Davoudi S. (2015)

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Planning Theory

DOI: 10.1177/1473095215575919

Planning as Practice of Knowing

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Abstract

It is often suggested that a defining feature of planning is its interventionist nature which requires connecting knowledge to action. With the upsurge of evidence-based planning, much is rehearsed about the utilitarian necessity of making such connection. What is less widely discussed is the epistemological nuances and challenges of knowledge-action relationship. This essay aims to contribute to the latter by conceptualising planning as *practice of knowing*. This is to shift the focus from knowledge as something that planners *have* to knowing as something that planners *do*. I would argue that, rather than thinking about knowledge as having an instrumental place in planning, it is more useful to think about planning as practice of knowing that involves: knowing what, knowing how, knowing to what end and doing. Seen in this way, practice of knowing is a dynamic process that is: situated and provisional, collective and distributed, purposive and pragmatic, and mediated and contested.

Key words

Planning, Practice, Knowing, knowledge, Action, Practical judgement

Introduction: The evidentialist turn in planning

The last two decades or so have witnessed a growing emphasis on evidence-based policy and practice (see for example, *disP*, 2006). In Britain, planning has been particularly targeted as an area of public policy which has to be "front-loaded" with evidence base, meaning that planners should "gather evidence about their area … at the earliest stage in the preparation of the development plan" (ODPM, 2004:32). Plans are considered "sound" if they "are founded on a robust and credible evidence base" (ibid: 39-40). If they fail this "test of soundness", which is conducted by an

independent panel, they have to be taken back to the drawing board and be supported by better "evidence and reasoning" (ibid). There is nothing wrong with the attempts to improve the knowledge base of planning. What *is* problematic is that: evidence is often understood as synonymous with facts; robust and credible is interpreted as quantitative and measurable; 'front' is seen as an identifiable moment in time when plan making begins; and, 'loading' is considered as pouring a certain quantity of evidence into a plan-making 'container'. The chosen terminologies are indicative of a limited technical rational view of planning which perceives an instrumental place for evidence in the policy process. This view perpetuates the Geddesian dictum of 'survey before plan', and assumes a linear and unproblematic process that begins with the collection of often descriptive data and ends with a blue print. The instrumental view of policy-evidence interface underpins other areas of public policy and particularly the health sector where it originated from (Davies et al., 1999). As I have argued elsewhere (Davoudi, 2006; Davoudi, 2012; Davoudi, 2015) its ethos is Popperian. It it is predicated on the assumption that better evidence necessarily leads to better policy; that science should be given a position of superiority and should determine rather than contribute to policy making. The over-statement of the role of evidence is reflected in the expectation from policy makers to become "professionals" and have "a grounding in economics, statistics and relevant scientific disciplines in order to act as 'intelligent customers' for complex policy evidence" (Cabinet Office 1999:36). This assumes that being enlightened by science always leads to being committed to the actions derived from it. Notions such as 'front-loading' are symptomatic of conceiving planning as a linear process in which evidence for well-defined and neatly-structured problems are gathered first before solutions are formulated. This fails to acknowledge the mismatch between such an ideal world of planning and its actual disordered, uncertain and essentially political realities (Young et al., 2002; Davoudi, 2006; Davoudi, 2015). Despite the extensive critique of this instrumental rationality (at least since Lindblom, 1959), it keeps creeping back into policy rhetoric, albeit dressed up in new vocabularies such as evidence-based planning. Elsewhere, I have suggested that in the messy world of planning and policy making, evidence can be best considered as playing an enlightening rather than determining role; that, it is more appropriate to talk about policy being *informed by* rather than being *based on* evidence. Furthermore, the emphasis should be on the role of evidence as a contributor to the wider public debate rather than the narrow domain

of policy. In other words, emphasis should be on "evidence-informed society" (Davoudi, 2006: 22 drawing on Smith, 1996).

In this essay, my aim is to shift the focus of debate away from evidence altogether because the term evidence has only limited utility in understanding the nature of planning activity and the role of knowledge in it. I would argue that it is more helpful if we turn our attention towards the concept of knowing, and conceptualise planning activity as *practice of knowing*[i]. Instead of considering evidence as something that planners *have* (or seek to *gain*) we should focus on practice of knowing as something that planners *do*. Instead of thinking about knowledge as having an instrumental place in the planning process (i.e. to inform action), it is more useful to think about planning as a process of knowing and learning. This means articulating knowledge and action as recursively interlinked rather than considering the former as a precondition to, or coming before, the latter in a linear, causal chain. To conceive of planning as practice of knowing requires an understanding of the complex interrelationship between: knowing *what* (cognitive / theoretical knowledge), knowing *how* (skills / technical knowledge), knowing to *what end* (moral choices) and *doing* (action / practice). Together, these multiple forms of knowing provide the foundation for the art of *practical judgement* (wisdom). In the following account, I will first elaborate on these in turn without suggesting that they are separate from each other. I will then discuss (following Blackler, 1995) practice of knowing as a dynamic process that is: situated and provisional, collective and distributed, pragmatic and purposive, and mediated and contested. I will end the essay with some concluding remarks.

Knowing *what*[ii]

> 'Planners do not uncover facts like geologists do, but rather, like lawyers, they organise facts as evidence within different arguments…all engage in persuasive rational arguments …focused and attached to value objectives' (Hoch, 1994:105).

This statement invokes that facts and information are not in themselves evidence; they become evidence when they are used in conjunction with other information to prove or disprove a proposition. Evidence is described as "information bearing on the truth

or falsity of a proposition" (Audi, 1996:252). In this broader sense, evidence plays an important, albeit contested, role in the understanding of knowledge and rationality. It provides the epistemic justification for scientific knowledge claims. Hence, it is argued that, "one has knowledge only when one has a true belief based on very strong evidence" (Ibid). Here, knowledge is defined, following Plato, as 'justified, true belief', with justification provided by scientific evidence. It is this kind of scientific knowledge that Aristotle calls *episteme.* "Its goal is truth, and its matter is belief" (Scruton, 1996: 325). It is this limited epistemic view of knowledge that underlies the growing evidentialist approach to planning. Its central assumption is that a theory of cause and effect can be established between planning problems and planning solutions through the deployment of scientific methods by value-free expert planners. As I will outline below, this epistemic view of knowledge has been criticised in relation to at least three of its characteristics: its *analysis* of knowledge, its articulation of the *sources* of knowledge, and its adherence to only one *type* of knowledge.

1. Critiques of the analysis of epistemic knowledge

Here, the main criticism relates to the idea of fundamental truth or true belief (Schuman, 1987). Sceptics, for example, deny either the existence of a fundamental truth, or, if they agree with its existence, the ability of human beings to establish what that is. Pragmatists argue that truths are beliefs that are confirmed in the course of experience and are, therefore, fallible and subject to revision; that there is no single fundamental truth. For them, truth is a pragmatic cognitive value. It is the usefulness of a proposition in achieving certain intellectual or practical goals (Audi, 1996:234). American classical pragmatists, such as Charles Sanders Pierce, William James and John Dewy, argue that truth, as much as belief, is characterised in terms of "tend[ing] to satisfy desire" (Cooper, 1999: 197). Hence, planners prefer a belief that "satisfies a 'vital good' to one that does not" under three circumstances: a) if the choice is momentous and urgent; b) if the evidence is inconclusive; and, c) if the appeal of the good is overwhelming (Ungar, 1987:33). I will return to this when discussing the pragmatic nature of practice of knowing.

2. Critiques of the sources of epistemic knowledge

Here, the focus is on: how do we find out what truth is, which methods do we use. Questions such as these have led to a well-known controversy between rationalists

and empiricists. For empiricists, the source of knowledge lies in the bottom-up (inductive), specific observations which can then lead to generalisation and theory building (i.e. *a posteriori*). For rationalists, knowledge comes from top-down (deductive) theories and laws which can then lead to hypotheses and their confirmation or refutation (i.e. *a priori*). As Karl Popper (1963: 37, original italic) famously suggested, "*the criterion for the scientific status of a theory is its falsifiability, or refutability or testability*". In the social sciences, rationalism is associated largely with structuralism (as in Marxist theories[iii]) and empiricism with positivism (after August Comte[iv]). However, both rationalists and empiricists belong to the naturalist tradition of inquiry because both consider nature as *independent*, Reason as *unprejudiced*, and both the social and the natural world explainable through the deployment of a unitary *scientific* method (Davoudi, 2012).

A radical alternative to the naturalist approaches has come from the interpretive or hermeneutics[v] traditions. They argue that, both natural and social objects are located in "a communal background of intelligibility that preshapes how the world appears and who we are as agents" (Guignon, 1991:84); that the social world, in particular, can only be understood *from within*, rather than explained from without. In distinguishing between explanation and understanding, Roth (1991:179) argues that, "explanations explain by subsuming specific cases under laws; understanding proceeds by making plain the rules and relations in which activities are embedded, and which give them their significance qua human actions". Roth considers understanding as a particular form of explanation, namely narrative explanation which combines explanation, interpretation and action (Wagenaar, 2011). The question, however, remains as to: understanding from within what? In the context of planning, one answer is, from within the *mind* of each individual planner (subjective meaning); another answer is, from within the *social rules* which render planner's action with meaning (objective meaning). Subjective meanings are concepts "we think about" while objective meanings are concepts "we think with" Fay (1996: 116). Although difficult to untangle from each other, the separation is analytically useful as it highlights the distinction between what a planning action means to others and what a planner means by it.

In the social sciences (planning included), the interpretive tradition is often associated with constructivism, post-modernism and critical realism. What is common amongst them is the idea that knowledge is socially constructed and historically contingent; that we interpret the world through specific forms of language and thought that are situated in specific social and political contexts. They argue that "law-like propositions are hard to formulate when applied to human behaviours, with their ever-changing capacity for reflexivity" (Bastow *et al*., 2014:15); and for changing their behaviour in response to being told how they should behave in a particular way and why at present and in the future. Therefore, for interpretivists, the goal of knowledge is less about "explaining and predicting social events and more about understanding what meaning and what significance the social world has for the people who live in it" (Gilbert, 1993:7). This includes the researchers themselves who cannot assume an Olympian detachment from "a scene which is kept moving by their very efforts to understand it" (Hollis, 2003:212)[vi]. It also includes planners who cannot detach themselves from the social world they engage with and plan for. Interpretivism evokes an understanding of the scientific process which echoes Kuhn's idea of paradigm change; a process characterised not as a fixed and pre-determined path of discovery but as a fluid and dynamic interpretation through which scientists make sense of the natural world (Irwin, 2001). I will elaborate on this when discussing the collective nature of practice of knowing.

3. Critiques of the types of epistemic knowledge

The third criticism of the epistemic view of knowledge relates to its monopolisation. First, it suggests that only one type of knowledge (i.e. knowing what) counts as knowledge and, hence, discounts other, equally important, types of knowledge notably, knowing *how*, knowing to *what end* and *doing* (I will discussed these in the following sections). Second, in considering knowing what as the only valid type of knowledge, it further applies a narrow definition of it which is limited to the bounds of naturalist traditions that I outlined above. Through these monopolising tendencies, the epistemic view of knowledge perpetuates the deep rooted assumption about its privileged status (Latour, 1987; Law, 1992). As I mentioned earlier, it is this reductionist understanding of knowledge that is implicitly promoted in the evidentialist turn in planning and policy making. .

Knowing *how*

Knowing *how*, or knowledge *of acquaintance* according to James (1950), refers to crafts and skills, or what Aristotle terms *techne*. It is not knowledge of theoretical truth (however interpreted) linked to cognitive and conceptual abilities but the embodied knowledge of technical know-how. In planning schools we often refer to it as 'planning skills'. It ranges from drawing skills to the use of computer software and information technologies. It is action-oriented and, as Zuboff (1988) argues, depends on people's physical presence and their sentient and sensory information. It involves mastery of the means. It evolves and cumulates as planners interact with tools and technologies. They construct their interpretation of technologies almost spontaneously while interacting with them. I will elaborate on this when discussing the situated nature of practice of knowing. However, it is important to note that like knowing *what*, knowing *how* also connotes reliability in the sense of not just the skill itself

but also its application to an end.

Knowing to *what end* and *doing*

It is often suggested that a significant aspect of planning is its specific attempt to connect forms of knowledge with forms of action in the public domain (Friedmann, 1987). Although this succinctly captures the essence of planning activity, a misguided interpretation of it implies a process in which one thing (knowledge) is connected to another (action) while the two remain seemingly independent of each other. This is an instrumental understanding of action which construes practice as a mere application of theory; as the outcome of some forms of *a priori* knowledge. It implies that knowledge of *what* and knowledge of *how* are enough grounds for taking action. In the language of evidence-based planning, it implies that the evidence collected by planners can show them what to do; what policies to propose; what spatial strategies to promote, or what actions to take. Yet, however thoughtful (knowing *what*) and skilful (knowing *how*) planners may be, they may still not know what *to do* when it comes to moral choices about what course of action to take. They may not know how to handle the complex "social-moral environments" of the planning processes (Wagennar, 2004:649). This is why knowing *to what end,* or the 'knowledge of

ends', as Kant calls it, is as important in planning as other types of knowledge (what and how). Indeed, planning is an archetypical example of Aristotle's "practical discipline"[vii] which "concerns the doing of something not separate from the agent, namely, action and choice" (Audi, 1996:40). That is why Aristotle's discussion about action (praxis) is closely linked to the discussion about ethical and political life and about actors' (planners') values and social norms (Campbell, 2012).

Practical *judgment*

There is, however, another layer of complexity because, planners may know or feel what ought to be done but may still act against their better judgment. Aristotle's response to this dilemma is *phronesis* or practical judgement. He argues that for those equipped with *phronesis* virtue, desire (what *ought to* be done) and the right judgement (what *is* done) coincide (Audi, 1996). This means planners *do* what they know or feel is right to do, socially and politically, if they have achieved wisdom. Accomplishing this higher level of knowing enables them to apply their intuitive and informed opinions to not just what to do, but also what the consequences of their action are likely to be. A virtuous planner has the ability to make practical judgment in a specific situation almost spontaneously. Thus, *phronesis* goes beyond analytical (*episteme*) and technical (*techne*) knowledge and involves judgements which are "made in the manner of a virtuous social and political actor" (Flyvbjerg, 2001:2). However, being a virtuous planner does not mean doing 'good' all the time (Ibid.), as I will discuss later in relation to the contested nature of practice of knowing. It does, however, resonate with what Gunder (2010:206, drawing on Bourdieu's *habitus*) calls "habitual action, knowledges derived from the unconscious".

The key point is that becoming a virtuous actor (i.e. accomplishing practical wisdom) is less about having all the evidence *a priori* and more about having practical experience and *doing*. It means being able to understand a particular complex environment and know what to do, even without having an articulated knowledge of it, by acting on it. To paraphrase Wagennar (2004), what planners know is not entirely held in their memory, codified rule books, data bases or websites, but is embodied in the actions that they are engaged in. Their knowing as embodied, embedded and enacted knowledge allows them to extend beyond what is known, to become

'seasoned' planners capable of making practical judgment. This challenges the traditional conceptions of knowledge as abstract, disembodied, individual and formal.

Not all claims are knowledge claims, but everyone is knowledgeable

> "Much of the world's work of problem solving is accomplished […] through ordinary knowledge, through social learning, and through interactive problem solving" (Lindblom and Cohen, 1979:91).

Although knowledge is interpreted differently depending on the interpreter's epistemological perspective, this does not mean that simply all claims are knowledge claims. Neither does it mean that knowledge is a merely normalizing discourse. It is true that *knowledge* can and should be validated but validity does not necessarily depend on whether "certain causal relationships" have been established (Rydin, 2007: 56). Neither is there "an objective Archimedean point" from which planners or "any other all-seeing agent" (Jasanoff, 2003:394) can determine who belongs to the realm of expertise and who does not, and who is suited to which type of knowledge. In the planning processes normative knowledge in inescapably intertwined with other types of knowledge and wherever we cut into the process, we see a fusion of science and politics, facts and values, norms and techniques; all engaged in a continual, back and forth process in which contestation over 'opening-up' and 'closing-down'[viii] is an ever present feature.

All knowledge(s) carry values. They are all potentially fallible, and what counts as 'knowledge' and who counts as 'expert' is always "contingent, historically situated, and grounded in practice" (Jasanoff, 2003:392). The intellectually challenging issues for planning theorists are not how to demarcate knowledge from 'non-knowledge' but, how such demarcations are produced, what functions they serve in channelling knowledge and power, what patterns of exclusion and inclusion they create (Ibid). The urgent agenda for planners and indeed other social scientists (see Davoudi et al, forthcoming) is the "problematization" of "the ensemble of discursive and non-discursive practices that makes something enter into the play of the true and the false and constitutes it an object of thought" (Flynn, 1994:37 quoting Foucault).

Conceptualising planning as practice of knowing implies that everyone is knowledgeable; that the boundaries of knowledge are fluid and overlapping; and, that cognitions are situated and collective involving actions and interactions (Star, 1992; Blackler, 1995). Much has been written about similar understanding of knowledge and practice particularly in the literature on pragmatism and in relation to the formation of critical theory in which the performatives of action (praxis) are seen to be directly associated with discourse, communication and social practices. In planning, it has influenced the work of scholars such as Charles Hoch, John Friedmann, John Forester and Patsy Healey (Healey, 2009). The main thrust of this body of literature is to undermine the traditional bifurcation of theory and practice and the construal of practice as mere application of theory. It evokes the need to understand human thought and action against the backdrop of everyday communicative endeavours, habits, skills and social practices. My aim is not to reiterate this work but, following Blackler (1995), to demonstrate that planning as practice of knowing is a dynamic process that is: situated and provisional, collective and distributed, pragmatic and purposive, and mediated and contested, as discussed below.

Practice of knowing is situated and provisional

Knowing is situated in time and space and specific to a particular context. It is provisional in the sense that it is constructed and constantly changing in a context which itself is constantly developing. Hence, context does not simply refer to some form of fixed and bounded institutional (or organisational) container. It refers to "a dynamically integrated system of *relations*" (Wagenaar, 2004:648 original emphasis) between planners and their environment in the sense that knowledge of social and spatial processes becomes simultaneously a condition for and a consequence of planning. This is reflected in Jean Lave's (1988:151) use of the term "setting" to denote that the relationship is not a passive reaction to contextual constraints, but rather an active engagement with contextual opportunities. Situatedness, therefore, refers to this ongoing "negotiation" (Wenger, 1998) between the actors and their setting. As Dewey suggests, "actors do not live *in* but *by means of* an environment" (1938, quoted in Wagenaar, 2004: 648 original emphasis) and in interaction with other actors. The circumstances of action and the availability of resources shape the

most abstractly represented planning tasks (Star, 1992). However, the provisional nature of planning as practice of knowing means that it maintains "ambiguity as a resource for exploring differences and finding what these differences mean in more practical and immediate relationships" (Hoch, 2009: 221). So, to talk about the context-dependent nature of knowing is not to suggest that knowing is context-determined. By engaging in planning activity, planners simultaneously perpetuate the socio-political and institutional structures in which they operate and at the same time carve out spaces for creativity and novelty to bring about change. Their practice of knowing is an active process of creative interpretation of past experiences and established routines (Lave, 1993).

Practice of knowing is distributed and collective

> "Judgement is communal and intersubjective; it always implicitly appeals to and requires testing against the opinions of other judging persons. It is not a faculty of Man and his universality, but of human individuals in their particularity and plurality" (Bernstein, 1983:219)

Knowing is distributed and collective. In a unified account of knowing and doing, knowing is not a separate category; it permeates social relations. It is a socially constructed understanding that emerges from practical collaboration. To think about planning as practice of knowing is to think about it as a socially-distributed activity system in which "collective wisdom depends on communal narratives" (Blackler, 1995: 1036). Stories that planners share about complex planning problems are, therefore, an essential part of their knowing and doing. They play a number of functions: they are *informative* because they circulate information about, for example, new planning policies. They are *educational* because they present ideas about how to handle a particular planning problem. Stories also perform an *identity-building* function because they demonstrate planners' identity as professionals as well as contributing to the collective wisdom (Orr, 1990; Forester, 2012). It is this social and communal character of knowing and doing which can create virtuous social and political actors and enables practical judgment. Our ability to improvise in unstructured and unfamiliar situation depends on the extent to which "we are immersed in a social-moral collective that we share with our fellow actors"

(Wagenaar, 2004: 650). "Actions are embedded in interactions" (Strauss, 1993:24) and planning activities intensify the social-moral interactions and provide a fertile ground for knowing, acting and practical wisdom.

Practice of knowing is collective and socially distributed not only because it is embedded in often unarticulated repository of background and past knowledge and experience, but also because of "what is at stake" (Wagenaar, 2004:650). The consequences of planning actions extend well beyond the situation that triggered such actions and may have long lasting social and spatial effects. Furthermore, planners' action affects not only others, but also the planners themselves. It affects their reputation, reliability, trustworthiness, commitment and standing in their immediate community and beyond. Their practice of knowing and their narrative of it are their test of prudence. They are informed by what Forester (1999:46) calls "other-regarding" and transcend the dichotomy between individual and community. The outcome is not the sum total of individual practical judgements but the expression of "a community of standards" and "the commonality and integrity" of a planning collective (Wagenaar, 2004:651).

Practice of knowing is pragmatic and purposive

Knowing is pragmatic in the sense that it is more concerned with consequences of action than the actors' intentions (Forester, 2012). However, it is also purposive and object-oriented. In any specific context, practical judgment derives from the collective wisdom of both what is intended and what works. As mentioned above, the consequence of action is not limited to material consequences. It also shapes "the evolving moral formation of people and politics" (Healey, 2009: 280) including the character and identity of actors and their standing in their communities. Through practice of knowing, planners "transform the historical, cognitive, emotional, and experiential capital of a particular community in purposeful collective action" (Wagennar and Cook, 2003:151).

Central to the pragmatic and purposive nature of knowing and doing is the role of trial and error as articulated in Donald Schon's *Reflective Practitioner* (1983). 'Reflecting in action', to use Schon's words, is a key dimension of planning as practice of

knowing, especially given that planners' action can lead to unintended and unexpected consequences. Reflecting in action means that, as planners, we are not only "thinking when we act", but also "doing when we act" (Forester, 2012: 9). In some ways planners are *bricoleurs*. Levi Strauss (1966: 66) used bricolage as a metaphor to refer to the way in which actors piece together different forms of resources (multiple forms knowledge, tools, technologies and materials) and adapt them to fit a particular purpose as they are acting and doing. The important point is that the purpose itself is shaped in part by the availability and accessibility of these resources, and the "properties" and utilities of these resources "are uncovered in process" (Freeman, 2007:486). Furthermore, none of this suggests that planners' sense of the purpose and object of their activity is universal. On the contrary, planners as 'situated agents' (Bevir, 2013) work across different traditions or "epistemological frames" (Freeman, 2007:490). These shape not only their socio-political ways of knowing and doing, but also their ways of understanding the objects and purpose of their activity. Some may frame their work in administrative – regulatory terms, others may see it as shaping socio-spatial processes, and a third may consider it as strategic and integrative; and so on. Different planners, even within the same organisation, may enact different conceptions of what planning activity is about. These differences can be sources of conflict and contention, but they can also be sources of innovation and transformation.

Practice of knowing is mediated and contested

> "The struggle to define the situation, and thereby to determine the direction of public policy, is always both intellectual and political. Views of reality are both cognitive constructs […] and instruments of political power" (Schon, 1983: 348)

To suggest that knowing is contested is to acknowledge that knowing and power are mutually dependent; that the strategic alignments that constitute each include similar relations. In this conceptualisation of power/knowledge, power is not about a capacity that someone does or does not have. It "is not something that is acquired, seized, or shared, something that one holds on to or allows to slip away" (Foucault, 1978:94). It is dynamic, "produced from one moment to the next" (Ibid: 93), and co-

constituted by those who support it and those who resist it (Rouse, 1994: 109). This conception of power overcome the semantic separation of power *to* and power *over*. To understood power, we need to focus on the ways in which it is exercised, including through claims of knowledge which, as Latour and Woolgar (1979) argue, are often examples of exclusion, collusion and domination.

Furthermore, relations of power are not direct lines between powerful (oppressors) and powerless (oppressed). They are, as Foucault (1982) suggests, complex fields in which all actors are involved and through which their actions and identities are shaped. "Power is exercised upon the dominant as well as on the dominated; there is a process self-formation […] involved" (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1983:186). Through fields of power not only knowing and doing are shaped but also identities are constructed. The exercise of power shapes planners' identities and makes them know and do. But in doing so it constructs the reality that planners take for granted (Fischler, 1995: 45). It shapes their sense of "what counts as self-evident, universal and necessary" (Foucault, 1991: 76); what counts as knowledge and how the object of planning should be known and acted upon. The unity of knowledge and action is demonstrated in Foucault's description of practice as "the point of linkage of what one says and what one does, of the rules one prescribes to oneself and the reasons one ascribes, of projects and of evidences" (Foucault, 1980a:42). Planning as practice of knowing both prescribes what is to be done and codifies what is to be known. Foucault (1980a:47) calls the former the "judicative" (regulating ways of acting) and the latter the "verdicative" (producing legitimating discourse) characteristics of practice. His power/knowledge dyad is an elaboration of these twofold dimensions of practice (Foucault, 1980b) in which power is a positive concept, functioning in "our divisions of true and false, the good and evil, as well as in the distinction and control of ourselves and one another" (Flynn, 1994). Power plays a productive role because constraint is a condition of action.

Power is exercised through forms of representations (or encoded knowledge) such as language, signs, metaphors and symbols. These enable collective narratives, negotiate priorities, signal group identities and help build communities; they are means by which planners give meanings to their action and, hence, are integral to the enactment of practical judgment. However, these are selective abstractions that amplify some

concerns and mask others. As Fischler (1995:24) argues, the symbols (such as diagrams and charts) that planners use to represent the city complement their political representation of which groups represent urban society. They are different "means of persuasion" (Wrong, 1988:33) which play their part in the contested practice of knowing. Another particularly powerful means of persuasion is rhetoric or opinion (*doxa*)[ix]. Contrary to the teaching of Plato which suggests that even the best of opinions are blind, and that the domain of *doxa* enslaves us to the prevailing public opinions, Aristotle suggests that they can provide a plausible premise for an argument. This is particularly the case when opinions are not passively received but actively made (as is the case with planning doctorines such as the greenbelt in Britain).

Power is also exercised through systems of formal rules (such as laws and regulations and professional codes) and informal social and cultural rules. Formal planning rules about substantive or procedural matters play an important part in shaping the dynamics of knowing and doing in planning activity. Informal rules, which may not act as instructions, can also influence practical judgement by providing planners with a rich archive of prior experiences as well as what is considered 'appropriate'. These, as Wagenaar (2004: 654, drawing on Beiner, 1983) argues, can help planners navigate the "practical-moral landscape" in which they operate. Navigating, however virtuously, skilfully and thoughtfully, does not mean doing good all the time because determining what constitutes the 'good' or whose interest this good serves are highly normative questions (Campbell, 2006). As Flyvbjerg's (2001:57) analysis of power shows, "choice must be deemed good (or bad) in relation to certain values and interests in order for good and bad to have meaning". Contrary to the conventional portrayal of rules (both formal and informal) as fixed and rigid inhibitors of innovation and creativity, they are dynamic and may act as enablers of change. As an integral part of power relations, rules can simultaneously impose constraints and grant opportunities. They can stifle creativity and lead to 'monorationality', as suggested by Gunder (2010) and Davy (2008), but they can also trigger change by disrupting entrenched habits and routines. A new rule or "planning slogan" (Gunder, 2010: 207) can unsettle the old. It may reveal what is hidden in planners' mundane routines, make them amenable to conscious deliberations, and, hence, lead to new habit formation (Davoudi et al., 2014).

Concluding remarks

> "Practice is a set of relays from one theoretical point to another and theory is a relay from one practice to another" (Foucault and Deleuze 1990:9).

Seen in this way, theory and practice, knowing and doing are relational. Conceptualising planning as practice of knowing means acknowledging the interrelationship between knowing *what* (theories / concepts), knowing *how* (skills / crafts), knowing *to what end* (moral choices) and *doing* (action) as shown in Figure 1. It is this reciprocity which provides the foundation for practical judgement (wisdom and prudence). Planners may arrive at practical judgment by "combining, not separating, the Kantian dimensions of scientific, moral, and aesthetic understanding" (Healey, 2009:3). They do so not in a linear fashion of reading a text but in the iterative manner of comprehending a picture (Hoch, 2009). Knowledge is understood not as a timeless body of truth that 'expert' planners have internalised and 'lay' others (policy makers and citizens) can harness, but as a resource to be used in specific circumstances where creativity is ubiquitous.

<Insert Figure 1 about here>

Conceptualising planning as practice of knowing is a way of developing a unified account of knowing (in its multiple forms) and doing in which knowing is not a simple matter of taking in knowledge; it involves a re-conceptualisation of that which is assumed to be a natural category (such as evidence, experts) as a cultural and social construct (Lave, 1993). This does not necessarily mean opposing to the use of the term evidence. It means actively engaging in the struggle to broaden its scope to reach a more inclusive definition of evidence which incorporates all forms of knowing. Central to planning as practice of knowing are the dynamic relations between individual planners, their communities and their conception of planning activity. These relations are mediated though forms of representations, systems of rules and relations of power. In this complex web of relations, knowledge is not a separate category, it permeates these relations which themselves are dynamic and constantly changing.

"Although Reason is (planners') guide, it can only lead them to where they want to go, where their own interests and values take them" (Fischler, 1995:50). Planners' values are shaped not only in planning schools and through their formal training but also in their day-to-day activities. Their sense of the purpose and consequences of their knowing and action plays a fundamental role in their practical judgement. The significance of knowing *to what end* is reflected in Foucault's elaborate, yet insightful suggestion that, "people know *what* they do; they frequently know *why* they do what they do; but what they don't know is what what they do *does*" (quoted in Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1983: 187, emphasis added). It is here that more thinking, theorising, exploring, understanding, knowing and doing is needed. As I have sketched above, planning as practice of knowing is multidimensional; it is situated and provisional, collective and distributed, purposive and pragmatic, and mediated and contested. More importantly it is dynamic in the sense that new ways of knowing and doing can emerge if planning communities begin to re-think what Unger (1987) calls the 'false necessity' of everyday life, and fully engage with the tensions and contestations in their knowing and doing.

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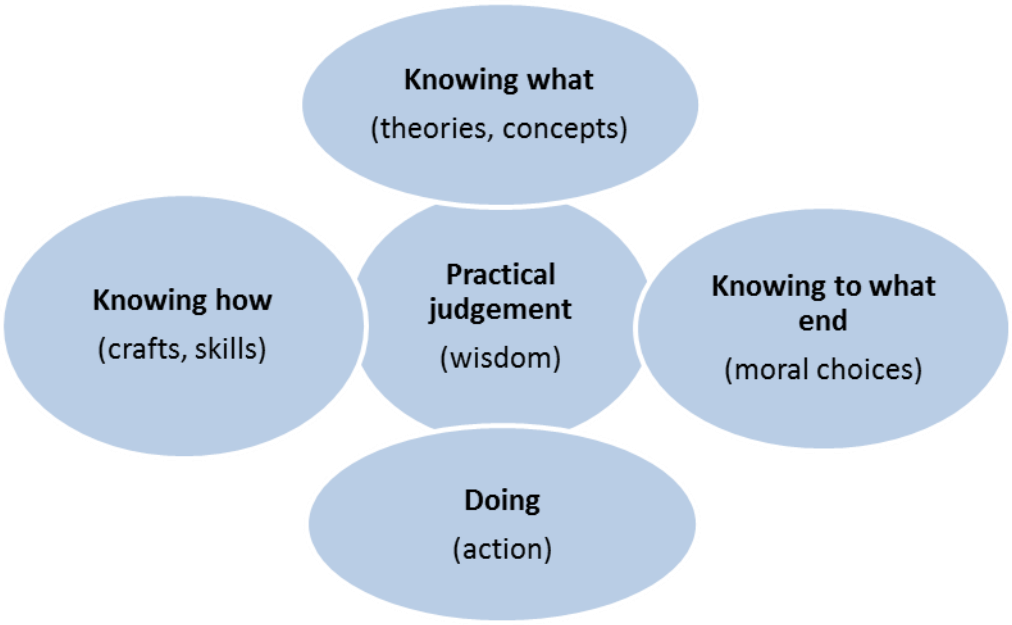

Figure 1: Planning as practice of knowing

Source: The author

Biography:

Simin Davoudi is Professor of Environmental Policy and Planning at School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape and Associate Directorof Institute for Sustainability at Newcastle University, UK. She is past President of the Association of the European Schools of Planning, Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences, Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and member of the Royal Town Planning Insitute.

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[i] Inspired by Freeman (2007)
[ii] James (1950) calls this knowing *about.*
[iii] These suggest that social relations are determined by hidden structural forces and laws
[iv] He viewed sociology as a progressive, cumulative, explanatory and scientific project which can explain society according to rational logics (Gilbert, 2008)
[v] from the Greek word *hermeneus*, an interpreter
[vi] In the philosophy of science this is called double hermeneutic, or interpretation of interpretation.
[vii] The other two types identified by Aristotle are productive disciplines and theoretical disciplines
[viii] Terms used by Rydin (2007)
[ix] I am grateful to Benjamin Davy for bringing this aspect to my attention.