cities, including Birmingham, England (see Singh, 2001). Yet as she acknowledges, these initiatives remain fragile, and co-exist with public policy and an everyday urban life imbued with a view of culture as a discrete, homogeneous commodity, which Young *et al.* (2006) recently reported in relation to Manchester.

The commodification of culture resonates with the urban competitiveness that is promoted by what Buck *et al.* (2005) have termed the ‘New Conventional

Wisdom' about economic development. The planning system in Britain has been expected to be supportive of the neo-liberal New Conventional Wisdom, and what evidence there is suggests that the tensions between policies that respect and engage with culture and difference and those for which it is simply an exploitable asset are played out in the form of different activities being undertaken by different agencies or different sections of an agency (for example, Sandercock, 2003).² More research is needed on this.

The struggle to recognize and respect difference is complicated by two factors, which have an impact on how difference and its more common synonym 'diversity' are understood. The first complicating factor is that the importance of recognizing social diversity has had a quite separate justification in relation to public policy to that outlined above, namely the idea that recognizing diversity helps organizations operate effectively. This 'business case' for the importance of diversity and equality has a particular resonance with public services that are being re-oriented to be more sensitive to their 'customers' (Audit Commission, 2002, p. 10; see later), and Mason (2002) is persuasive in arguing that it is this private sector rationale for diversity that has been influential in British public policy. Hutchings and Thomas (2005) illustrate the way the case has been made in national government advice, but point out its limitations in relation to promoting equality: if, in any given instance, there is no persuasive business case for respecting diversity or promoting equality, then the logic of this position is that these aims should not be pursued. There is some evidence to suggest that this is the position taken by planning consultancies in Britain.

The second complicating factor in understanding what is being claimed in discussions around the diversity agenda—certainly in relation to race—is that there can be little doubt that the vocabulary of 'culture', 'ethnicity' and 'faith' has been racialized. It is undoubtedly important to recognize that religion plays a role in the lives of many people (including members of minority ethnic groups), and that the significance of faith is influenced by, and in turn influences, the way individuals and groups regard the significance of gender, ethnicity, age, locality and nationality (for example). There has been good research undertaken in recent years in respect of this, and the papers in this issue add to this in a way that is particularly useful for planners. Yet the dangers that Barker (1981) illustrated many years ago remain: he demonstrated how culture had become a racialized notion, in the sense cultures were seen as homogeneous, largely fixed, mutually exclusive and typically antipathetic entities. On this understanding of culture it was 'natural' that people from the same culture should wish to live together and that they should not be comfortable with, and choose not to co-exist with, people from different cultures. Despite scholarly and political criticism of this notion of culture there can be little doubt that it continues to have popular resonance, which possibly has been increased by populist talk of British (or other) ways of life under threat from attacks by 'fundamentalists'. And often, religion, culture and ethnicity are mixed together in this naturalizing, essentializing process of racialization. It is important that recognizing the practical and symbolic significance of faith organizations (see, for example, London Churches Group for Social Action/ Greater London Enterprise, 2002; Farnell *et al.*, 2003) does not unwittingly racialize religious identification. In this issue, Chapman and Lowndes show how

important it is that the complexity of the 'faith sector' is understood if a constructive engagement in governance—including planning—is sought from those who identify themselves in terms of faith. They argue that, if this is done, faith groups and organizations have much to contribute to developing more inclusive governance sensitive to social diversity and material injustice.

More needs to be known about how religious identity is related to other bases of identity, including ethnic identity. With respect to the politically sensitive matter of Islamic identities among young Asians, well-informed commentators have argued that identities based on neighbourhood are often more significant than religious identities (Hussain, 2007), something of obvious interest to planners. Sandeep Kumar Agrawal's and Richard Gale's papers explore different aspects of this question in Canada and Britain. Their findings underline the importance of planners' understanding the detail and distinctive dynamics of their localities—in relation to faith, ethnicity and culture, just as much as they might in relation to land markets and traffic patterns. They examine some of the spatial impacts of people's religious identifications, with ethnic identity appearing to reinforce (and perhaps be part of) religious identity in the Canadian cases discussed by Agrawal. Reading the papers makes it clear that local circumstances will play an important part in how religio-ethnic identities are formed (if at all), are understood, and what impact they have in spatial and governance terms.

Whatever the position in respect of identity, we can conclude that involving faith groups in planning and urban policy has the potential for regressive, authoritarian, racialized outcomes as well as providing a way for reaching residents who may not otherwise engage with policy-making. Planners need to be aware of this.

Changing Governance

Over the past 30 years the governance of Britain has been in flux (or turmoil, depending perhaps on the degree of optimism with which one has viewed the changes) (Stoker, 2004). Only three major changes will be explored briefly here.

First, from the late 1990s there has been significant devolution of power from the national government in London to elected bodies in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales (Cullingworth & Nadin, 2006). The precise remit of each body is different, but each has effective control of planning policy, and each has a constitutional commitment (again expressed slightly differently in each case) to promoting equality of opportunity. The anticipation is that these commitments will inform all the work of these new bodies, and if the impact on planning has sometimes been slow to appear (Thomas, 2002) there is no question that at the very least the new constitutional arrangements offer new, and reasonably promising, opportunities for political mobilization in support of equal opportunities.

The second major change has involved the role of elected local councils within the governance of their areas. To oversimplify, they have become enablers, working with and through a range of organizations with whom they network, and have partnerships rather than service delivery bodies across a wide range of welfare services. They are now required to take responsibility for promoting the welfare of their localities in a broad sense, and the vocabulary of place-making has

extended from planning circles (for example, RTPI, 2001) to general discussions of local governance (for example, Confederation of British Industry/Local Government Association, 2006; see Sandercock, 2003, p. 173 on Birmingham, England). These shifts—involving working in myriad partnerships and networks—have increased the complexity, and in many ways the subtleties, of governance, and have raised questions about how access to and influence within governance can be broadened (Bailey, 2003). These concerns are all the more urgent in relation to groups such as ethnic minorities who have a long history of being excluded from governance. Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) are bodies designed to provide a focus for the new, fluid, issue-oriented local governance that has been emerging in Britain (LSPs are the English and Welsh names, but broadly equivalent bodies exist in Scotland). They are expected to create shared visions, shared priorities and to bend budgets across the complex landscape of governance. Yet the evidence of a recent study of LSPs in England is that little attention is paid to the participation of ethnic minorities in LSPs and to the statutory race equality duties placed on the partners within the LSP (Black Training and Enterprise Group/Urban Forum, 2007). Basic procedural tools like ethnic monitoring were found not to be in place in very many LSPs. Such findings indicate the continuing obstacles to placing race equality at the mainstream of local governance, a finding generalized by the CRE investigation of physical regeneration in the United Kingdom (CRE, 2007a). Yet many of Chapman and Lowndes's cautionary points in relation to involving faith groups in governance also apply to involving ethnic organizations: they have much to offer, potentially (and clearly should not be marginalized unjustly), but cannot simply be assumed to be representative of some larger ethnic or racialized constituency, may not be internally homogeneous or cohesive, and may bring distinctive values and perspectives which cannot be simply ignored as awkward.

The final change in governance that will be highlighted is the attempt to change the ethos and culture of service delivery by public authorities. This has had more than one phase, but central to its later development has been the idea that the content and delivery of services needs to be responsive to, and indeed determined by, the requirements of users (Collins, 2002). It has been argued that even the cruder elements of this service reform agenda—such as the use of performance measures to shape the priorities and try to improve the practices of public bodies, including those involved in planning—have the potential to help raise the significance of race equality within the priorities of planning bodies (Thomas & Lo Piccolo, 2000). Collins (2002) and the Audit Commission (2002)—arguing from a standpoint broadly sympathetic to the reform agenda—believe that a serious focus on customers of services will of necessity require promoting equal opportunities. Yet Collins's research in the early years of this decade confirmed that in the national (UK) government there was widespread confusion about how to sensitize services to customers. She suggested the Northern Ireland experience—where wide-ranging equalities legislation was introduced in the late 1990s³—showed that culture change was possible, but Ellis's (2001) study of planning and ethnic minorities does not really support that.⁴ There remains interesting and important research to be undertaken into how the changes in governance throughout Britain have affected race equality initiatives.

The Legislative Context

The UK legislated on race relations before most other western countries. The first Race Relations Act came in 1965, a further act came in 1968, and a more comprehensive and robust successor in 1976. For almost 25 years a model was in place in England, Wales and Scotland that had three key elements:

- *The idea that, in essence, discrimination and racism was a kind of personal injury, the significance of which was for the individual to decide.* It was important, therefore, that there be a complainant in cases of discrimination, even if that person were then assisted in pursuing the claim by organizations set up for the purpose; in the absence of complainants the presumption was that organizations and individuals had no responsibility to ensure that their activities were not discriminatory. Although the legislation talked of promoting racial harmony, this pro-active stance was overshadowed by the reactive action related to individual acts of discrimination (Harrison, 2005a).
- *The idea that discrimination could be the consequence of unintentional actions* (indirect discrimination might result from the working out of bias built into the very procedures of an organization—for example, criteria employed to judge eligibility for housing). It was necessary, therefore, to monitor outputs of bureaucratic processes to see whether some social groups were systematically missing out—it was not enough to simply heed the good intentions of those operating the processes. Planners, for example, did not have to be bad people for the planning system to indirectly discriminate against ethnic minorities. Importantly, this element recognized the significance of groups, as opposed to individuals, as those discriminated against (Mason, 2002).
- *The existence of an organization set up by national government, the CRE, to 'police' the race relations legislation, investigate major instances—or allegations—of racism, and keep the effectiveness of legislation under review.* Inevitably, the influence of such a body within government waxed and waned according to the political priorities and philosophy of the government and the astuteness, and connectedness, of the key personnel within the Commission. In general, however, it has never been a 'big hitter' within government circles, although one of the later chairs (Trevor Phillips) is a prominent New Labourite, with a media-savvy profile high enough to ensure that the CRE was in the public eye pretty regularly.

The Race Relations Act 1976 ensured that more overt racism was outlawed from the planning system, but the available evidence from the 1980s through the 1990s suggests that countering racism was never a significant concern of the British planning system. National government, which set key policy priorities within the centralized UK planning system, had nothing to say on the connection between planning and race equality (Krishnarayan & Thomas, 1993). Perhaps not surprisingly, then, planners did not appear to understand how to set about tackling racial discrimination (Thomas, 2000).

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000—a direct response to the report into the police investigation of the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence

(Macpherson, 1999)—transformed the legislative context. We are still witnessing the medium-term implications of the change. Macpherson's report highlighted the way that an organizational culture can skew the way that everything is done within, and by, an organization. It used the term 'institutional discrimination' to refer to:

The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people. (Macpherson, 1999, p. 28)

The implication of this kind of analysis is that eradicating discrimination in organizations and service delivery requires complete culture change. That, in turn, requires substantial institutional review, change, and monitoring. The Act is intended to place legislative weight behind the need to transform every institution of any note in Britain. It does this by complementing the reactive approach to countering discrimination and racism that underpinned the 1960s and 1970s legislation with a duty on public bodies to promote race equality. The significance of this is that public bodies cannot wait for complaints, or judgements that they have discriminated: rather, they must assume that there is a job to be done to promote race equality unless there is clear evidence to the contrary.

The government has made it clear that it sees this duty as involving taking positive action, and current good practice is identified as including:

- Monitoring impacts of existing policies and practices.
- Assessing the likely impacts of proposed policies on ethnic minorities.
- Ensuring policies meet the needs of ethnic minorities.
- Having a publicly stated policy on race equality (a Race Equality Scheme).

The Race Equality Schemes set out how they are approaching their duty, with an action plan for addressing the priorities they have identified. The Schemes are public documents, drawn up after appropriate consultation (notably, with ethnic minority and black residents, of course). For all its limitations, compared with the past this constitutes a clear, and rather impressive, mechanism for holding public bodies to account in relation to how much they are doing to promote race equality. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the novelty of the approach (outside Northern Ireland—see note 3), the first waves of Race Equality Schemes have not been impressive and planning has hardly featured in them (Thomas, 2004). Moreover, these changes are taking place against a heavy legacy of marginalization of race equality, and lack of understanding of its principles and rationale in national government (Collins, 2002). The optimists hope that local planning authorities, and other agencies involved in planning and regeneration, are ascending a learning curve; one suspects, however, that how well they ascend will depend on how well pressure can be put on them to take these legislative requirements seriously. A recent finding that national government departments were not giving race equality great attention is not

reassuring (CRE, 2007b; see also CRE, 2007a). And there appears to be real uncertainty about and/or reluctance to find out about how to conduct assessments of how proposed policies and projects will impact on different ethnic groups, and to monitor the effects of existing policies and projects (CRE, 2007b).

These legislative changes in relation to race relations created distinctions between the legislative approach to promoting race equality and that used in countering sex discrimination and discrimination against disabled people that retained the broadly reactive approach. The Equality Act 2006 placed similar duties on public bodies in relation to sex equality and disability equality as are already in place in relation to race equality. In addition, the act recognizes the significance of other kinds of discrimination—outlawing discrimination on the basis of religion, age and sexuality in employment. The first signs of governmental concern about discrimination on grounds of religion will be of particular interest to many promoting race equality, who feel that religion is now a kind of proxy for 'race' in the way that culture once was and still can be. The Equality Act also set up a new Commission for Equality and Human Rights to replace the individual commissions on race equality (CRE), sex discrimination and disability discrimination. This began its work in September 2007. The commission's title makes it clear that it will have a wide remit, and it will need to work hard to demonstrate that this width does not entail a loss of focus on any of the traditional areas of anti-discrimination work.

Urban Policy

In the late 1990s it was widely agreed that decades of initiatives to combat urban poverty and deprivation in British cities had done little to address the way racial discrimination adversely affected the life chance of black and ethnic minorities (for example, Brownill & Thomas, 2001). The Conservative governments' focus on 'top-down' property-led regeneration in the 1980s and well into the 1990s was particularly inimical to righting racial, or indeed any other kind of injustice (Loftman & Nevin, 1996; Imrie & Thomas, 1999), but the focus on capital projects, as opposed to providing revenue funding, also tended to work against the interests of ethnic minorities (Robson *et al.*, 1994, p. 54). The focus on property remains an important strand in the thrust of 'New' Labour urban policy and to the extent that it encourages, indeed arguably depends upon, gentrification (Lees, 2003; Hubbard *et al.*, 2007) arouses concern about its impacts on minorities who are disproportionately represented among poorer residents, and also found disproportionately in the kinds of inner areas of cities where 'renaissance' is planned. The visionary prospectus of the Urban Task Force (1999) notes the importance of social mix in its blueprint for the humane English city, but there is an absence of any discussion of how to achieve social mix in a context where allocative mechanisms for housing and employment can compound injustice in general, and racial discrimination in particular (Thomas, 2000).

From the mid 1990s there was a growing emphasis on the need for urban policy initiatives to develop out of and be managed by grass-roots level partnerships of stakeholders. Initial concerns about the way minority ethnic concerns were marginal in the way needs were identified, projects developed and resources

allocated and managed gave way to quite heavily qualified acknowledgement that lessons were being learnt about how to engage black and ethnic minorities in partnership working at all stages (Beazley & Loftman, 2001). The setting up of the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) in the Cabinet Office, the heart of government, by the new Labour government elected in 1997, was part of the Labour concern to be seen to be addressing social injustice, albeit in a particular way. While property development remains important to the Labour government strategies for urban competitiveness through renaissance, addressing social exclusion is also central. Promoting social inclusion appears to be a way of contributing to the defusing of social (often racialized) tensions, making cities palpably safer places for all residents (including the better off ones who must repopulate the city if renaissance is to happen), and improving flexibility in the labour market (Levitas, 2005).

From early on, the SEU was clear that explicitly addressing racism and discrimination was essential to reducing the inequalities suffered by black and ethnic minorities in all aspects of urban life (SEU, 2000, pp. 8–9, for example). Engaging black and ethnic minorities in policy formulation and implementation at all levels was a refrain throughout the proposals for neighbourhood renewal in England (SEU, 2001), and also in the kinds of guidance and evaluation undertaken of the flagship New Deal for Communities (Chanan, 2003, pp. 34–35; CRE, 2007a, pp. 39–44). But the advice and guidance, although plentiful, appears to have had, at best, a patchy effectiveness (Chanan, 2003; Rogers & Robinson, 2004, p. 41; CRE, 2007a). Promoting race equality is not yet an integral part of urban policy. In relation to physical regeneration, it appears as if professionals generally still fail to see the connections between their activity and the promotion of race equality (CRE, 2007a).

In the light of these findings, and other developments, it is not unreasonable to now harbour some doubts about how significant these kinds of concerns are to government. One might have expected that they would have been given an added urgency by the racialized disturbances in northern English towns in 2001. One prominent strand in the official analysis of the episodes is that a root cause in each town was the estrangement of two communities (white and non-white), an estrangement that had developed over decades; and that the phenomenon of people living in parallel worlds had to be challenged (Cantle, 2001). In commenting on the policy development following the report, in which ‘community cohesion’ has come to the fore, some have pointed out that the concern with parallel worlds has obscured the contribution of other factors such as racial discrimination (not to mention that all the communities were poor, and felt themselves to be—and often were—competing for public and private resources) (Harrison, 2005b, p. 85; Alexander, 2007). A recent government-commissioned report has emphasized the importance—in relation to promoting cohesion—of remaining focused on the material basis which allows people to have choices in how they live their lives, and has expressed concern that government policy is focused on social attitudes at the risk of overlooking the material bases that sustain them (Turok *et al.*, 2006).

The governmental (and media) anxiety over ‘parallel worlds’ has been heightened since English-born bombers professing Islamic beliefs have been active in British cities. Only a few years ago the UK government set up the Commission for Integration and Cohesion to advise on how the conceptually messy notion of cohesion (Buck, 2005) could be promoted. Their report

(Commission for Integration and Cohesion, 2007) has argued that core values of Britishness need to be emphasized (by implication over diverse cultural identities), and that phenomena such as residential segregation need to be challenged. Alexander (2007, p. 117) argues powerfully that this approach suggests that “‘community cohesion’” can be seen as ... the latest attempt to *manage* (or contain) diversity’. It has certainly prompted the government minister responsible for planning in England to suggest that money should no longer be spent on translating documents into minority ethnic languages on the grounds that it discourages people from learning English and (supposedly) imbibing all the values that go along with speaking the language (Kelly, 2007).

Governmental statements on inclusion and, latterly, cohesion and order have emphasized the importance of neighbourhoods and communities, in devolved Wales and Scotland as much as in England (Imrie & Raco, 2003; Turok, 2004). ‘Community’ is an ambiguous, often contested, term and, as Young (1990) has pointed out, claims about membership and boundaries of community can be ways of consolidating injustice. In this context, the racialization of the notion of community at all scales from the local to the imagined community of the nation can be a potent and subtle way of perpetuating racism (Beebeejaun, 2004; Stenson, 2007). In relation to urban policy initiatives the evidence suggests that this negative potential has not been generally countered by an increasing awareness of the formal mechanisms of promoting equal opportunities.

Intertwined with the emphasis on community in general has been an increasing recognition accorded to religion, with the ambiguous term ‘faith community’ acquiring widespread currency in policy discussions. From at least the time of William Booth in the nineteenth century there have been overtly religious interventions (scholarly and practical) in policy discussions about the social conditions in British cities. Stenson (2007, p. 31) points out that an important element of governance is trying to influence the myriad social networks found in cities, of which religious networks are an increasingly prominent subset. A major attraction for government of involving faith groups/organizations is the perception that most religious groups of any size (i.e. those not on any ‘lunatic fringe’) will tend to promote a rather conservative set of social values (and hence be a force for cohesion and order). Thus when it was in power in the 1980s and 1990s the Conservative Party worked quite hard—if not especially effectively—to tap into what it felt was a natural constituency among voters of Asian descent who, it was believed, would retain strong faith-influenced values (Saggar, 2001). When it appears there are strands in a faith group that may also be threatening to public order (as in the case of some Muslims in the United Kingdom), then working with the less disaffected religious adherents can be a strategy for both isolating and identifying the more confrontational elements. The ambiguity of the recognition of faith does not help planners who are, in any event, often uncertain about their grasp of the principles involved in discussions of social justice and equal opportunities.

National Planning Policy

Nearly 15 years ago a report for the RTPi on *Ethnic Minorities and the Planning System* concluded that it was essential the national government take a lead in

highlighting the significance of race equality in planning, and making clear how planning could promote race equality (Krishnarayan & Thomas, 1993). For close to 10 years little happened. But by the early years of the current decade, national planning policy had to demonstrate a clear response to two demands that were being made of it. First were the specific requirements of the reformed Race Relations Act and, associated with this, an expectation that public policy be sensitive to the need to counter institutional racism. This expectation extended to national government, not just local government. Second was the increasing prominence of sensitivity to 'diversity' as a characteristic of good governance. The term 'diversity' may be ambiguous, but it provides an opportunity to introduce race equality into public policy agendas. In relation to planning policy in England it has meant that for the first time government has produced lengthy guidance on how local planning authorities might think systematically about sensitizing their policies and practices to the needs and aspirations of ethnic minorities, and countering racism (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister [ODPM], 2005). In addition, *Planning Policy Statement 1 Delivering Sustainable Development* (ODPM, 2005, p. 7) makes clear the government's commitment to:

developing strong, vibrant and sustainable communities and to promoting community cohesion in both urban and rural areas. This means meeting the diverse needs of all people in existing and future communities, promoting personal well-being, social cohesion and inclusion and creating equal opportunity for all citizens.

It remains to be seen whether and how this advice has been interpreted and used—a major programme of research is needed.

An apparent expression of the sensitivity to diversity has been the renewed attention by governments in all parts of the United Kingdom to the plight of Gypsies and Travellers. For generations, these have been among the most vilified of all ethnic groups; yet their already desperate plight worsened in the 1990s as legislative changes made it virtually impossible for them to lawfully live a life in caravans, let alone a traditional nomadic existence (Thomas, 2000). In recent years, in England and Wales there have been serious attempts to improve the sensitivity of planning and housing policy to the needs of Gypsies and Travellers. These have involved an implicit disavowal of the myth that the formal equality of Gypsies and Travellers in relation to planning law gave them the right, responsibility and opportunity to make adequate provision for their accommodation. In reality, as Ellis and McWhirter point out in their paper in this issue, a combination of planning law and policies and criminal law and policing have served to exclude Gypsies and Travellers from lawfully using sites that would be appropriate for them, with the expected consequences for quality of life for them and their children. The strategy in England and Wales (and indeed Scotland and Northern Ireland) has a broadly similar approach: overt acceptance of the right of Gypsies and Travellers to their distinctive way of life; a serious—although not necessarily uncontested—assessment of their accommodation needs (for example, Niner, 2003, 2006) and advice from national/regional governments that the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers should be regarded as part of the

mainstream needs of an area's population, not some exotic, and annoying, 'add-on' (ODPM, 2006; Welsh Assembly Government, 2006; RTPI, 2007). On the face of it, a textbook case of respecting diversity/difference, as one of the aims of the government circular in England makes clear:

to create and support sustainable, respectful, and inclusive communities where gypsies and travellers have fair access to suitable accommodation, education, health and welfare provision; where there is mutual respect and consideration between all communities for the rights and responsibilities of each community and individual; and where there is respect between individuals and communities towards the environments in which they live and work. (ODPM, 2006, p. 5)

It may be argued that it is too early to fully evaluate the outcome of this new, more benign, interest in Gypsies and Travellers, but Ellis and McWhirter's paper suggests there are structural contradictions in the new approach that doom it to frustration. In essence, the contradiction is between an apparent acceptance of difference/diversity, on the one hand (Gypsies' and Travellers' cultures must be respected), and an implicit, but very real, valorizing of a sedentary, rather than nomadic, culture on the other. They point to the emphasis on the significance of cohesion and shared values in the English government's circular as evidence that any rapprochement between Gypsies/Travellers and planning authorities will involve an assertion of core values of the sedentary population that are fundamentally inimical to the culture of Gypsies and Travellers. Yet unjust as such a refusal of recognition might be, could it be compatible with some redistributive justice—that is, increasing material benefits for Gypsies and Travellers (notably an improved supply of better sites, with all the benefits that entails)? Future research should examine this.

Conclusion

In the United Kingdom, as in many countries, addressing racial injustice has been subject to complex political forces and struggles. On the positive side, the legislative framework for promoting race equality is supportive and quite sophisticated. The institutional mechanisms to enforce the law, and advise upon it, are currently a little unsettled as a new commission assumes responsibilities previously associated with three bodies, but it is reasonable to suppose things will improve on that score, at least a little. The elaborate systems of inspecting public sector agencies—including planning agencies—developed over more than 10 years could be deployed to ensure that race equality is taken seriously. There are also some signs that well established government mantras about combating racism are influencing policy documents in planning. Many local councils—working with a wide range of bodies and social movements—can point to real progress in fostering community cohesion and addressing material injustices. And there is also positive activity outside local councils (for example, Baines, 2007).

But there remain all too obvious ambiguities about the degree of commitment of government to promoting race equality, and indeed ambiguity about how the issue

itself is framed. Recent government concerns to reduce social tension by emphasizing cohesion and shared British values can sit uneasily with an older agenda of promoting race equality, and this extends well beyond the case of Gypsies and Travellers. Too often, partnership working appears to involve putting together a checklist of what are currently deemed appropriate organizations and interests (CRE, 2007a), and these can change with some rapidity—faith groups are currently important, but who knows what their ‘worth’ will be in a few years time. This kind of approach threatens to confuse and undermine planners’ confidence, and blunt the slowly developing momentum associated with legislative changes. There is every reason to suppose that among planners in general there is a poor understanding of the link between race equality and planning and often very little incentive to improve matters. For all the worthy statements about diversity (and indeed sustainability) in planning policy at most governmental levels, there is no doubt that in most locales planning remains centrally wedded to supporting the economy, understood as facilitating investment (primarily, in the case of planning, investment in development). Pinioned by the New Conventional Wisdom (Buck *et al.*, 2005) that they must help make their localities (and country) competitive, it is understandable why planners may not rush to work through the real dilemmas associated with promoting race equality in such a context.

So in Britain, as elsewhere, the struggle continues to promote race equality within and through planning, recognizing that doing so inevitably requires understanding planning within a broader political framework.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful for the comments of Vincent Nadin, Sandeep Kumar Agrawal, Geraint Ellis and Vivien Lowndes on an earlier version of this paper.

Notes

1. Products of this persistent effort in relation to race equality include advice on translation (RTPI, 1993), advice on how local authorities should respond to racist representations on planning matters (RTPI, 1996), and a study of recruitment to planning schools with a view to increasing black and ethnic minority recruitment (Ahmed *et al.*, 1998). See also RTPI (2007). There has also been some progress in increasing the proportions of black and ethnic minority planners, although perhaps less than the Institute would wish. Recent Labour Force Survey data show that about 4.5% of the profession is from black and ethnic minorities, an increase over 10–15 years (Nadin & Jones, 1990), but still a small proportion of a growing sector (Centre for Ethnic Minority Studies, 2005, p. 24).
2. It may be that there need be no irreconcilable tension between respecting cultural difference and seeing it as a competitive asset, but I think that in practice this *is* what happens in Britain; further research could shed light on this.
3. The legislative history and history of promotion of anti-discriminatory policy in Northern Ireland is rather different, as might be expected. In brief, ‘Northern Ireland’s equality agenda has been dominated by the fair employment (religion and political opinion) legislation’ first introduced in 1976 (McSorley, 2003, p. 2). Uniquely in Britain, this legislation had provision for affirmative action. The equivalent of the UK’s 1976 Race Relations Act was introduced only in 1997. The Northern Ireland Act 1998, introduced as a consequence of the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement of that year, laid the basis for new constitutional arrangements in Northern Ireland (in essence a devolved assembly with power-sharing across political and sectarian divisions). It also set up a new Equality Commission and placed a duty on public bodies to promote equality of opportunity for nine defined groups—including racial groups—and to promote good relations among three

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others (again, including racial groups). In pursuing this duty, public authorities are required to produce Equality Schemes that show how they will fulfil the duty, and also are expected to undertake Equality Impact Assessments of their policies (Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, n.d.). These provisions clearly foreshadow the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and Equality Act 2006. It has been strongly argued by Wilson (2007) that in Northern Ireland the equalities struggle has been dominated by a concern with 'recognition' at the expense of redistribution.

4. Ellis (2001) provides an excellent account of the sensitivity, or lack of it, of the planning system in Northern Ireland to the needs of ethnic minorities. The picture is strikingly similar to the United Kingdom, although there are some local circumstances also in play in explaining these outcomes.

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