As PROFESSIONALS, PLANNEERS ARE EXPECTED to offer independent, objective advice to clients and employers. Professional implies limiting the personal in planning behaviour. This is never easy in work that requires one's full presence, and it is increasingly at odds with the challenges and contextual demands that planners face (for example, as facilitators and negotiators, or in highly charged collaborative processes where people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care).

How might the planning profession recognize more of the arational and the personal as legitimate elements of planning behaviour? One path involves practitioners becoming more self-aware, identifying their predisposition to ways of planning based on "thinking" and "feeling", and learning to be more flexible in their use of non-preferred ways. Engaging in dialogue enables them to share and develop situationally appropriate strategies for managing the ongoing tension between professional and personal aspects, not in terms of either/or, but rather in terms of both/and.

Revisiting Professionalism
Everyday language distinguishes the amateur from the professional who does paid work at a high level of competence and capability. In addition, a professional is someone who holds membership in a recognized profession that, when fully evolved, has these attributes: exclusive claim to and mastery of a stock of systematic, coherent, specialized knowledge, and exclusive right to practice in that field; a program of extended education/training based on professional schools and systems of apprenticeship; a service ideal oriented primarily to the public interest; the right to control who employs, the public, and tribunals. A professional is commonly understood to mean arm's-length, impartial and objective. Arm's-length suggests a distance that discourages personal contact and familiarity. Impartial refers to fair treatment and to an absence of bias and prejudice, in order to achieve a proper balance of interests. Objective goes further: it implies dealing with facts or conditions without distortion by personal feelings, prejudices or interpretations — hence the dictionary definition "having reality external to or independent of the mind". Compare this with subjectivity, which emanates from an individual's thoughts, opinions, biases and feelings; in this sense, reality is personally constructed, "in here" rather than "out there" waiting to be discovered through investigation. Rendering independent professional opinion therefore necessitates distancing oneself from one's own interests and feelings and from undue external influence. Situations are to be dealt with impersonally, in a detached, impartial and fair manner. "Personal" is restricted to meaning that the professional opinion belongs to a particular individual, who is drawing upon his or her own knowledge and experience.

A classic example is the planner as expert witness before a tribunal. Criteria for this role (professional membership, competence and independence) are intended to ensure that the opinions rendered will be based on planning expertise and will not simply echo the position of client or employer. As a former member of several such tribunals, I suspect that their members find it especially difficult to deal with evidence, which is often presented in painfully personal terms by advocates and other participants, such as concerned citizens who oppose a project on grounds seemingly rooted in self-interest. It's easier and more comfortable to reach a decision after a hearing where technical experts present their cases objectively and "truth" emerges from cross-examination. Unfortunately, as many have noted, this kind of objectivity is a convenient myth that privileges certain interests. It is incomprehensible to people whose everyday lives operate according to a different way of knowing. And it can be problematic for planners who must suppress aspects of themselves in order to appear credible.

The Arational in Professional Practice
Planning is often said to be an applied science and an art (CIP 1994). Science is the source of the image of the independent, impartial, objective professional, who embodies what Donald Schön (1983) calls technical rationality. It stresses scientific method as an objective means of providing information to decision makers. It relies on the separation of facts from values as the basis for knowledge, favours quantified data and models as a means of inquiry, emphasizes analysis over interaction, and searches for "best" solutions to problems. Some time ago, Schön argues, professional planners embraced this "dominant epistemology of practice" to enhance the status of their fledgling profession by substituting scientific knowledge for their traditional reliance on experience gained through practice. Never mind that probably not a lot of real science finds its way into the average planner's daily work, where the 'best' solution is often established by subjective value judgments, which must be balanced with or against 'rational scientific' analysis" (Stel 1988, 154).

The technical-expert role, in which planners provide independent professional opinion, captures only part of what most professional planners actually do. John Forester's extensive research into everyday planning behaviour finds it to be mostly communicative work: focusing and shaping attention through meeting, listening, negotiating, facilitating, and the like. Planners apply knowledge and exercise skills that are interactive and political as well as technical, bringing into play both rational and the arational. In collaborative planning practice, "fact and feeling, reason and emotion are often tightly intertwined" (Forester 1989, 107). A narrowly framed, personal style of planning can be risky and self-defeating, "producing not professionalism but the impression of insensitivity, misunderstanding, callous neglect, and, as a result, not cooperation but anger directed at the planning analyst" (Forester 210). Similar risk is incurred when planners working with culturally diverse publics disregard ways of knowing not grounded in scientific/technical investigation (Sandercock 1998).

Rationality has long been a cornerstone of planning (Breheny and Hooper 1985). In an ordinary sense, rational refers to positions or actions that are based on logical reasoning rather than on emotion or impulse. The opposite, irrational, denotes a state of being "unreasonable" and "out of one's mind", thus confirming rationality as primarily a cognitive mental function.

Translate rationality to planning and decision-making and we have the familiar model: establish a goal, consider alternatives, evaluate consequences, and select for implementation the alternative that offers the best outcome in relation to the goal. Despite the many shortcomings of this approach, variants of it survive and thrive, partly because the expectation of rational behaviour is so deeply ingrained in our society and its institutions. But whose rationality? Don't most people think they are being reasonable? Judgments about "irrationality" depend on how reality is framed. In the world of planning there exist multiple rationalities, each of which is to be negotiated in arriving at conclusions that are feasible, acceptable and ethical. Planners have to be prepared to deal not only with assorted versions of rationality and irrationality, but also with the arational, in which reason and logic are seemingly absent but not necessarily violated (as when you know something without knowing how you came to know it). The arational encompasses subjectivity, moral and value judgements, feelings, instinct, intuition and non-traditional forms of meaning-making. Conclusions are reached by processes difficult to track or explain, and yet are valid and valuable.

Increasingly, the arational is "intruding upon" professional planning practice. Evidence of this is abundant. Interactive roles involving people skills (e.g. facilitator, mediator, negotiator, manager, etc.) are clearly on the rise in the planning field.
Effective facilitators let their groups see them as human, listen to their own intuition, and tune to the emotional needs of the individuals. This trend is related to the recent emphasis on emotional intelligence, which includes self-awareness, self-motivation, and self-regulation, as well as on social skills such as communication, empathy, conflict management, collaboration, and teamwork (Goleman 1998). The same goes for the growing recognition of intuition (Weintrob 1998) and other forms of nonlinear thinking as critical qualities for planning and decision making in an era of “chaos, complexity and change” (Sanders 1998). These trends challenge planners who define themselves narrowly as impersonal detached professionals.

Creating Space for the Personal

Aspects of the rational find their way into professional practice (most obviously in the forms of subjectivity, intuition, and value behavior) and are given the practice of detached caring which acknowledges a painful dilemma: while the quality of care provided depends in no small measure on personal relationships between clients and caregivers, these professionals must bound their care to cause a planner to miss out on critical aspects of the personal.

One possibility is to redefine “detachment” so that it no longer means “dissociation” and “disinterest”, but rather “the capacity to care deeply from an objective place.” 6 Objectivity would then be akin to non-attachment: the ability to engage fully with clients without getting caught up in their emotional positions. Paradoxically, this means being dissociated and yet still connected—or, as Jack Hawley puts it (1993, 21), “staying in the game and being more effective at it by getting away from it.” Such a stance (familiar to psychotherapists, nurses and other caregivers) involves resilience, discernment, equanimity, and adaptability, all essential qualities for dealing with diversity, conflict, and change.

It may be tempting to collapse the professional/personal distinction altogether, as feminists did in the 70s when they claimed that the political is personal and the personal political.7 But professional and personal in planning are not synonymous or mutually inclusive; overlapping and intertwined, but one does not encompass the other. In most professional contexts, certain aspects of the personal (beyond owning one’s opinion) inevitably enter planning practice; to pretend otherwise is self-deluding. Still, there are limits, both practical and ethical, on how far personal can go before it ceases to be personal. And in some settings, such as on the witness stand or “speaking truth to power”, credible professional behaviour may require temporary bracketing of certain facets of the personal.

Professional and personal may be best viewed not as either/or but as both/and. Barry Johnson (1992) would call them a polarity, i.e. interdependent opposites whose tension must be managed on an ongoing basis. Each pole has an upside and a downside. For example, focusing exclusively on a narrowly defined professional posture may bring more credibility with other professionals and less anxiety about having to deal with emotions, but it can also turn people off at meetings, and cause a planner to miss out on key data inputs. On the other hand, a strongly personal stance may bring greater acceptance by the public and a richer set of options, but at the price of emotional fatigue and fear of diminished credibility. The trick is to capture as much of the positive aspects as possible while minimizing the negatives.

Managing polarities isn’t new to planners seeking to achieve vision and practicality, flexibility and commitment. The innovation in this case lies in thinking through in advance the appropriate professional/personal mix in each context. For this to happen, a good deal of self-awareness and flexibility is required on the part of the individual. And here, people differ.

Sorting Out the Personal: One Mode

It seems that most individuals have certain personality-type preferences that predispose them to act in certain ways regardless of situational demands, and that consequently make it difficult for them to be as flexible as they need or would like to be (Lang 1995). The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator identifies four sets of opposing preferences, all of them relevant to planning.8 One of these sets addresses the different ways that people reach conclusions and make decisions.9 Thinking is an objective process involving logical, impersonal analysis of situations and cause-effect relations; Feeling is a subjective process based on personal values, what feels right, and the impacts of decisions on self and others. While we sometimes make use of our non-preferred way, the one that’s more often favoured impels us into a distinct pattern of deciding.

• Those who prefer Thinking are likely to analyze what’s wrong in a situation, move quickly to problem-solving, examine the pros/cons and consequences of possible courses of action, and exclude or devalue information not logically consistent with the required decision. Most people with a preference for Thinking know that the human factor is important and take it into account, but as only one of other factors considered significant. At times it may seem that, more concerned about abstract concepts such as fairness, they give insufficient weight to the needs of individuals.

• Those who prefer Feeling typically identify with others and empathize with people affected by their proposals. In the examination of alternatives, harmony with the proposed values receives prime consideration, as does information, logical or otherwise, deemed important by the people involved. It’s not that most Feeling types fail to use logic in analyzing situations and making decisions; rather their logical process includes and gives priority to individuals and groups, personal interactions, and values. Unlike Thinking types, those who tend to favor orderly and efficient decision-making, those preferring Feeling are more likely to opt for decisions reached through consensus.10

Granted, planners will not always be able to follow the preferences; other variables can intervene, such as the exigencies specific to a situation, external pressure to plan a certain way, and dominance of one or more members of a team. Nonetheless, type-based preference can be influential, especially when there’s a fair amount of freedom to determine how to proceed.

Although data are scarce, it appears that most planners are Thinking types (and more often Intuitive than Sensing).11 The relative absence of Feeling types12 does not bode well for planning processes that call for the strengths of this function. This absence may also help explain why many planners seek refuge in a style of practice that is relatively impersonal. Rather than being “in a state of arrested development,”12 the planning profession may be dominated by a different way of investigating, interacting and deciding—head more than heart. It’s not that the Thinking way is wrong, it’s just incomplete and in some situations inappropriate if used alone.

Effective planning requires the full range of personality-type preferences in order to balance each type’s strengths and weaknesses (biases toward certain theoretical models, forms of knowledge, methods, information inputs and outputs) and to transform difference into complementarity. Ideally, the preferences of a planning team must match the situation. Where this is not possible, something else is needed: “type flexibility”, the ability to access and enact one’s non-preferences when the situation calls for it (Lang 1997). Type flexibility has limits (for a Thinking type to behave in a Feeling manner takes more energy, is difficult to sustain, and is most difficult when the planner is fatigued or stressed).13 The planning profession may be vastly improved, if planners and educators are willing.

Summary

Professional implies the provision of independent, objective, impersonal, expert opinion. The reality of planning, however, is more than that. Much everyday planning is communicative and collaborative work involving the personal and arational: subjectivity, moral and value judgements, feelings, instinct, intuition and non-traditional forms of knowledge. To create more space for the personal in their professional work, individual practitioners need to become aware of personal predispositions to different ways of planning, learn to be more flexible with non-preferred ways, expand their behavioural repertoires, and open conversations with other planners to share situationally appropriate strategies for managing the personal/professional polarity.

Résumé

Le professionalism implique la capacité de fournir une opinion objective, impartiale, subjective et impersonnelle. Dans les faits, le métier d’urbaniste exige davantage. Aujourd’hui, l’exercice de cette profession consiste, en grande partie, en un travail de communication et de collaboration et fait appel à l’individualité et au non-rational, c’est-à-dire à la subjectivité, au sens critique et au sens moral, aux sentiments, à l’instinct, à l’intuition et à toutes les formes non traditionnelles du savoir. Pour accorder plus de place à leurs qualités individuelles, les professionnels de l’urbanisme doivent apprendre à reconnaître leurs aptitudes naturelles dans certains aspects de la profession, à faire preuve de plus de souplesse dans certains aspects et à adopter de nouvelles attitudes. Ils doivent également ouvrir le dialogue avec leurs confrères, partager leurs expériences et dégager de nouvelles stratégies qui leur permettront de créer un milieu propice à l’équilibre des ressources individuelles et professionnelles.
Bringing the Whole Self to Professional Planning

The conventional image of "professional" is unable to capture the fullness of planning practice. Professional planners are not just providers of independent professional opinion. This frame is an inadequate fit with the contexts in which many planners work, it limits their approaches, and it requires them to suppress personal qualities while pretending to be something less than they are. The impaired professional and personal effectiveness that is likely to result is a disservice to clients, and detracts from the individual's versatility. These are important considerations at a time when organizational loyalty and job security are on the wane (Lang 1998).

My concern is for planning as it is and for what it needs to become. Circumstances in which planners find themselves sometimes require adopting the stance of independent expert, but that cannot be the only arrow in the practitioner's quiver. There are plenty of indications that more of the personal ought to be recognized as a legitimate part of the planner's behavioural repertoire.14 Enlarging that repertoire, however, goes beyond the realm of skills to encompass qualities, values and ethics. Technique or skill alone is insufficient. There is also a person using that technique, whose personality extends into and well beyond the technique itself, and who affects the outcome of most interventions profoundly. People respond to other people in their fullness, not just to the tools they employ. On a personal level, if we want to become more skilled practitioners, then it is essential to develop those parts of our own nature which are most closely associated with intervention success. Admitting the heart into the study of social and community change is an indicator of both personal and professional strength (Berkowitz 1982, 186, 188).

Making more room for the personal in professional practice is easier said than done. The ultimate proving ground is in each individual and in each practice setting. Redrawing professional/personal boundaries entails rethinking the Code of Professional Conduct, in order to set some general parameters. For CIP and its affiliates, this means rethinking the term "professional planner" so that it embraces an expanded array of planning behaviours. All of this needs to begin at the local level, by helping planners understand how what they experience as their professional roles, where these roles generate conflicts with their personal side and limit their effectiveness, and how they might work through these dilemmas.

Underlying this issue is a maxim familiar to many professions but new to ours: planner, know thyself. Enhanced awareness of one's personal predisposition toward planning, coupled with an appreciation of the differences in those whom the planner works for and with, is more than just an aid to effective practice: it's a necessity, a form of what Stephen Covey calls "synergistic communication" (1990, 264). As people open their minds and hearts to new dimensions of themselves and others, the way also opens to new possibilities for individuals, groups, organizations and communities.

Admitting the arational and bringing the whole self (or at least more of it) to the work of planning means taking along our minds and hearts. Risky, maybe, but so is splitting the self and suppressing important parts of it. A fuller form of professional practice promises to be more professionally relevant and more personally fulfilling.

References


Lang, R. 1995. Strategic Planning and Personality Type: Toward Constructive and Contingent Use of Differences. EGIS discussion, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. Summary available from the author.


Endnotes

1 Diane Santo (1992, 24), MCEP reflecting on eleven years as a member of the Ontario Municipal Board, observes, "Planners as individuals have not been able to develop a real sense of professionalism."

2 Joe May, Chair of the Ontario Professional Planners Institute's Discipline Process Review Committee, describes the "failure of independent professional opinion with being impartial and objective" (1996, 27).

3 Mihaly Grossman (Grossman, 1998, 13) describes a recent ruling that disqualified a professional planner from testifying as an expert witness because the appearance of independence had been compromised by the fact that the individual was employed by the law firm representing a party to the hearing. In Cranmer's view, the disruption caused by "the fundamental differences between lawyers (who have a professional responsibility to act in the public interest) and advocates" (planners who have a responsibility to offer independent objective advice), resulting from the capacity of the legal system to represent a party to the hearing, contributed to an "opposition to the disturbance of the planning/advocate relationship" in planning. In Cranmer's view, the_Testimony has undermined the "professional and personal qualities while pretending to be something less than they are." The impaired professional and personal effectiveness that is likely to result is a disservice to clients, and detracts from the individual's versatility. These are important considerations at a time when organizational loyalty and job security are on the wane (Lang 1998).

5 Planning has been characterized as "rational matters of the intangible," according to this view, rationally applied to the self involves control over impulses (Friedmann 1987, 102).

6 The source, anthropologist Margaret (Aegon 1995, 111), finds this meaning to be common in non-Western cultures.

7 Evans (1979, 273) calls the interpretation the public and private spheres, the cities Charleston/Beach. "There is no pure domain of a person's life: it is not political and there is no political issue that is not one personal. The old barriers have fallen."

8 Opportunities to take the MBTI regularly occur in workshops, in larger cities across Canada. A useful general reference is Kroeger and Thuesen (1988).

9 Under these circumstances, validated by the MBTI, are: (1) focusing attention on and gaining energy from either the external or internal world of people and events (Introversion, Extroversion); (2) concentrating on and attaining to information either through Sensing, which focuses on what exists and relies mainly on the immediate and direct experience of the five senses, or through Intuition, which depends more on a sixth sense (hunches, gut feeling, insights) and goes beyond the concrete and observable to seek latent possibilities in objects and events; (3) dealing with the outside world either in a planned and orderly manner (Judging), or in a flexible and spontaneous manner (Perceiving).

10 Adapted from Berger and Konyl (1995, 30-51). In the thirty-sixties she has conducted or attended in the past thirty years, these T/F differences invariably show up.

11 My sample of 51 strategic planners in Ottawa, over half of them members of MIP, found: 38% Sensing, 32% Intuition, 79% Thinking and 21% Feeling (Lang, 1995, 205-215).

12 In my sample this was even true for women (25 of the 33). They were twice as likely to prefer Thinking over Feeling, the opposite of the general population where roughly two-thirds of women are feeling types (the reverse is true for men). The women were also more likely to appear to be introverts, or to have a "social life, subdued, outgoing, and sociable" (Kroeger and Thuesen, 1988, 34).

13 The most general reference is Kroeger and Thuesen (1988). One quite revealing by the MBTI are: (1) focusing attention on and gaining energy from either the external world of people and events (Introversion, Extroversion); (2) concentrating on and attaining to information either through Sensing, which focuses on what exists and relies mainly on the immediate and direct experience of the five senses, or through Intuition, which depends more on a sixth sense (hunches, gut feeling, insights) and goes beyond the concrete and observable to seek latent possibilities in objects and events; (3) dealing with the outside world either in a planned and orderly manner (Judging), or in a flexible and spontaneous manner (Perceiving).

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