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SOME ASPECTS OF GROUP DECISION MAKING

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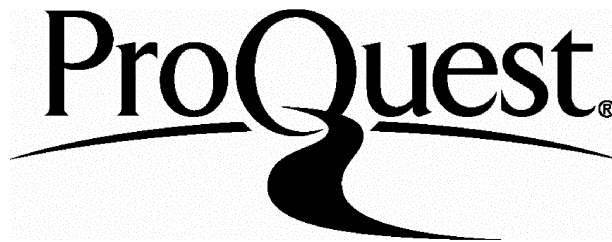
ABSTRACT

We present the results of a research programme that examined certain aspects of group decision behaviour. Specifically, we have identified some dimensions of strategic and non-strategic interaction and considered the importance of both group and individual-oriented purpose as explanatory concepts.

The research indicates that certain 'political' models over-stress the importance of self-interest motives in organisational group decision-making and under-rate the importance of bureaucratic interpretations of purpose. The findings also show that much group decision-making is characterised by 'non-purpose', when the participants may be indifferent to the possible outcomes of the process.

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CONTENTS

1   BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

*   *   *

The air was thickening in the elegant, oak-panelled
committee room. I watched the trails of cigar smoke
climb slowly and swirl among the crystals of the
chandelier whose value could probably pay the salaries
of the fifteen senior bankers disposed around the table
for two or three months. The stern portraits of their
forefathers gazed down with approval at the endeavours
of those present if not at the elusive outcomes of the
ponderous process of discussion.

The heavy damask curtains muffled the noise of the
traffic below in Lombard Street. Even so, the droning
voice of the Head of Property Division was scarcely
distinguishable from the clatter of taxis backing and
filling and the bustle of loading and unloading at
Leadenhall Market just around the corner. On my
immediate left, at the head of the table, the Director
of Planning sat erect and attentive, a good chairman
and an example to us all. His dark pin-striped suit
was immaculately cut. The silk tie which bore the
Bank crest was carefully knotted exactly in the centre
of his starched white collar. To my right, the doodles
of the Marketing Director had spilled across two-thirds

of his note-pad and I thought I could detect an ever-so-slightly pornographic theme.

I caught the gist of another sentence and carefully composed a minute note since it was some time since my last. In the distance I could hear the rattle of a tea trolley and wondered whether it was heading this way. When I looked up again, the Head of Property's lips had stopped moving and his gin-weathered visage was casting around for reactions. Attention turned towards the chairman and I noticed for the first time his glazed eyes and drooping lids. I tapped my pencil gently on the water carafe and he flickered back into life.

"Thank you very much, George, you've certainly given us something to chew on. There were two points that struck me as particularly vital to our brief ..."

He carried on with aplomb, and if it crossed anyone's mind that what he was saying didn't really seem to relate to those snippets of George's monologue that they had managed to decipher, they gave no visible recognition of the disparity.

I glanced at the clock. The hands seemed to have travelled backwards since the last time I looked, which must have been several hours ago ...

* * *

Such was one of my earlier experiences of the making
of high policy, and it must be admitted that this
kind of gathering has never since failed to fascinate.

This thesis is about committees and how they operate.
The study described here involved following the work
and progress of one particular Local Government
executive committee for a period of just over a year.
It aims to throw some light on that mysterious process
by which decisions, action, recommendations, reports
and sometimes new committees are somehow generated from
long series of meetings, discussions, arguments,
presentations and representations. We are, as a
parallel interest of no lesser importance, concerned
also with the theoretical and practical problems of
conducting research into such institutions, and the
many philosophical questions surrounding the elusive
process by which a social researcher draws his conclu-
sions from this kind of qualitative study.

1.1   Structure of the Research Programme

At the outset, it was decided to follow the work of an
existing committee or working group over a significant
period of time. One of the usual characteristics of
these institutions is that they tend to meet relatively

infrequently. A long elapsed time is therefore
necessary for the researcher to feel that he has obtained
sufficient material. What consitutes sufficiency in
this context is rather an arbitrary matter, but a
point appears to be reached in one's association with
such a group of people when there is no longer much
surprise at what occurs in the course of the meetings.
That is not by any means to say that at this stage
the researcher has finally plumbed the depths of
knowledge and discovered all there is to be found -
that is often far from the case. It rather means that
his acuity is probably beginning to dull from over-
familiarity and possibly boredom and that is arguably
as good a time as any to stop and take stock.

The Housing Assessment Team is a working committee
comprising members from a number of departments within
Bath City Council. The members are all professional
local government officers. The Team was set up in
1975 by an active Chief Executive, and was given the
job of managing the fate of the large number of marginal
or non-habitable houses that then existed in and around
the city. Much of this property stemmed from the
Georgian period, some was built rather later. But
it was the policy of the council at that time to increase
the available housing stock - there was then a signifi-
cant shortage - in line with the principles of

conservation that were, and still are, strongly held
by the city.

Late in 1975, a housing survey was carried out, and
this resulted in a list of properties which required
work carried out on them before they could be deemed
habitable. This list formed the subject matter for
the Housing Assessment Team. Their job was to decide
what was to be done with each property, whether it
should be demolished or converted, how many housing
units could best be made from each, who was to finance
the work, and how the result was to fit in with the
longer term plans for the area (e.g. in relation to
any proposed road-building, changes in shopping
facilities, green belt schemes, planned industrial
development and so on). The work involved the team in
deciding upon a suitable scheme between themselves and
then consulting and negotiating with owners, tenants,
nearby inhabitants, contractors, the planning committee
and any other interested parties, in order to work
out how the scheme could best be implemented. All this
involved quite complicated and dynamic problems of
choice.

The Housing Assessment Team was selected as a location
for the fieldwork of this study for a number of reasons:

(i)   A multi-disciplinary committee was required, since one of the questions of interest of this study is the part played by members' perceptions of the objectives of such a team. We wanted to have a number of different institutional and individual views of these objectives and to find out something of how they interacted together. The Housing Assessment Team comprised local government officers from a number of different departments and so was ideally suited for this particular purpose.

(ii)   Two of the members of the team were already known to the University of Bath and were also accustomed to the presence of field workers. Since both they and the chairman of the team were willing to tolerate yet another inquiring force in their midst, the question of convenience came to the fore.

(iii)   The members of HAT are middle-ranking local government officers and are therefore close to both decision-making and policy-making within their own departments and also the execution of decisions and the implementation of policy. It was hoped therefore to tap the views of people who were neither too low in the organisation to be unaware of policy issues, nor so elevated

that they were far removed from the real and
practical implications of the outcomes of the
consultative process.

Stages of Involvement with HAT

There were a number of different stages of interaction
with the members of the Housing Assessment Team:

(a) Preliminary discussions with the head of department
     responsible for the operation of HAT, in order to
     obtain his agreement and backing for the research
     programme as a whole.

(b) Discussions with the chairman of the team both to
     obtain his support for the venture, which was
     clearly of vital importance, and also to negotiate
     with him a role for me at the considerable number
     of meetings that I would be attending.

(c) The early attendances at the meetings, at which
     I contributed little or nothing to the content of
     of the discussions.

(d) Later attendances at the meetings, at which I was
     able to contribute something to the discussion in
     order both to pay my way for being there and also
     to maintain a natural and low-profile presence,
     which would have become increasingly difficult after
     a long period of non-contribution. A silent,
     lurking force can easily be tolerated for a while,
     but it will eventually cause suspicion and tension.

(e) Discussions with individual members outside the formal meetings, in order to obtain their own views on particular questions of interest.

1.2 Outcomes of the Research Programme

There are two distinct kinds of output from this study, both of which are presented later in the form of commentary and discussion:

(i) Conclusions and ideas about the social dynamics of committee meetings, formulated on the basis of both my association with HAT and also related experience of other committees.

(ii) Conclusions and ideas about the process of undertaking this kind of qualitative research, particularly with respect to the question of how it is that conclusions themselves are drawn from the mass of diverse material (notes, minutes, tapes, interview data, impressions of how the members think and how they think other members think, off-the-record information acquired at the bar or over the lunch table) that one quickly accumulates in the course of the work.

To the extent to which this programme of research has been concerned to examine any one, particular hypothesis

it was that members of decision-making groups such as
the Housing Assessment Team are not driven principally
by the kinds of self-advancing motives highlighted by
many of the contemporary 'political' analyses of
organisations. Neither, indeed, are they always driven
in any specific direction at all. We would rather
incline to argue that 'traditional' bureaucratic
interpretations of purpose are both pervasive and often
strong but, at the same time, much of group decision-
making, particularly at relatively low levels of an
organisation hierarchy, is characterised by a general
indifference to the outcomes of the process.

We shall examine these linked propositions with reference
to a set of theme concepts, each important within them-
selves as models for understanding group decision, yet
all related to each other as representing different
facets of strategic and non-strategic behaviour.

We move on now to consider some important introductory
themes that have informed the nature and direction of
this research. The intention here is to set the scene
both for the methodological discussion and for the later
chapters of analysis.

1.3 Introductory Themes

An important idea that returns again and again in the
later discussion is that what is often called the
rhetoric of what is produced by committees in action

ought not to be dismissed merely as such, but should rather be considered and evaluated as real and principal output from the process. In a sense, perhaps, therein lies a major source of disappointment for those waiting and hoping for committees to 'produce the goods'. Expectations are invariably based upon models of what individuals can and do produce when left to their own devices. Output from a group of people, however, is well-known to be of a qualitatively different kind.

It does not appear to be either meaningful or useful, theoretically or practically, to separate conceptually what should be "really going on" from the actual words and actions of the participants. Thus, we shall contend, whatever a committee finally produces is what it produces. What that is then labelled and how parts of it are packaged and distributed will depend largely upon the politics of the situation. But to be measuring that against a more "proper" form of output i.e. that which ought ideally to have been produced, is to misunderstand the whole process and its context.

In emphasising this conceptual standpoint, we shall highlight the existence of a series of different types of critical social state or period, at which points it appears that suitably formed rhetoric can become very powerful, when well-timed and apposite interjections can launch the proceedings onto a new course favoured

by the speaker. So that, regardless of both the formal and the informal power structure within the group, and the organisational pressures upon and ambitions of the members, it is often possible to over-ride the apparent "physics" of the situation with words designed carefully to manipulate the mood of the meeting.

At the same time, we are aware that such disturbances can be initiated quite unintentionally by the chance flow of discussion and may provide a kind of self-generated flux for the proceedings which intending manipulators have to learn to understand and take account of.

Values and Action

A central theme that will concern us is the nature of the relationship between dimensions of value and action. Each of the case studies in this thesis touches upon different aspects of "values", "objectives", "purpose", "interests", and we discuss what can be meant by these terms in different kinds of circumstances and how what people actually do seems to be affected by them. Models of behaviour which attempt to explain outcomes by reference to values are undoubtedly useful and informative, but they clearly need to be much more complex in conception than straight-forward matrix systems of cause and effect.

The centrality of values within an individual's
intellectual frame, and their constancy in the face
of the prospect of different kinds of action, are
continuing issues of debate (Armstrong and Eden, 1978;
Arrow, 1951; Becker and McClintock, 1967; Burnstein
and Vinokur, 1973; Laszlo, 1973; Postman, Bruner and
McGinnies, 1948; Rokeach, 1972, 1973; Vickers, 1972,
1973; Young, 1977). We shall incline to support the
case for a rather contextual and contingent definition
of values, which will always take account of the stimuli
to which an individual needs to respond and the practical
options for action or inaction open to him.

This discussion is complicated further when we come
to talk and think about purposive groups as distinct
from individuals. The concept of a group objective is
highly elusive and time and again it has been found
to be misleading to try and predict the "behaviour"
of a working group simply with reference to some
assumed corporate purpose (For example, Ackoff and
Emery, 1972; Bales and Strodtbeck, 1951; Bennett,
1977(a), 1977(b); Black, 1948; Bonham, 1974; Bonham,
Shapiro and Heradstveit, 1978; Curtis, 1974; Dando,
1976; Driver and Streufert, 1969; Festinger, Schachter
and Back, 1959; Haworth, 1959; Janis, 1972; Johnson,
1968; Kuhlman and Marshello 1975a, 1975b; Lewin, 1952;
Pettigrew, 1973; Sandberg, 1976; Simon, 1964; Vinokur,
1971). At the same time, in the present study, we

have found that individual members working within
committees and teams are often aware of, and are able
to articulate, some idea of a group objective, have
referred to this notion in the course of discussions
and even cited it in written matter such as reports
and minutes. But whilst there is some evidence to
support the existence of an individual's perception
of group objectives, we would prefer to see this as
standing as yet another item in the usually long list
of conditions to be satisfied in the search for a
workable solution to a problem, rather than as a
central determining precept.

So group objectives appear to be neither entirely
comprised of empty rhetoric, nor yet are they
apparently pivotal to the behaviour of group members.
The articulation of group objectives seems to be
closely related to the individual's view of the group
itself. Those who have a strong sense of group
identity appear apt to operate with significant
reference to a notion of group purpose. These notions
can be, and in general appear to be, very different
for each individual, regardless of any apparent
similarity in the label which each may use. If such
labels can first be identified, then clearly the
understanding of each interpretation is vital to the
understanding of the behaviour of the group as a whole.

It is in this context that such understanding is very often particularly difficult for those 'lay-men' who commission or set up working groups or committees with some apparently clear end product in mind. They may themselves have what they think is a well-formed view about the brief that they have laid down and are often frustrated that much discussion and debate, particularly in the early stages of the committee's life, tends to focus upon the interpretation, re-interpretation and sometimes re-formulation of the brief. Very often, the eventual starting point for the 'real work' of the committee is somewhere completely different than that envisaged by the party or parties who set the thing up in the first place. Sometimes that starting point is never reached and the final output of much deliberation is a new set of terms of reference. It is part of our point that this is rather a natural state of affairs and that those who would regard such behaviour as recalcitrant or inefficient are almost certainly doomed to suffer perpetual disappointment in the progress of such institutions.

Methods of Analysis

The discipline and methodology that has been employed in the course of this study has involved what might be called semi-participant observation of a particular working team over a considerable period of time. One

of the most important sources of data has been the
individual discussions with each team member at his
own office after the meetings. In this, we have
essentially been following the thinking of Harré and
Secord (1973):

"At the heart of the explanation of social behaviour is
the identification of the meanings that underlie it.
Part of the approach to discovering them involves the
obtaining of <u>accounts</u> - the actor's own statements
about why he performed the acts in question, what
social meanings he gave to the actions of himself and
others. These must be collected and analysed, often
leading to the rules that underlie the behaviour."

People may account for their actions to make them
intelligible or to justify them or both, but the
relationship between what was done and what was said
about that is liable to be complex and problematic.
However, we would argue that just to watch is not
enough. The 'pure' anthropological method of
observation will tell you something, but it will not
tell you very much at all about the systems of meaning
that the members of a working team use in their inter-
actions together. For that, the researcher has to
try and make sense of what the participants tell him
(and also what he thinks that they are not telling him).
There are many traps of which he has to be wary

however, a few of which are now mentioned briefly
by way of introduction.

Baffles to Understanding

There may commonly be a deliberate attempt by the
person giving an account to convey an impression which
is in some sense deliberately misleading, either to the
researcher himself, who is the immediate recipient of
the explanation, or, through him, to a third party.
Researchers or consultants or anyone who tinkers with
an organisation from the outside are prime targets
to be used as unwitting couriers for internal political
purposes.

At least as important is the phenomenon of what might
be called 'inaccurate articulation'. An individual
providing an account of events to a researcher may or
may not be able to identify to his own satisfaction
what he thinks were the important determinants of
behaviour in a given situation, and he will then
be more or less successful at putting these ideas into
words. Thus, an individual may produce an account that
he is not fully satisfied with, but may withold his
reservations from his audience.

Tidyness and aesthetics are important considerations
in both the generation and understanding of explanations
of behaviour. Getting behind the style may be

problematic. An individual may prefer a particular

form of account e.g. structured or systematic,

'balanced', elegant, concise, poetic, or scientific.

The style of rhetoric and metaphor employed by a local

government officer will be different from that employed

by a bank manager which will be different again from

that favoured by an actor. It is also often very

difficult to work out the extent to which an account is

an attempt to 'repair' past chaos and provide a tidy

explanation of what was essentially an untidy event.

The most common characteristic of an explanation

of behaviour made to a third party is probably its

function as a justification of a particular course of

action. In trying to account for what Harré and Secord

(op. cit) call the propriety of past actions, an actor

will have in mind some criteria of rightness that he

may hold himself, or at least believe that his audience

holds. In trying to understand such an account, the

researcher first has to recognise that justification

is taking place and then to try and determine whose

standards are being referenced. It is always very

difficult for those being questioned from outside

their organisation to accept that this third party

may have no political axe to grind at all, save that

of getting hold of some data that he can use. This

fact can, equally, provide very informative interview

material if the researcher is able to key into the

justification that is taking place.

It must in all this be appreciated that verbal explanations offered in response to a question will often carry their own momentum and will tend to exhibit a kind of inevitable indexicality. What is said next will in a sense have to follow on from and relate to what is said before. A slightly different starting point, a different question or shade of emphasis, a different response from the listener as the explanation proceeds, all these things have a bearing upon what is put out. Also, in constructing accounts, different degrees of knowledge and different interests are assumed for different audiences. Interpreting an account successfully involves being aware also of what was omitted. Explanations by social actors direct to researchers will be similarly constructed on the basis of what the latter is assumed to know and not to know.

Circourel (1973) has pointed to the problem of indefinite triangulation and the question of partiality. There is always something else that could be said. When is an account to be regarded as complete enough, either by the researcher or by the person constructing it? Of course the researcher, in constructing his own account of behaviour, has to address the issue of indefinite triangulation in much the same way as anyone else.

1.4 Presentation of Findings

We have chosen to develop the conclusions and ideas
arising from this research within the format of five
case studies. Each draws upon a particular sequence
of meetings and the discussions that came out of them.
Each is situated around a different theme, a theme
intially suggested by the material of each case but
then taken up and used to generate and focus discussion.
The themes do not represent formal hypotheses in the
experimental sense, nor do they represent conclusions
within themselves. They are suggested determinants
of committee 'behaviour'. The first is also some-
thing rather more than that since it considers the
validity of a simple model of interaction between
participants; namely, the notion of a Hypergame,
developed by Bennett (1977a, 1977b) from the basic
tenets of game theory. The remaining case themes are
related to each other and to the concept of a
Hypergame insofar as they each deal with different
aspects of an important question posed by this thesis;
that is, the relationship between a 'corporate' model
of committees, a molecular view if you like, and a more
atomic model which sees the output from committee
discussion as the result of a complex network of
interactions between the individually motivated
members.

The case themes, that comprise the middle five

chapters of this thesis, have been labelled as

follows:

- A Hypergame Model

- A Collective Purpose Model

- A Leader-Driver Model

- A Personal Interest Model

- A Satisficing Model

The chapter on methodology that precedes these five

comprises a series of arguments that attempts to both

explain and justify the use of case studies and related

commentaries to present and structure both source

material and conclusions and ideas deriving from it.

We discuss the extent to which these two forms of

idea are in any case separable. The case study then

emerges as a rather natural format of analysis, but

one in which there is a continuing switching between

different modes of discourse. We comment upon these

modes and we also argue the case for a wider definition

of what it means to be scientific when conducting this

kind of inquiry. In this context, we consider the

nature of the process by which 'findings' are generated.

Part of the point of this kind of line of argument is

a plea for something of a 'liberalization' of academic

studies such as we are engaged upon here. That is not

to say that we are not fully supporting the application

of well-established and, in our view, valuable
principles of scientific inquiry. It is rather that
we do not agree firstly with the common contemporary
restriction to certain methods of going about an
investigation, particularly the literal interpretation
of the stages of inquiry usually denoted by the
'classical' experimental method; nor, secondly, with
an often corresponding naive view of measurement which
either depends heavily upon the concept of quantity
or else adopts a quantitative paradigm for handling
non-quantitative ideas, often in both cases ignoring
the rather tenuous and arbitrary nature of the links
between observed phenomena and concepts that are formed
to describe and explain them.

In standing by the apparent letter of the inquiry
methods of the natural scientist, the latterly emerging
social scientist often ties chains around himself,
hampers both his thinking and the presentation of his
ideas, and also loses credibility both with the natural
scientists that he is trying to emulate and the
population whose behaviour he is attempting to explain
and who alone can arbitrate in the matter of the
validity of certain of his conclusions.

Chapter 2, which looks at our own methodology and,
in a sense, model of knowledge, now follows. Then we
present the five central chapters of analysis. The

last two chapters draw the ends together, summarise
the main conclusions that have been drawn and reflect
upon the final nature of the product.

2   RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The research programme presented in this thesis had

two principal objectives:

(i)   The first was to uncover some empirical determin-

      ants of group decision outcomes by analysing

      the work of a particular inter-departmental team

      in Local Government. The broad, guiding hypo-

      thesis of the research was that, for many examples

      of group decision-making, politically oriented

      models of behaviour which emphasize the self-

      interest motives of organisation members may

      tend to attribute strategic and competitive

      intentions where none exist. As a corollary to

      this proposition, we argue the extent of bureau-

      cratic definitions of goals for both collectives

      and individuals. However, we also suggest that

      much of group decision-making is notable both for

      a lack of significant intention and an essential

      indifference to the eventual outcome.

      It must be made clear that in no sense were we

      attempting to chart the 'physics' of any of the

      decision-making that has formed the material for

      this research. Rather, the object was to examine

      and elaborate a particular set of concepts that

      appear to be important for understanding group

      decision-making. The events of particular decisions

      have been illuminated by the application of these concepts.

(ii) The second object of the study was to make some

practical and theoretical observations about

how a research project such as this should best

be conducted. Part of this purpose involves

examining the relationship between source material

and the things that a researcher then goes on to

say about it. In this context, we look at some

of the characteristics of 'scientific' inquiry

and consider some of the ways in which it is

similar to and differs from other forms of research.

This is, in part, a justification of the method

of presentation and analysis that has been used

to serve our first objective, namely, the case

study. This format has been employed both as a

method of organising source material and as a

means of structuring and explaining the conclusions

that were drawn from it.

One of the conclusions of our arguments is that a

researcher need not be over-preoccupied with method

in order to be able to discover and pass on something

useful to either a scientific or a lay audience. To

argue this case has, rather paradoxically, involved

a considerable emphasis upon method and some of the

theoretical links between method and results. We look

at the question of semantics in the process of

drawing conclusions, examine the arbitrariness of

these semantic ties and look at how the quality of

the researcher may often be more important for the validity of his conclusions than the discipline or methodology that he employs.

Data and Data Collection

What was to count as data for this study was not, perforce, fully known at the time of its commencement. It was, essentially, to comprise any stimulus, written, spoken, pictorial, symbolic, present or historic that could help to throw any light upon the progress of the discussions of the Housing Assessment Team.

The term 'data' is often used in a misleading way in accounts of social studies, and often rather strictly following its normal usage in the 'pure', experimental sciences. Somehow, 'data' might then seem to connote only minutiae observations of social phenomena that should be measured and recorded very precisely and then related in a logical and structured way to a set of conclusions or findings.

We shall not be so restrictive in the use of the term 'data', but will take it in general to mean any input to the cognitive processes of the researcher/analyst that may have a bearing upon his subject of the moment. We agree with Wootton (1975) who has observed:

"Much time is spent ... in discussing the ways in which
what people say can be transformed into data, how the
context in which a question is being asked influences
a person's response, and so on. After some consideration
of such issues, it soon becomes clear that handling
responses and deciding on the status they can be
assigned is no easy matter. In fact it is rather
complex, and by complex I think we usually mean that
there are problems such as deciding whether a particular
response counts as an instance of some analytic
category (the coding problem); deciding whether the
way in which a response is classified does justice to
the point of view being expressed in the original
response; or deciding on the most reliable way of
classifying responses. Such problems are mainly
addressed in the context of survey enquiry, but they
are in fact even more acute in naturalistic enquiry.
In the latter case, for example, there is less chance
of some standard response elicitation technique, and
much interpretation will be based on the analyst's
implicit classification of conversations going on
around him. On the other hand, the participant observer
is generally held to be in a position to pick up the
meanings and nuances of what is going on around him,
so that the looseness in the handling of data is
compensated for by the greater validity."

The outputs from this process will be ideas and concepts

that help third parties to understand what is going on.
We will argue later in this chapter that we can regard
an inquiring process as being scientific to the extent
that the researcher can identify the relationship
between his inputs and his outputs.

The method that has been adopted in this study for
collecting inputs has been based upon a principle of
'semi-participation' in the decision-making process
being examined. My initial, and formally introduced,
role with the Housing Assessment Team was one of
academic researcher interested in the broad subject of
decision-making. As soon as possible, however, I
attempted to dilute that role both by a limited
participation in the discussions themselves, where I
was invited or where I thought that I could sensibly
interject without giving offence, and also by demon-
strating a willingness to talk with any of the team
members about almost any subject at all outside the
formal structure of the meetings.

The intention behind this degree of participation in
the working day of the members was to try and ensure
my unobtrusiveness, and also trustworthiness, by
becoming something of a camelion and so blending in
with the natural background. The consequences of not
doing this are often over-rated and thought to be dire,
but it is true that they can complicate the problems

of data interpretation. One is examining different

social situations when a researcher is and when he is

not present, but of course the latter case is rather

difficult to arrange. Examining the reactions of a

working team to having a researcher present would

certainly be an interesting study, and it would be of

some use no doubt to future researchers. However it

was not our intention here and so we were keen to

minimise those reactions in order to be looking at

and thinking about a set of circumstances that could

be deemed to be sufficiently like a 'normal' team

meeting for useful and generally applicable conclusions

to be drawn. We were hoping to obtain data that had

just as much bearing upon our questions of interest

as that which would be in principle 'available' when

the researcher was not there.

Following Schwartz and Schwartz (1955) we would

"... define participant observation as a process in

which the observer's presence in a social situation is

maintained for the purpose of scientific investigation.

The observer is in a face-to-face relationship with

the observed, and, by participating with them in their

natural life setting, he gathers data. Thus, the observer

is part of the context being observed, and he both

modifies and is influenced by this context. The role

of participant-observer may be either formal or informal,

concealed or revealed; the observer may spend a good

deal or very little time in the research situation; the participant-observer may be an integral part of the social situation or largely peripheral to it."

In our own case, the fact that research was the object of my presence was not concealed. My presence itself was formally endorsed and I tried to ensure that it was soon informally endorsed. I spent a considerable amount of time in the research setting and people soon got used to having me around.

Collecting Members' Accounts

The concept of an account has been treated formally by many sociologists and social psychologists. Broadly speaking, we may say that accounts are specific kinds of speech-acts that are provided by individuals when they attempt to interpret, explicate or justify other social acts (including other speech-acts) performed by other people or, more commonly, by themselves. Accounts essentially seek to make actions intelligible; that is, to invest them with socially sensible meanings and to locate them within a commonly understood frame-work. However, they may also attempt to make actions warrantable; that is, to display the rightness or propriety of what was done.

An important part of the present study was the collection of individual team members' own accounts

of events either at or seemingly relevant to the
meetings. Data was amassed in the form of interview
notes, most of which were set down immediately after
such sessions. A tape recorder was used at _some_ of
these sessions and at the _later_ HAT meetings. This
is in line with our earlier stated policy of maintain-
ing a low-profile, in order not to set up unintention-
ally special circumstances which would mean that we
would be researching a different kind of social setting
from that in which we were principally interested.

Our purpose in obtaining such accounts was to try
and get at the meanings which the group members gave
to the Housing Assessment Team, the work that it was
given to do and their own and other members' contri-
bution to that work. In this we are to some extent
following the thinking of Harré (1979) who, as a
psychologist, has been concerned to use account data
to make statements about cognitive processes. He has
stated:

"In account analysis we try to discover both the social
force and explanatory content of the explanatory speech
produced by social actors. This then serves as a
guide to the structure of the cognitive resources
required for the genesis of intelligible and warrant-
able social action by those actors."

Harré hypothesises the existence of what he calls

'template structures' which are created by individuals

as representations of formal structures which are

perceived to exist in the world at large. Accounts

are not taken explicitly to reveal template structures;

"... instead, the cognitive resources will show

tacti representation of template structures."

Less relevant to our own purpose, Lyman and Scott

(1970) have considered accounts in relation to the idea

of the production and maintenance of smooth social

interaction. Thus they define 'account' more

particularly as "... a linguistic device employed

whenever an action is subjected to valuative inquiry"

that has the "... ability to shore up the timbers of

fractured sociation ... to throw bridges between the

promised and the performed ... to repair the broken and

restore the estranged." Others have more simply sought

to use accounts as we ourselves have, that is, as

additional and complementary forms of data.

Clearly, it is not a straightforward business to

interpret this kind of information. What people

tell you in response to a particular question may be

due to a great many complex and interlocking motives.

Accounts may provide data not only about the specific

social act to which they refer, but also about the

wider intentions of the actor. A person constructing

an account will almost certainly have some kind of
model of the expected consequences of the different
things that he might say. In a sense, this model
will serve to guide the production of an explanation.
One of the questions that the researcher has to answer
for himself here is the question of how he is viewed
by the person that he is interviewing. It is true
that some researchers in some sets of circumstances
seem able to take on the role of detached confessional
and the people to whom he is talking within the
organization of interest fall over themselves to tell
him the 'inside story' apparently without reserve.
Most commonly, however, researchers are treated with
great caution, not least because it is assumed that
they will be getting about within the organisation and
talking to a great many people. This can also mean that
an investigator is likely to be used as a courier to
pass on a political point to a third party or another
department.

Even if there is no such manipulation going on, it
is clear that the meaning of accounts is contextually
determined. The person giving the account will probably
assume a certain common stock of knowledge and will have
his or her own ideas about the practical purpose for
which the account is required. In this respect, not
only the content but also the style of response will
be adjusted in accordance with the respondent's view

of the sort of material the researcher would like to
hear and his own preferences for providing such
material. A given individual may lean towards a
particular form having particular characteristics.
It may be methodical, systematic, scientific and attach
importance to detail and accuracy; it may be balanced
and inconclusive, looking at all possible points of
view and weighing them against each other; it may
be anecdotal and graphic, stressing amusing incidents,
'hot' stories and political intrigue. Getting behind
the style of accounts that are offered is vital to
their interpretation. Material will tend to be
selected for its suitability for the preferred medium,
and important data that doesn't fit the form may be
disregarded.

Particular forms of expression may also imply a
structure to the data that wouldn't exist if the
researcher had observed the events first-hand. Accounts
very often succeed in tidying up the past, in making
a series of fairly haphazard or chance occurrences
appear to conform to an organised master plan.

Cicourel (1967) has made some important observations
about the linked questions of indefinite triangulation
and partiality in the construction of explanations
of events. He has argued that fixing the point of
closure is a rather arbitrary process and usually a

matter of judgment and expedience to suit the particular
set of circumstances for which the explanation is
required. A point may often be reached in the con-
struction of an account when either constructor or
audience or both sense that enough has been said
(Ramos, 1978). What is said is subject to certain
forces of internal determinism and will depend both
on the starting point and the reactions of the
questioner. Whether or not, for example, a response
to the question 'why did you do this in those circum-
stances' is in some sense correct, it will represent
one of a number of things that could have been said.
If there is a reason that is somehow more important
or central than others, it may or may not be given
first. The first item in the response may be suggested
by the form of the question or some other part of the
context of the inquiry. Subsequent items may be
suggested by the first. The initial question draws
boundaries for the response, but so does any inter-
mediate summing up, request for clarification or
elaboration, or the feeding back of understanding so
far.

As far back as 1947, Crawshaw-Williams observed:

"Once an opinion is formed, the strong temptation to
hold on to it at all costs makes us forget how much
we originally simplified the issue. The result is

that in making our selection from all the myriad facts

which are presented to our attention day-by-day and

which are nearly all of them evidence for or against

some opinion of ours, we tend to ignore those which do

not 'fit in'. If this happens in the case even of

rational opinions, founded originally on some evidence,

how much more must it happen in the case of opinions

which were never anything more than comfortable

distortions of reality. With such opinions there is

a great increase both in temptation and also in the amount

of evidence to be avoided. There seems to be practically

no limit to the amount of evidence that a man can

ignore when he feels sufficiently strongly disposed to

do so."

The problem for a researcher of working out how much

evidence his respondent has ignored is often considerable.

Sometimes this selective perception is quite uncon-

scious. Sometimes the respondent is deliberately

intending to mislead.

Intentions to Mislead and 'Inaccurate' Articulation

This, perhaps the most common baffle to authentic

interpretation of how people explain their actions,

is also the most difficult to deal with. We have

already noted the possibility of the researcher

being employed as an unwitting courier of political

impressions and it is as likely as not that this kind

of data misleads from what actually happened. In these
circumstances it isn't even a sufficient solution
for the researcher to somehow gain the trust of the
person he is interviewing, even if he knew how to do
it. If the researcher is perceived as an agent freely
mobile between different departments or significant
political actors, then even if he himself is trusted,
the formation of useful impressions to be 'passed on'
will be almost automatic for the respondent.

The researcher's best chance of combatting attempts
to mislead probably lie with adopting some of the tech-
niques favoured by interrogators! In particular, it
is often useful to adopt a method of gently and
casually   probing around the subject of interest in
the hope that any strategy to mislead is revealed by
gradually emerging inconsistencies. What is especially
difficult in this is to differentiate between such
strategies and what might be called 'inaccurate
articulation', where an individual asked to provide
an account may not be able to work out fully himself
what he thinks were the causes of the events in
question and, even if he believes that he knows, he
may not be completely successful in putting these
ideas into words. Any doubts he then has about the
authenticity of his account may be witheld from his
audience.

Misleading accounts can also be quite unintentional in that they are an almost automatic bureaucratic response. Organisations very often have available routine, 'prepackaged' account formats for their members, as Lyman and Scott (op. cit.) have noted:

"Organisations systematically provide accounts for their members in a variety of situations. The rules of bureaucracy, for instance, make available accounts for actions taken toward clients - actions which, from the viewpoint of the client, are untoward."

So the researcher has to beware programmed and habitual responses to his inquiries. They can usually be identified from their unspontaneous nature and it is then necessary to probe behind the rhetoric to uncover the richer reasoning that may be there.

All of the interview material obtained in the course of the present study has been analysed and interpreted with these issues in mind. The intention throughout the whole process has been to get behind what people have actually said and find out something of what they meant, to try and uncover the webs of meaning and significance that are the real interactants in social groups such as committees.

We have then gone on to derive analytic concepts that

help to explain certain aspects of how events turned
out as they did. This process was essentially one of
almost continuous iteration, testing ideas against the
data until some goodness of fit was achieved. We now
go on to describe and discuss that process of analysis
and to make some suggestions about its nature and
limitations. We look at some theoretical ideas that
bear upon the business of creative abstraction. The
intention here is to provide a scientific underpinning
for the case studies that later present the main findings
from the empirical part of this inquiry. What we mean
by 'scientific' in this context is also illuminated
in the following section.

2.2 Making Sense of Data

2.2.1   The Derivation of Explanatory Concepts

A principal part of our interest in the process of
conducting this kind of social research centres upon
the theoretical foundation of any conclusions that
we feel able to draw. Therefore, we shall in the
course of this section be attempting to examine certain
aspects of the means by which an investigator of social
phenomena begins to make sense out of whatever he
comes to regard as his data, the means by which he
starts to try and explain the unexplained and to set
up causal links between particular empirical observations.

The derivation of explanatory concepts is clearly not
an activity that is confined to researchers, scien-
tific or otherwise, nor indeed to any of those curious
individuals engaged in pursuing lines of inquiry in a
more or less disciplined manner. Some kind of explana-
tory structure will be created by anyone who is trying
to understand anything, trying to make sense out of
events that have confronted them. In the limit, it
could be argued, all users of language can fall into
this category, to the extent that language is seen as
a tool to classify phenomena and delineate concepts
which are then handled more or less discreetly and
related to each other as and when necessary. But
we shall be concerned principally with more conscious
attempts to define concepts in relation to observed
phenomena and in relation to other concepts - that is,
with the process of <u>model construction</u>. Central in
this debate will be the question of semantics and
the nature of the relationship between a model and what
it purports to represent. According to Harré, for
example (1976):

"A model is a representative device. But it is unlike
either of the two main traditional classes of sign.
It is unlike a natural sign in that there is no causal
relationship between a model and its subject, while
a natural sign like smoke is related causally to the

fire that it signifies. It is unlike a conventional
sign, since the choice of a particular model as a
representation is not wholly arbitrary. The selection
of a model is based upon real resemblances and differ-
ences between the model and what it represents, and
decisions as to what are the proper degrees of likeness
and unlikeness can be the subject of argument."

Mary Hesse has also pointed to this rather complex
link between observation and explanation (Hesse, 1976):

"... the commonly accepted distinction between literal
and metaphorical or analogical meanings is as baseless ...
as is the distinction between theoretical and obser-
vation languages in science. All descriptive terminology
is learned and subsequently used by a process of
extension of application and meaning from similars
to similars. I never re-apply the commonest term, such
as 'green', in exactly the same circumstances in which
I learned it, but always by making a (perhaps
unconscious) judgement that this new situation is
sufficiently similar to the old to merit application
of the same universal term. My judgement is not
arbitrary, since it is based on objective similarities
which I am able to recognise, and is attested by the
intersubjective understanding and general agreement
of my language community."

There are two important points which emerge at an
early stage in this discussion. The first is a very
old question in the philosophy of science and yet very
often remains an unaddressed issue in the evaluation
of practical social research; it has to do with whether
the researcher believes that he is in the business
of 'discovery', that is of attempting to reveal what
had previously lain dormant, just waiting to be
found, or whether he sees himself as trying to overlay
observations with some kind of explanatory template
that he has designed specially for this purpose.

The second point, which in a sense follows on from
the first, concerns the relative idiosyncracy of
research findings and the relationship between
particular researchers and the things that they have to
say about their own small corner of the empirical world.
The social scientist would perhaps like to think that
his findings are 'objective'. Conversely, much good
and interesting social commentary is dismissed on the
grounds that it is 'merely subjective'. To take this
latter view surely reflects a naive interpretation
of the linguistic basis of science. To take the
former line may be all well and good, but social
scientists often seem to operate with a rather restricted
model of what objectivity is. Relativity is a concept
that has been in circulation for a long time in the
scientific community, but its full implications for

the process of model construction and explication are not always taken on board. For the purposes of the present study and the ideas that derive from it, we shall regard 'objectivity' as a valued ideal, but take it to mean a secondary use of language which attempts to explain, in its own or other terms, the relationship between ideas that are generated from the research process and the observed phenomena that start that process off. Objectivity represents here a dialogue between observation and explication. It means a continuing attempt to uncover and articulate not only the assumptions upon which particular models are based, but also the meanings behind the language which is used to develop ideas and generate explanations and explanatory concepts. Einstein (1954) made this point very clearly even in relation to the natural sciences:

"What science strives for is an utmost acuteness and clarity of concepts as regards their mutual relation and their correspondence to sensory data."

Objectivity in this sense has nothing to do with method, but is rather an expression of the basis upon which items of knowledge are founded and upon which they can then be used to reach into the unknown.

Putnam (1962) has made the following observations:

"We commonly use formalised objects to serve as models for unformalised objects. We talk about a game whose rules have never been written down in terms of a model of a game whose rules have been agreed upon and codified, and we talk about natural languages in terms of models of formal languages ... I think that we may say that the concept rule of language, as applied to natural language, is an "almost full-grown" theoretical concept. Linguists, sent out to describe a jungle language, describe the language on the model of a formal language. The elements of the model are the expressions and rules of a formal language, that is, a language whose rules are explicitly written down. The corresponding elements in the real world are the expressions of a natural language and certain of the dispositions of the users of that language. The model is not only a useful descriptive device but has genuinely explanatory power."

The phenomenon to which Putnam alludes takes its form in the course of this study as two levels of language use. The terminology of the two does not differ significantly, except in the occasional use and generation of technical terms to stand for phenomena or characteristics that have been identified or described in the language of observation and which are then discussed and related to others in the language of explication.

The use of case histories as a medium both of analysis
and communication also involves this duality of
language. Case histories first describe and then
comment upon observed events, although the shift between
these two modes is often not clean. The cases presented
later in this thesis each have a theme associated
with them. This theme is used to trigger and focus
discussion and commentary around the described events,
representing a kind of working hypothesis in each case.
Such a theme is almost always necessary as a starting
point to any discussion and we look now at some of the
characteristics of how this process can unfold.

2.2.2   On the nature of Case Studies

Case studies can be viewed as amalgams of description
and commentary and they provide a very natural way
both of organising source material and of structuring
its analysis. Popper (1957), evaluating historicism
as a mode of inquiry, has made the following obser-
vations on the question of the standpoint taken by
the would-be historian for the purposes of generating
a commentary:

"... undoubtedly there can be no history without a
point of view; like the natural sciences, history must
be selective unless it is to be choked by a flood of
poor and unrelated material. The attempt to follow

causal chains into the remote past would not help in
the least, for every concrete effect with which we
might start has a great number of partial causes;
that is to say, initial conditions are very complex,
and most of them have little interest for us.

The only way out of this difficulty is, I believe,
consciously to introduce a preconceived selective
point of view into one's history; that is, to write
that history which interests us. This does not
mean that we may twist the facts until they fit into
a framework of preconceived ideas, or that we may
neglect the facts that do not fit. On the contrary,
all available evidence which has a bearing on our point
of view should be considered carefully and objectively ...
But it means that we need not worry about all those
facts and aspects which have no bearing upon our point
of view and which therefore do not interest us."

A number of interesting questions are suggested by
this line of thought. First, what does it really mean
consciously to introduce a preconceived selective
point of view, what purpose does this actually serve
and how is it possible to distinguish between the effects
of this and any unconscious selective point of view
that a writer of history may hold. Second, if we are
not to twist the facts until they fit into a frame-
work of preconceived ideas, what else can we do with
them? Finally, how in any case do we discriminate

between those facts that have a bearing upon a selected
point of view and those that do not?

On the first question, Popper's advocation of the
explicit use of initial reference concepts sounds
rather like a parallel to the use of a hypothesis
in the classical process of scientific inquiry. What
is particularly interesting in both these cases is
the relationship between the hypothesis and the
material, the question and the observations. If you
change the hypothesis, switch the question of interest,
then you presumably glean something different from the
material. This process could be repeated almost
indefinitely for a case study. There is practically
no limit to the things that could be said about it.
A different area of concern suggests new forms of
commentary and new explanatory concepts. But this is
a creative process, there is nothing mechanistic or
automatic about it. The quality of the commentary,
both with respect to its relevance and its rightness,
depends upon the mind that is making the links between
question and material. Ask a different person and
you will get a different answer. Ask the same person
another time and he will make different links and they
may be better and they may be worse, whatever we care
to mean by that in the context of the case. As Grant
(1970) has noted:

"... reality is not only located in the mind, but
is at the mercy of the moods and caprices of that mind,
dilates and contracts with the degree of activity of
the consciousness. Reality is 'for the time being'."

What Popper's initial reference concepts are doing
is to roughly delineate the area of discourse. It
does not matter that the boundaries will seem to be
blurred. In a sense, they cannot be otherwise and it
is the continuing business of the commentary itself,
with its self-conscious use of explanatory language,
its 'objectivity' in our earlier sense, to clarify
what is inside and what is outside. This is the
process of explanation. It is true that the result
is always subject to debate. What is important is to
know what the result is.

On a straightforward linguistic plane, no coherent
commentary could possibly be generated without the
use of a question. Given a set of observed phenomena
and half-an-hour to fill, a commentator would find
it difficult to produce other than a sequence of more
or less disconnected remarks and observations if he
had no theme or slant to which to relate his thinking.
He would almost certainly have one available, however,
or dream one up in order to get going in a 'coherent'
way. Language must respond to language, thinking
proceeds indexically.

But to what extent is this process of generating

explanations therefore rather circular?   In this

context, Kaplan (1964) has noted:

"... the behavioural scientist often makes use of

what might be called the circle of interpretation:

act meanings are inferred from actions and are then

used in the explanation of the actions, or actions

are construed from the acts and then used to explain

the acts.   Thus Collingwood (1946) has said about

the historian that 'when he knows what happened he

already knows why it happened' ..."

It is often difficult to distinguish between the process

of appropriately associating new phenomena with

existing, useful concepts and the process whereby

the characteristics of existing concepts are searched

for in a tangle of observed events.   Kaplan goes on

to say:

"After the moment of the observer's birth no

observation can be undertaken in all innocence.   We

always know something already, and this knowledge is

intimately involved in what we come to know next,

whether by observation or in any other way.   We see

what we expect to see, what we believe we have every

reason for seeing, and while this expectancy can make

for observational error it is also responsible for

veridical perception ..."

Clearly, an important skill of the accomplished researcher
is an ability to somehow be able to step outside the
connotational constraints of his own and others'
established language usage. In the process of trying
to put together a plausible explanation of events and
behaviour, he will attempt to be <u>creative</u> and to look
at the possibilities for forging new connotational
links. The search for such links underlies the very
nature of inquiry.

It is interesting and instructive to view this search
as a design activity in Churchman's (1971) sense:

"... design is thinking behaviour which conceptually
selects among a set of alternatives in order to figure
out which alternative leads to the desired goal or
set of goals. In this regard, design is synonymous
with planning, optimizing, and similar terms that
connote the use of thought as a precursor to action
directed at the attainment of goals."

Each time a researcher is confronted by 'data' and
attempts to make some sense out of what he has seen,
he undertakes a specific design task. It can be argued
that he will be driven in this by two levels of goal:
driven in a rather obvious way by the aim of trying to

produce an explanation at all, but more fundamentally by the objective of trying to construct a linguistic network of concepts and ideas whose meaning characteristics have a particular correspondence with the phenomena he has observed. This is his design problem. Of course it is not only the correspondence that is important. Just as an engineer might be attempting to design a car that has sparkling performance, moderate fuel consumption, and is comfortable, elegant and safe, so will the builder of explanatory models operate with a set of more or less conflicting criteria. His account will certainly have to 'fit the facts', but he may also want it to be 'scientific', persuasive, authoritative, coherent, interesting, brief, graphic, perhaps demonstrably useful for a particular purpose.

As we have argued earlier, if he is concerned with scientific explanations, the researcher's constructed linguistic network must not only achieve a correspondence with the characteristics of observed events, it must also explain and illuminate that correspondence itself. Thus, the reader of his account will be able to first test it against his own interpretation of events and then to examine how the researcher's interpretation is constructed. At least in principle he ought to be able to; yet it can be argued, conversely, that the problem of forcing someone else to accept

the connotational links that you have proposed

between an observation and a linguistic explanation

may be an uphill and sometimes impossible task. In

Mary Hesse's earlier example, a person will only

denote something as green if he or she recognises

it as having the characteristics they recognise as

greenness. If it doesn't seem to be green, then they

will call it something else.

However, Michael Overington (1977) has commented that:

"Whether or not there is a relation between things,

Burke argues that if there is a connotational

relation between the terms which symbolize these

things, then the embedment of such a connotational

relation in the linguistic structures of human mental

processes is sufficient to influence people to

translate this symbolic relation into action (by

providing a sufficient justification, by making sense

for them of the projected action). For example,

to call some occurrence of a death 'murder' is to

justify (explain, motivate) the search for an indi-

vidual who intended to kill."

So that if similar connotational relationships

between the 'symbols' that constitute an explanatory

structure exist for both the analyst who devised

that structure and for his listener, then the listener

will at least be able to make sense of the explanation
in its own terms, i.e. it will appear to have a
consistency and a coherence and will not merely come
over as gobbledegook. This coherence may of itself
lend weight to the plausibility of the explanation.

Coherence is added to an account of observed events
if there is an identifiable linking theme running
through the argument. For the scientific reporter,
such a theme often serves to close a circle of
indexicality and to provide a linguistic starting
point from which a network of cross-referenced
meanings can grow. For the present study, we have
selected particular linking themes after the main
part of the research activity was completed, themes
intended to guide and focus the analysis. Some would
assert that it is not possible to even embark upon
a programme of research without a well-formulated
and particular quest, without a theory or a hypo-
thesis to test. Kaplan (op. cit.) for example has
said that:

"Every theory serves, in part, as a research directive;
theory guides the collection of data and their sub-
sequent analysis, by showing us beforehand where the
data are to be fitted, and what we are to make of them
when we get them. The word 'data' it cannot too often
be emphasised, is an incomplete term, like 'later than';

there are only data for some hypothesis or other.
Without a theory, however provisional or loosely
formulated, there is only a miscellany of observations,
having no significance either in themselves or moreover
against the plenum of fact from which they have been
arbitrarily or accidentally selected."

There is a counter point of view which asserts that
by selecting particular observations after they have
been 'collected' and by describing and arranging
events in a particular way, the analyst can provide
for his audience a good understanding of what he
himself has seen and some insight into why things are
as they are. Some sociological and anthropological
commentaries are founded upon these precepts and are
put together using, intentionally, a rather graphically
descriptive style. Edgar Morin (1971), a sociologist,
adopts this technique in his report on a three-year
study of a village community in south-west Brittany,
Plodemet:

"... the station square is half empty and barely used
since the railroad was discontinued and the station
demolished. A rather lifeless market is set up every
month on the large rectangular site. The two hotels
are located in this part of the town because of its
proximity to the station that was. Both are rustic,
despite the influx of visitors during the summer;

their restaurants refuse parties that are too large

in summer and parties that are too small in winter ...

The pork butcher makes his own pate and sells factory-

made meat products, dairy produce and chickens. He

has an electric spit, and in the last few years he

has taken up preparing cooked dishes for the summer

visitors. The electrician floods his planoply of

gadgets with neon lighting - refrigerators, gas stoves,

water-heaters, electric mixers (called anthropomorphically

"Charlotte" and "Marie"), television sets, record

players, records (Adamo, Johnny Halliday, Hugues

Auffray in 1965)."

Images selected and strung together in prose, meaning

deriving essentially from the selection, their

juxtaposition and the style of description. The

explanation is not explicit but it is nevertheless

there. It becomes progressively clear as soon as

you latch on to the fact that Morin's main focus of

interest is the process of change wrought upon the

village by the forward march of the economy.

Appreciation of this theme throws the network of

'description' into perspective and images are then

not only graphic in themselves but contribute points

to a wider argument.

Morin's research techniques were not dissimilar from

those used by most field investigators of social

behaviour. Morin notes:

"The inquiry, which lasted one year, was followed
by a further period lasting eighteen months, in
which thousands of notes, pages, and yards of recording
tape were broken down and an attempt made to recreate,
out of thousands of fragments, clues, and 'snapshots'
a being which, unlike the paleontologist's dinosaur
or the archaelogist's Troy, will never have any
corporeal existence: a changing society. We had to
compose and decompose, reconsider and reject, examine
facts and ideas from a number of different points of
view, meditate, reflect, in short think, in the
preindustrial, precybernetic sense ..."

Morin is here referring himself to that creative
process whereby ideas about data are somehow derived
from thinking about it. By 'precybernetic' he seems
to mean that the activity has no prior structured
rules for arriving at the correspondence between
data and ideas. However, he does make use of a
reference concept - "a changing society." This is
the theme that Morin uses to throw his material into
perspective. This is the selected 'point-of-view'
that Popper (op.cit.) deems necessary for generating
a historical account.

What is curious is that Morin's account hardly seems

to depend upon a theoretical language, or indeed any

formal or meta-language for its explanatory power.

It is almost as though the explanation is self-

explanatory. But it is not true that the commentary

can be regarded as merely 'description', since there

is a clearly emerging set of theories about the

changing society. "An old community in a state of

metamorphosis" is at once a prior suspicion, an early

'finding', a reference concept guiding the research

as it continues, a grand conclusion and an organising

force behind the narrative.

Medawar (1969) has reflected upon the efficacy of

what are normally understood by the methods of

science for this kind of investigation:

"I very much doubt whether a methodology based on

the intellectual practices of physicists and biologists

(supposing that method to be sound) would be of any

great use to sociologists. On the contrary, the

influence of inductivism ... has in the main been

mischievous. It has stirred up in some sociologists

the ambition to ascertain the laws of social change,

above all by the painstaking accumulation of data

out of which general principles will in due course

take shape. The elevated prose and studied postures

of a flourishing school of social anthropology in France

today are best explained away as a reaction against

the crude scientism of those who have urged upon
sociologists the adoption of a style of investigation
which they do not use themselves and cannot authen-
ticate from their own experience."

Medawar would prefer to separate the activities of
sociology from those of natural science, a desire which
has been expressed by many sociologists and physicists
alike. Yet both groups are attempting some kind of
inquiry and both would no doubt argue that they attempt
to go about this business in a more or less disciplined
way.

It seems important to draw some kind of distinction
between the 'methodology' and 'intellectual practices'
to which Medawar refers. Methodology is commonly used
to denote the complete baggage of methods and techniques
that a researcher brings to his work and uses to
identify issues relevant to a particular quest, to
collect data in a more or less systematic way, to keep
a check on the quality of that data and then to draw
considered conclusions about the quest on the basis
of that evidence.

This kind of scheme for disciplined inquiry could apply
in principle to natural scientist and sociologist alike.
But there are some important operational differences
and it is these, perhaps, to which Medawar was referring

as intellectual practices. In particular, the last two

stages present significantly different problems for

the sociologist than they do for the natural scientist.

Social phenomena are also fundamentally different

from material phenomena, as Silverman (1970) has

noted:

"Matter itself does not understand its own behaviour.

It is literally meaningless until the scientist imposes

his frame of reference upon it. There is no possibility

of apprehending its subjective intentions and the logic

of its behaviour may be understood solely by observation

of the behaviour itself. The action of men, on the

other hand, is meaningful to them. While the observer

perceives water boiling when it has reached a certain

temperature, men themselves define their situation

and act in certain ways in order to attain certain

ends. In doing so, they construct a social world."

The question of whether or not this difference in the

nature of the material means that the essential

process of gaining knowledge is different for social

and natural science is more difficult to resolve. On

the question of the validity of data, the natural

scientist is very often concerned with the concept

of contamination. He would prefer to think that the

measurements he is taking are related to what he

thinks they ought to be and that the effects that he
is observing or otherwise detecting are not partially
determined by other variables of which he has no
knowledge or over which he has no control. He
therefore devises a system of cross-checks designed
to reveal the presence of such rogues.

The social researcher is in a similar position if
he has restricted his inquiry to a particular aspect
of an observed phenomenon which, perforce, he is
usually obliged to do. But his special difficulty
is that the 'variables' with which he is dealing are
not well-defined at the outset. This is partly because
of the relative newness of the concepts he is using,
partly because of the sheer complexity and relative
indeterminacy of social phenomena, partly because the
inquiry process itself merges with the situation being
looked at and partly because he is less concerned with
quantity and more concerned with quality. As a result,
the social researcher often finds that he is in the
business of helping to define variables rather than
measuring them or devising a formal calculus that links
them causally together.

However, this process of definition is open-ended.
The variables or concepts under construction can
continue to grow in meaning as more and more data is
brought into correspondence with them. The question

of validity becomes problematic since all data may
be argued to be equally valid, or else none of it is.

To return to our outline of a process of inquiry,
the stage of drawing conclusions can become the
equivalent to the addition of meaning to an idea, the
task of refining and helping to delineate a concept.
Here we come up against a further complexity,
surrounding the relationship between 'data' and
'concept'. This appears to be another dimension to
the difference in intellectual practices to which
Medawar refers. It is probably a difference in degree
rather than of kind, since the natural scientist
must also forge his own conceptual links between
observation and finding. But he is often dealing
with a relatively self-contained 'subject'. The
sociologist usually feels himself to be dealing with
the whole world, all that has gone on in it socially,
all that _is_ going on in it, all that people have said
and thought about that and all that they are currently
saying and thinking.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) have noted that:

"Generating a theory from data means that most hypo-
theses and concepts not only come from the data, but
are systematically worked out in relation to the data
during the course of the research. Generating a

<u>theory involves a process of research</u>. By contrast,

the <u>source</u> of certain ideas, or even 'models', can

come from sources other than the data."

How concepts and data might be related to each other

they don't go on to say. Glaser and Strauss presume

that in some sense theory that is derived from data

is better than theory that isn't. This may often be

so, but it is the degree of correspondence which

finally exists between the data and the language of

theory which is of ultimate importance. The problem

is that this correspondence is difficult to measure,

firmly lodged as it is upon linguistic foundations

which provide the meaning for themselves as well as

what is built upon them. In this context, Quine (1970)

has talked about 'grades of theoreticity':

"The notion of a molecule or positron is more theor-

etical than that of a golf ball or rabbit. By this

I mean that it is more remote from the data ...

Preparatory to assessing grades of theoreticity, or

distances from the data, we ought to settle what to

count as data. They are supposed to be, as nearly as

possible, the uninterpreted testimony of the senses.

Thus it was that Berkeley and others have conceived

of our visual data as two-dimensional and looked upon

three-dimensional vision as the product of interpretation."

One of the primary concerns of the present research

has been the interplay between two-dimensional and

three-dimensional vision in this sense. Our intention

has been to add meaning to a number of concepts

that seem to be important for the understanding of some

of the processes of group-decision making. This

meaning is added in stages by a process of triangu-

lation. The concepts that we have used have partly

been suggested by an initial consideration of the

'data' in Glaser and Strauss's sense, partly from

one's own past experience of decision-making

behaviour in groups and partly from the literature.

Whatever their precise origins, we proceed, by bringing

data and concepts together, to make sense of the data

and attempt to understand some of the determining

forces behind the events that unfolded. By the same

process, we aim to elaborate the meanings of the

concepts both by relating them to data and, in certain

cases, to each other.

The five central chapters of this thesis are each

associated with a particular theme. This is the concept

that we are researching in each case. They are, in

order of treatment:

- The Hypergame

- Collective Purpose

- The Leader-Driver

- Personal Interest

- Satisficing

The Hypergame is a recent conceptual development in
game theory (Bennett, 1977) and is a model of strategic
interaction. It has some intuitively 'life-like'
qualities that are missing from many game-based models.
Specifically, it allows that the various participants
in a strategic interaction have different perceptions
of what everyone else is trying to achieve and how.
Chapter 3 outlines the concept of a Hypergame,
examines the constituent elements and shows how they
relate to each other. We then consider the history
of a particular case of the Housing Assessment Team in
Hypergame terms, attempting to formulate certain
aspects of it in strategic form. By this process
we generate some possible interpretations of events,
illuminate some of the things that happened and some
of the things that were said. By the same token, we
elaborate the meaning of the elements that comprise a
Hypergame, adding perspective as they are brought
close to the data.

Chapter 4 looks at some aspects of the concept of
Collective Purpose, and develops this notion with
reference to the same case that informs Chapter 3.
We also triangulate this concept against the idea
of Personal Interest. The two have been argued to

lie at opposite poles of a continuum (Zander, 1971)

but we consider in this chapter, and in chapter 6

which deals particularly with Personal Interests, how

the two phenomena were manifested in our own data.

Chapter 5 introduces the concept of the Leader-Driver

in order to explain certain characteristics of those

decision-making groups which are low both on Collective

Purpose and Personal Interests. We consider how the

apparent lack of direction in such cases can leave the

way clear for determining forces which derive from

the process of discussion and debate itself. The

Leader-Driver in this sense refers to the mysterious

direction that can suddenly appear almost from nowhere

to push events towards a decision outcome when nobody

seems to be pushing.

Chapter 6 examines some dimensions of Personal

Interest that were revealed in the course of a

particular Housing Assessment Case in which a public

inquiry caused some of the team's reasoning to be

externally evaluated. We look at some of the ways

in which Personal Interests can be expressed within

an organisational context and consider the scope for

conflict with aspects of Collective Purpose.

Chapter 7 looks at the concept of satisficing, as

developed by March and Simon (1963), and it considers

the events of another case in these terms. In
particular, we see how satisficing behaviour can be
associated with policies of 'laisser faire' and how
a decision-making process that involves more than one
person can be seen in terms of a sequence of more or
less delayed responses to the actions or contributions
of each of the parties.

Chapter 8 brings together important issues and
conclusions about group-decision making that emerge from
the previous chapters. Finally, in chapter 9, we reflect
upon some of the strategies that were employed for
collecting data in the course of this study and make
some final comments upon the nature of the findings
that were obtained and the way in which they have been
presented.

Glaser and Strauss (op. cit.) have argued that:

"In discovering theory, one generates conceptual
categories or their properties from evidence; then
the evidence from which the category emerged is used
to illustrate the concept. The evidence may not
necessarily be accurate beyond a doubt ... but the
concept is undoubtedly a relevant theoretical
abstraction about what is going on in the area studied."

The categories represented by the five themes of the

centre chapters of this thesis were not generated
purely from the data provided by the Housing Assessment
Team. They were well developed already and much
has been written about them. However, the cases
selected for analysis against each of these theme
concepts exhibited some indicators of the respective
concepts and were therefore appropriate vehicles to
be used for their illumination, whatever the degree
of fit eventually turned out to be. It is part of our
thesis that both data and explanatory concept will
derive meaning from being brought together, even if
the 'fit' is poor or even negative. Thus, the notion
of Collective Purpose is lent a further dimension by
considering the extent to which Personal Interest is
related to it. Similarly, looking at what turns out
to be an essentially non-strategic situation with
reference to concepts of strategy adds further
refinement to what we mean by strategy as an idea.
It also uncovers a sense in which an interaction
can be regarded as relating to this concept in a
negative way, that is if it appears not to be
characterised by strategy at all or only in part.

We gain further perspective by considering how the
concepts relate to each other. The strategic
structure suggested by a Hypergame has Personal Interest
as a core component. But it is important to consider
other ways of looking at interests and the notion of

Collective Purpose is an important example which is
also related to Personal Interest as an idea. Strategic
interaction implies the objective of optimising, but
it is important to consider other standards of attain-
ment and so we examine the concept of satisficing to
add further perspective. Finally, if the element of
strategy is weak and interests are not the major
driving force in certain examples of group decision
making, then it is important to consider other factors
that might be important. Hence our concept of Leader-
Driver is brought into play.

As a second objective of this research, we have been
interested in reflecting upon the relationship between
empirical observations and what can be said about them.
This theme has been considered in this chapter and is
also threaded through the rest of the thesis. Part
of our method of presentation has been to juxtapose
observation with 'three dimensional' interpretation.
The reader is then able to draw some conclusions
himself from the data and compare these with what we
have inferred ourselves. He will not, of course, have
access to the great quantity of background knowledge
which has informed our own commentary.

To the extent that we have attempted to remain self-
conscious about this process of analysis and tried to
stay aware of what we appear to know about it and what

we do not, then this inquiry can be said to be scientific. We have suggested that one of the hallmarks of scientific inquiry is having available some considered basis for adjudging the status of the knowledge that is produced. We have argued that it is almost impossible for this adjudgment to take the form of measurement in the social research. The consumer of such research must, in the end, consider what is said in the light of his own experience, evaluate the epistemology that he believes the commentator to be using and evaluate its sensibility and utility accordingly.

In our search for an authentic understanding of the meanings that lay behind the events discussed in this thesis, we have attempted to get to know the main participants as well as possible. The fieldwork of this research covered a period of well over a year and many more conversations and discussions took place, particularly with the members of HAT, than could be alluded to here. We have attempted to include a sensible and representative selection of material, but it must be remembered that some of the conclusions that have been drawn will, perforce, have been <u>partly</u> informed by data of a rather elusive nature imbued, and sometimes imbibed, over a considerable period of time.

3   <u>A HYPERGAME MODEL OF GROUP INTERACTION</u>

3.1   <u>Introduction</u>

The Housing Assessment case presented in this chapter

will be discussed and illuminated with reference to a

recent development in game theory. Hypergame Analysis

(Bennett, 1977a, 1977b; Bennett and Dando, 1977, 1979)

is a method of game modelling which allows that the

players have, in general, different perceptions of the

game being played. It is an insightful way of looking

at group interactions in which the members are assumed,

in general, to be operating with incongruent motives

and with more or less inaccurate ideas of the motives

of everyone else.

We begin by describing the events of a particular case

that appeared on the HAT agenda for several months.

We then introduce the notion of the hypergame and

discuss its relationship with and derivation from

classical game theory. Finally we discuss the stages

of a hypergame analysis with reference to the case

itself and draw some conclusions about both the feasi-

bility and the value of this kind of analysis.

3.2.   <u>A Summary Case History</u>

The events which formed the subject-matter of this

particular series of meetings centred around the

considerable debate and discussions over the future

of the site and area surrounding a group of 'preserved'

artisan cottages. These cottages were located next to

an empty area of wasteground which had potential as

both a building and a development site.

The cottages in question form a terrace of four and

stand at the top of Bedford Street, just off the old

London Road. They first appeared on the agenda of

the Housing Assessment Team back in July 1978, having

been found to fail to meet the minimum standards for

occupation. Although the lower two cottages stand

empty, two families live in the larger pair next to

the London Road, which carries a large volume of traffic.

Bedford Street is a rather shabby cul-de-sac running south

away from the old London Road and dropping steeply

down towards the River Avon. The main road at that

point contains a motley collection of shops inter-

spersed with the occasional seedy looking office,

usually with a blackened brass plate at the door and

grey net curtains at the dusty windows. This whole

area, just on the fringe of the city centre, had

recently been designated by the Planning Department

as being in need of 'tidying up'. Property prices

and rates here are lower than they are a few hundred

yards up the road.

Opposite and below the cottages, between the main road
and the river, is an area of virtual wasteland which
is currently being used as a free car park by shoppers
and by the employees of a nearby bank. At the bottom
of this site, which is about a hundred yards square,
and down towards the river, an old brewery is now being
used as a workshop for a small motor repair business.
The mechanics also occupy a couple of semi-derelict
corrugated iron sheds. Most of the land on which
these buildings and the car park stand is owned by a
Mr. H, who is also the proprietor of a nearby furniture
store. Mr H, in conjunction with a local firm of
property developers, B's Ltd., has recently submitted
to the Planning Department a set of outline plans for
the construction of 26 two-bedroomed flats, in blocks
of three and four high. A number of different parties
have an interest in this proposal as follows:

(i) First, and forming the basis of our initial
     interest in the case, the Housing Assessment
     Team has its own official brief to try and
     devise a satisfactory and workable future for
     the cottages and their occupants. According
     to this brief, they will collectively attempt
     to weigh such considerations as the well-being
     of the occupants, the condition of the cottages,
     the short and longer term housing requirements
     of the city, the costs and benefits of conser-

vation, the industrial potential of the site

and its prospects for providing employment, the

long term plans of the council for the immediate

surrounding area and so on. Their main official

objective is the general improvement of the city

housing stock and they consider other possible

or proposed developments in relation to this

primary purpose.

(ii) The potential developers: Mr H who owns the land

and B's Ltd. who would carry out the work. There

is another possible developer who had once offered

to buy the site from H and has twice submitted

outline plans for a multi-storey car park. These

have both been turned down and it doesn't look

as though the scheme has much chance of getting

started. The owners and some occupants of the

London Road properties that overlook the Bedford

Street site also have an interest in this case.

They seem to be concerned that the views of the

river presently enjoyed from their upper floors

should not be obstructed by the new development.

A few of them are insisting that if the proposed

housing plan is approved, then three of the

planned four storey blocks should be truncated

to three storeys. This would reduce the number

of housing units from 26 to 23 and the developers

are arguing that this threatens the whole financial

viability of the scheme. They say that in this

case, they would seriously consider reverting

to an alternative, light industrial development

for which outline planning permission has already

been approved. This may be a piece of negotiating

bluff against the Planners, who would prefer to

see the housing rather than the industrial

development on the Bedford Street site, although

rough costings carried out by HAT seem to

indicate that 23 units does indeed represent

a rather marginal return on the project.

(iii) The councillors who sit on the Planning Committee

and the relevant Planning Sub-Committee are by no

means in agreement themselves over what should be

done. Most tend to support housing development

in this part of the city rather than industrial

development, but even some of these think that

the proposed scheme detracts environmentally from

the area. Others believe that the area has, in

any case, no particularly significant image to

detract from. One member is especially concerned

about the height of the planned blocks of flats

and the effect both aesthetically and upon the

outlook enjoyed by existing neighbouring

properties. Another is campaigning for a pair

of old oak trees which would have to be cut down

if the builders moved in. Another is worried

about the general question of over-development

on the river bank and the risk of gradual

degredation of this leisure amenity.

Perhaps rather paradoxically, none of those

members of the council who specifically represent

the ward in which Bedford Street lies, appear to

be showing any great interest in any of these

issues or discussions. None of them sits on

the Planning Committee and none has made any

representation to this committee or elsewhere.

None of the ward members or any of the public

has seemed to be concerned with the case, save

for those few who have connections with the

London Road properties that back onto the site

and, of course, the two families who occupy the

terrace cottages.

(iv) The Planners have at least an official interest

in this case. The terraced cottages which

represent the core of the Housing Assessment

Team's problem, are listed buildings. The planning

representative on the team would himself prefer

them to be maintained. He does concede, however,

that there are plenty of similar buildings in

and around Bath and the bit of heritage to which

they contribute, whatever it represents, would

not be greatly threatened by their removal. If

the Planning Department were able to come to a
suitable arrangement with the contractors, then
they would probably consider applying to the
Department of the Environment for listed building
consent to demolish the cottages. At the same
time, a local conservation group is pressing for
the preservation of both the cottages and the old
brewery at the bottom of the site. Any of the
proposed development plans would require this to
be demolished.

(v) The two families who currently occupy the pair
of cottages nearest the main road would probably
have continued to live there for a considerable
time undisturbed, but for the fact that the
properties came to the attention of the Housing
Assessment Team through one of their preliminary
surveys. Now that their future is under official
discussion, someone will probably need to find
some money to bring them back to the minimum
standard for occupation. The families themselves
will almost certainly be unable to raise the
finance and the job will have to fall either to
the City Council or to a private developer who
would be prepared to take them on, perhaps in
conjunction with a larger scheme.

This case, then, seems at first sight to be characterised by the relatively large set of interested parties involved and the extent to which there is an inherent conflict between certain of those interests. One of the secondary objects of the current research was to try to discover to what extent Bennett's Hypergame framework of analysis was useful in practice in understanding the dynamics of this kind of situation. We now introduce more formally the concept of a Hypergame, discuss some of its characteristics and look at how it is related to certain of the fundamental ideas in classical game theory.

3.3   The Hypergame as a Derivative of Classical Game Theory

We shall not be concerned here with the mathematical and logical foundations of game theory as they were originally set down and developed by Von Neumann and Morgenstern (1953). A whole algebra has been built upon these precepts and it is not part of our purpose to become entangled with it. We shall introduce the notion of a Hypergame as it was conceived and defined by Bennett (op. cit.) because this representation of situations of conflict intuitively appears to be able to attend to what Berresford and Dando (1978) have referred to as 'adequate conceptual complexity'.

As Rapoport (1962) has noted of game theory itself:

"The value of game theory is not in the specific

solutions it offers in highly simplified and idealised

situations, which may occur in formalised games but

hardly ever do in real life. Rather, the prime value

of the theory is that it lays bare the different kinds

of reasoning that apply in different kinds of conflict."

Some important assumptions in 'classical' experimental

gaming were those concerning:

(a)   The specificity of the situation being considered

      and

(b)   the behaviour of the players in relation to the

      laid-down rules of the game.

First, it was always assumed in the course of experiments

that the possible outcomes of the game were well

specified and that each player had a known and consis-

tent pattern of preferences amongst them. It was also

assumed that variables which controlled the possible

outcomes were well specified in that one could precisely

characterise all the variables and all the values that

they could take. In short, it was held that one was

dealing with games whose rules were well defined to

all players. No possibility was allowed that different

players had different ideas about how the game should

be played.

Second, game theory traditionally made assumptions

about the behaviour of players, in that they were

assumed to be 'rational', motivated precisely by their own utility functions which they understood precisely. Players were also assumed to fully appreciate their opponents' utility functions.

The rather arbitrary and simplistic nature of these assumptions was well appreciated by many of those researchers of strategy who were involved with using or developing game theory. Luce and Adams (1956) observed that:

"A basic assumption of the theory of games is that each player correctly perceives the payoff functions of the other players. This assumption seems highly unrealistic ..."

Nigel Howard, who has done much to extend the mathematical and representative sophistication of game models, comments (Howard, 1977):

"A game-theoretic model omits many factors (e.g. players' individual psychologies) that affect real-world outcomes. It investigates only the strategic factors."

The concept of conflict is fundamental to the basis of game-related models. Part of the authenticity of any particular model will clearly depend upon the

extent to which the explicit and implicit tenets of conflict are in fact reflected in practice. Vickers (1968) has argued that we may use the idea of conflict in two distinct senses. The first, which might be described as 'theoretical' conflict, relates to those situations in which the interests of particular individuals or groups can be demonstrated to be in some way incompatible, so that the fulfilment or partial fulfilment of one person's aims or objectives would mean the denial, to some degree, of those of another. It is perfectly conceivable in such instances that the individuals concerned may not perceive this tension of interests themselves. Whether they do or not, the conflict might be highlighted by an observer on the basis of some elicited statements about the parties' preferences, or inferred from their past or present behaviour.

Vickers' second sense of the word 'conflict' is commonly used to refer to a clearly observable state of animosity between particular individuals or groups. We might describe this as 'symptomatic' conflict. Symptomatic conflict can arise whether or not there is a real theoretical conflict of interests and can often confuse any analysis of the forces underlying the situation as it is observed. A gaming model that is fitted to empirical data is usually attempting to map the relationship between players' interests in a

simple way and, hence, to make explicit any theoretical
conflict that may exist. The researcher who is using
such a model to reflect the characteristics of his
real-life setting is first faced with the problem of
eliciting or deciding what those interests are. What
the individuals may tell him or what he may see for
himself can often be centred around symptomatic conflict,
which may or may not represent the existence of a real
disparity of interests.

The 'classical' theory includes mixed-motive games
such as the Prisoner's Dilemma which account for the
possibility of 'rational co-operation'; that is, the
theoretical conflict between the players is not total.
Both can benefit by co-operating to further the other's
interests. When such games have been played in an
experimental sense it has been observed that, not-
withstanding the configuration of the game matrix, the
extent to which players wholeheartedly pursue their
own interests depends markedly upon the individual
concerned, differences in personality and his
perceptions of his opponent's intentions in this
direction. Many results have been obtained which bear
upon these findings (Slack and Cook, 1973; Hottes
and Kahn, 1974; Kelley and Stahelski, 1970; Kuhlman
and Marshello, 1975a, 1975b).

Trehune (1974) has carried out extensive experiments

with the Prisoner's Dilemma game and concluded that different personality subjects developed significantly different levels of conflict by the end of 150 trials of the game. He suggests that the main way in which personality governs conflict in Prisoner's Dilemma and similar games is not through a direct correlation of individual predispositions, but rather that the joint configuration of actor personalities predisposes the social system to develop characteristic forms of behaviour during extended interaction among its actor-components. The 'group' of players seems to build up predictable patterns of responses which can be seen to relate to that group alone.

Sermat (1967) has carried out experiments in which the behaviour of players, in terms of their disposition towards conflict or co-operation, has been modified by feeding back information about opponents' strategies. More recently, Dando and Bee (1977) have investigated the effect of players having different aims in game experiments, concluding that:

"... the experimenter cannot assume that his view of the situation corresponds with that of the players. In particular, he cannot assume that the players will necessarily adopt his specification of the aim of the game."

Dando and Bee characterised three types of player in
the course of their experiments. These were: own
gain maximisers, joint gain maximisers and relative
gain maximisers. These types effectively represented
three different interpretations of the stated aims
of the game. Clearly, the competitive spirit assumed
to exist in game participants is not always central
to their behaviour.

In a preliminary Hypergame Analysis of the fall of
France to Germany in 1940, Bennett and Dando (1977)
noted that:

"... one of the most important factors in this case
was the difference between the opposing High Commands'
perceptions as to what were the strategic possibilities.
Their choices were based on arguments that apply to
different games. The assumption of players' 'complete'
information is clearly violated in this case - and,
it can be argued, is violated in most interesting
real-world conflicts. We cannot give a satisfactory
account in terms of a single 'objective' or 'inter-
subjective' game, or meta-games based on such a common
game. Nor is the problem one of decision-making under
uncertainty, in the sense of the participants being
aware that their information was incomplete."

A hypergame is essentially viewed as a game in which

the players are assumed, in general, to be playing according to different sets of rules. Each player has his own set of strategies, his own perceptions of the possible outcomes and his own system of preferences relating to those outcomes. He may also, though not necessarily, attribute different possible strategies, perceived outcomes and preferences to each of his opponents.

According to Bennett (1977), a hypergame

"... is a system comprised of a set of games, each game being interpreted as expressing a particular player's perception of the situation. Players' actions are not analysed as moves in some objectively-given game, but as simultaneous moves in this linked set of perceptual games."

The possibility exists, then, for a player to be subject to strategic surprise, in cases where an opponent had more strategies than he had perceived. Therefore, a completely unforseen result could be obtained.

More formally, Bennett offers the following definition:

"An n-person hypergame in normal form is a system consisting of the following:

H1 :   a set Pn, of n elements

H2 :   for each p, q $\in$ Pn, a non-empty finite set S_p^q

H3 :   for each p, q $\in$ Pn, an ordering relationship O_p^q

            defined over the product space S_1^q x . . . x S_n^q

The elements of Pn are interpreted as the players of

the hypergame. S_p^q and O_p^q are interpreted respect-

ively as the set of strategies for player p, and p's

preference ordering, as perceived by q. That is, they

express q's perception of p's options and aims. Just

as an n-person game can be represented using an

n-dimensional matrix, so an n-person hypergame can be

pictured in the form of n n-dimensional matrices.

The sets S_1^q , ... S_n^q make up q's strategy matrix.

Together with Pn and the orderings O_1^q , ... O_n^q they

will be said to comprise player q's game within the

hypergame. The hypergame can thus be considered as

a set of n games, one for each player."

Although we shall intentionally not be concerned here

with any of the mathematical analyses that can be

carried out with game matrices, we have included this

formal definition of a hypergame to help ensure

complete clarity of the concept. Experience has shown

(Dando and Sharp, 1977; Wilcox, 1972; Noton, Mitchell

and Janes, 1974; Bennett and Dando, 1979; Bennett,

1977a, 1977b) that by far the greatest value to be

obtained from this kind of structural analysis derives

from the analyst appreciating the structure that is
proposed and then considering collections of observed
events in the light of that structure. Game matrix
analysis is almost prohibitively complex once one moves
beyond the simple two player system with a very
limited number of strategies. Even Bennett has not
been able to make much mathematical sense out of any
other than two player hypergames. Programming any
such processing, even if a satisfactory algorithm
could be agreed, would in any case be a question of
producing multitudinous incomprehensible variations
upon a rather simple theme.

The prime value of a hypergame analysis rests with
its ability to give the researcher a much greater
range of concept possibilities than he would other-
wise have had. Once he has appreciated the ideas
proposed in the model, then the nature of his thinking
about the relation between what he observes and how
he makes sense of that is significantly changed. He
is then on the look out for diverse perceptions of the
situation by the 'players', which could perhaps help
to explain otherwise puzzling or 'illogical' outcomes.
He has at his disposal an improved stock of conceptual
categories for so doing. We move on now to consider
the present case in these hypergaming terms.

3.4   Phases of a Hypergame Analysis

3.4.1   Seeing the Hypergame

The process of attempting to understand some of the

forces and motives that may have contributed to an

observed chain of events is necessarily rooted in

the past experience of the individual concerned.

Dilthey (1961) has observed that:

"Understanding rests on what we might call an inside

view of human nature which we all possess. We are

certainly not all psychologically sophisticated; we

have not analysed ourselves and traced our motives.

Indeed, where we think that we know our motives we

often delude ourselves; a spectator may understand

them better. Thus we have no privileged psychological

knowledge. Indeed, we are not talking about psycho-

logical knowledge but about something much more simple

and fundamental. We know what it is like to be angry

or happy, to remember or to make an effort towards

a goal. We also experience certain connections in

our mental life directly, how a memory may produce

grief or desire and how such desire may prompt us to

action.

... The employment of these basic insights allows us

to understand other people. Such understanding is

neither mysterious nor infallible. It can be described

as based on a kind of analogical argument."

Attempting to analyse the events of a case history
with reference to a particular set of related ideas
involves this kind of process, and this is partly what
we mean by 'seeing the hypergame'. We take as a
starting point some of the things that were said
about the Bedford Street housing case by some of the
would-be players.

R is the co-ordinator and chairman of the Housing
Assessment Team and he had this to say when I asked
him about the kinds of consideration that he bore in
mind when trying to work out the best outcomes of
housing cases in general and the Bedford Street case
in particular:

"That's difficult to say. It's basically a question
of compromising between all kinds of different
interests. As far as HAT is concerned, some people
on the Council and in this department see us as just
a group of public health inspectors dabbling in
housing. But we try to look at problems with a wider
brief than that. The Bedford Street story is a
good case in point. I mean, as you know, we have
been following the planning proposals right from
the beginning and trying to work out our own ideas
around them. The whole area there has to be

considered in its entirety, as with all planning really, otherwise you get a hotch-potch of developments with everyone doing their own thing."

I then asked R to what extent he thought that the participants in a case such as Bedford Street had important personal interests that they would always seek to pursue regardless of anyone who was trying to mediate in the interests of compromise.

"Everyone has their own hobby-horse of course, particularly the councillors. Party politics often comes into it, and personalities too. I mean B (a labour councillor) will almost always argue with anything that G (a woman conservative councillor) has to say. And H (a Head of Department) is very political with a small p. He is always pushing his department in some way, always keen to expand its area of influence. I suppose we're the same in a way. Nobody likes to appear incompetent do they, so we always try to make a professional job of our reports and we always try to come down on one side or the other and make positive recommendations to the committee. Housing Assessment is a comparatively new idea as you know, and there are still a number of people, particularly around the departments, who think that it is all a lot of fuss over nothing. So naturally I look to my own interests in that way.

Housing Assessment is now the biggest part of my job

after all."

It is interesting to note from these comments that

R, although he clearly recognises that individuals

involved in a particular case will each have their

own interests to serve (and he doesn't exclude himself

from this) he at the same time seems to maintain the

notion that at the middle of it all there is some

universally recognisable and common problem to be

solved and that, to a large extent, the people con-

cerned will usually work together, or at least try

to appear to work together, in trying to thrash it out.

Evidence from other participants in this case suggests

that this perspective is commonly held. Individuals

that we spoke to were each

- prepared to give and take in the course of both

  formal and informal discussions, on a kind of

  direct transactional basis i.e. to support another

  party in their point of view, always provided that

  this wasn't in direct conflict with their own

  interests and provided that they themselves were

  supported later or had already been supported

  in return.

- inclined to hold that, whatever the line that

  they might be vigorously pursuing to further their

  own interests, there was still a common problem

  ground somewhere in the middle that they had some

kind of official commitment to try and sort out.

This conceptual separation between an individual's
and the group's interests is a well researched
phenomenon (for example, Anderson and Graesser, 1976;
Black, 1948; Cooper, 1975; Curtis, 1974; Dearborn and
Simon, 1958; Doise, 1969; Driver and Streufert, 1969;
Dror, 1968; Hall, Mouton and Blake, 1963; Lewin,
1952; Moscovici, 1969; Shaw, 1932, 1947; Thomas and
Fink, 1961). Using a gaming analogy, it is almost
as if an individual and the working group of which he
is a member could be denoted as separate players in
the same game. J, the Planning Department's represen-
tative on the Housing Assessment Team alluded to this
idea in lay terms when I was asking him how he saw
the outcome of the case developing.

"It is as though I am wearing two completely different
hats, which is a rather strange idea when you think
about it. I am a planner by background and also by
departmental allegiance really. But I also have
this Housing Assessment part of the job. I mean from
that point of view this complex of flats that H and
B are proposing are a good idea. Functional sort
of housing units and not too expensive - funded by
private money as well. But they're pretty grim
looking, you know. It's a terrible shame that people
have to live in hutches like that. When you think of

how civilised parts of the city are, and indeed were
a couple of hundred years ago. We're going steadily
backwards really. But people don't seem to mind.
They queue up for these places actually."

Here, J is reiterating the concept of a bureaucracy
in the Weberian sense (Weber, 1947). The oft recog-
nised distinction between the individual 'as a person'
and 'speaking as a member of ...' Understanding their
actions involves understanding these different reference
points, understanding when you are watching the
individual and when the member of the organisation.
The two identities can merge together also and indi-
vidual views can be propounded within an organisational
framework or vice versa. Nowhere is this kind of
schitzophrenia more common than in the world of
local government. The officers' whole training and
culture rests upon putting aside their own personal
opinions, aiming to be 'neutral', 'objective', 'non-
political'. But of course they cannot be and so a
researcher is always coming up against such
disclaimers as 'off the record ...', 'wearing my
departmental hat ...', 'speaking as me personally ...',
'being non-political now ...' as markers between the
bureaucracy and the man.

In the Bedford Street case, the prospective developers
of the site are perhaps in a clearer cut position

than anyone else on the question of individual

interests. They have a plan which they presumably

believe would be profitable for them to put into

action. Before they can do this, certain official

requirements have to be met. Mr H, owner of the

land in question, saw his objectives quite clearly:

"It's simply business for me. I've had this land

for a while now - bought it up quite cheaply when

I had a bit of capital to spare. Then just sat on

it. I reckoned it couldn't do any harm. I know B

through the Rotary and he came up with this scheme.

We just want to make a bit of money. You've got to

find it where you can these days. I think the council

are basically on our side because the city needs more

housing in this middle bracket. They've got to be

seen to going along with the Bath planning principles

though. It's all hot air though. That whole area is

not much to write home about. It wouldn't really matter

a damn what we put up so long as it does the job."

H has a gamelike view of the situation. Conflict

seems to be part of his analysis; '... the council

are basically on our side ...' His purpose appears

to be well-defined; '... We just want to make a bit

of money ...' He has a model of how an important

opponent sees the situation; '... got to be seen to

be going along with the Bath planning principles ...'

When I spoke with him about the case, he also seemed
to see it very much in terms of a 'fun' game also
and was interested in the whole business of weaving
his way through it much as he might perhaps enjoy a
game of 'Monopoly'.

The City Council members principally involved with
this case are those who sit on the Planning Committee.
Disentangling their motives is even more difficult
than it is for the paid officers. Party politics
and the rough and tumble of life in the chamber are
overlaid upon everything else. Some of the comments
made by the councillors who attended the Planning
Committee meeting which finally accepted H and B's
proposals help to throw some light upon this problem:

Councillor H observed:

"If you remember, I was opposed to this scheme at
our last meeting, but all those residents in the
area that I have spoken to since then would prefer
housing development in Bedford Street to industrial
development. Perhaps it's not such a bad idea after
all."

Here we seem to have a change of mind apparently
occasioned by the democratic process of canvassing
the views of some of the ward members. Perhaps these
are important participants in Councillor H's view of

the game. Perhaps her change of mind is a contingent strategy to a particular strategy selected by the ward members. Unlikely; this would be a far too simplistic way to explain her reaction. Firstly, to be able to conceive of the ward members as a cohesive, strategic group requires stretching the imagination a long way. Indeed, one of them that I talked to made the following comment:

"Everyone's getting excited over nothing if you ask me. Whatever they put on that bit of wasteland would be better than the slum it is at the moment. But nobody can really see down there anyway, except the people in the house next to the Bank. And they're such a scruffy shower that they wouldn't really notice. Typical council - always getting busy about things that don't matter."

Hardly the response of a grand strategist. At the same time, having heard Councillor H speak on a number of previous occasions, it seems quite likely that she is taking the case seriously and does view her relationship with the ward members in somewhat public-spirited terms. It seems as though she is on the council to serve the interests of the public and will be largely directed by what they have to say.

Councillor R spoke in favour of the scheme, but his

view of some of the local residents who had objected

to the outline proposals was interesting:

"I am sure that this development will improve the

area for all concerned, even if some of the residents

don't think so at the moment."

If he sees the residents as participants in some kind

of game, then he obviously doesn't regard them as

potentially very influential. It is rather as

though they are standing on the touchline than actually

impinging onto the field of play.

Councillor A spoke about her objection to the housing

proposals:

"Although, as I think I made clear last session,

I am in principle in favour of housing as opposed

to any industrial development, my objection to this

particular scheme is about the actual height of the

proposed blocks of flats. The two main blocks at the

extreme west end of the site would significantly

obstruct the view from the nearby properties. Also

the architecture is frightful and I think that the

whole question of development on the riverbank is

one that we ought to be thinking about very seriously

indeed."

Here, Councillor A seems to allude to three sets of
interested parties. The developers themselves,
residents in nearby houses whose views out to the
south of the city would be seriously affected by the
new buildings, and a public at large, who might be
affected environmentally by uncontrolled development
along the river bank. In a more immediate sense,
there is presumably another party figuring somewhere
in her thinking, i.e. Councillor R, in reply to whose
last comment she made her own point. At the same time,
rather like Councillor H, she seems to be operating
more upon the level of principles than that of strategy.
Her model of her own role as a councillor is based
firmly upon the idea of public service. Although,
as a long serving councillor, she must be attuned to
the Politics and politics of the chamber, she seems
to regard these activities as ripples upon the real
business of deciding upon policy in the public
interest. As she observed to me:

"Of course you have to get involved in politics,
with both a large and a small p. But that's not
really our main business. We are here to work out
harmonious compromises on behalf of the public. I
think we all try and bear in mind what is best for
them in the end."

Following up this line, I asked Councillor A if she

saw her job as a councillor in terms of a strategist,
like a general running a war.

"It sometimes feels a bit like that, especially
when feelings start running a bit high in the chamber.
You can sometimes be under fire, as it were, from
everyone at once - your own party, the opposition,
the public, and they can be pretty ungrateful you
know. Sometimes you wonder why on earth you're
doing it all. But in the end, when things calm down,
I think that we're really all on the same side."

It is difficult to conceive of a game of strategy
in which everyone was on the same side and, hence,
matching a game-theoretic structure to whatever
implicit model of interaction that is presumably
driving Councillor A's behaviour would seem to be
both difficult and inappropriate.

When we come to consider the reactions of the paid
officers of the Planning Department, we come across
similar examples of an apparent unawareness of strategic
motivations. It is interesting to note a comment
made to me by one of the planning officers, G, just
before a meeting of the Planning Committee:

"Well, you'll be able to see some real pantomime
when the Planning Committee swings into action. If

you can make any coherent sense out of that bunch

then you'll deserve a Ph.D. It's all good slapstick -

a bit like watching an old film. You're sure you've

heard those lines somewhere before and you're pretty

sure what's going to happen next, give or take the

odd variation."

Any notion of game in his perception of the situation

was more akin to pantomime than strategic manipulation.

There are no high stakes with plot and counter plot,

but only the immediate ramblings of a familiar group

of people on a Wednesday evening.

J, however, had a different view again:

"Of course, it's often said that getting something

through is really a question of who you know. That

line is over-rated but there's sometimes some truth

in it. There was a bit of a fracas a couple of years

back because one of the more influential members had

been on holiday with a chap who was hoping to get

clearance to open a small chain of fast-food bars."

When I asked him about the Bedford Street case, though,

he was inclined to see it in rather uncomplicated terms:

"I'm sure there is nothing like that going on here,

though. The stakes are not very high. It doesn't

really matter to H whether the flats go ahead or not
I don't think. The finance side of it sounds a bit
marginal anyway. What everyone seems to have forgotten
about in all this are the old cottages themselves,
which are listed, after all. But they can't seem
to hold the councillors' interest for more than a
few seconds at a time."

M, another HAT member from the Planning Department,
had obviously given this question some thought himself.
He was prepared to offer a theory about how discussants
appeared to maintain stances which were clearly
juxtaposed but without any apparent reasons why
anything other than a state of entropy ought to
preside.

"It's a funny thing. You talk about individual
motives and so on. Most of the time, whether at the
HAT sessions or at committee meetings or at our own
departmental gatherings, nobody has much to gain or
lose one way or the other. But the tension often
builds up as though it was a summit conference or
something. It almost seems as though the participants
are competing for their identities. It's as if their
own ideas and points of view need to be accepted by
the others as some kind of confirmation that they
are real people."

Here is the suggestion that <u>strategic</u> interactions

can also include those in which the potential payoffs

and costs are essentially represented by the support

or denial of debating positions, even though no

money or material values attach to or are implied

by these positions. This seems to be something

different from the kind of transaction between

discussion contributions that have, for example,

been examined in some detail at the Harvard Laboratory

of Social Relations (Bales, 1950a, 1950b, 1951, 1953;

Bales, Strodtbeck, Mills and Roseborough, 1951). It

is not just that we appear to be observing the mutual

support of points framed in the course of discussion,

a support that is characterised by an immediate

gratification of acceptance within the group. It

is also that individual members may act in a sense

strategically, in order to maintain and develop a

system of beliefs and ideas that is vital to them

personally because it is central to their sense of

self, and to their ability to understand what is

happening around them and locate their own efforts

relative to the activities of everyone else. The

general purpose is to dispel and to minimise the

possibilities for 'cognitive dissonance' (Festinger,

1957).

M also observed that:

"Of course sometimes it just seems as though people

are competing just for the fun of it or because it
seems to be the natural thing to do."

This is in support of a view propounded by Goffman
(1970):

"... persons often don't know what game they are in or
whom they are playing for until they have already
played. Even when they know about their own position,
they may be unclear as to whom, if anybody, they are
playing against, and, if anyone, what his game is,
let alone his framework of possible moves. Knowing
their own possible moves, they may be quite unable
to make any estimate of the likelihood of the various
outcomes or the value to be placed on each of them.
And bad moves often lead not to clear-cut penalties
conceptualized as such, but rather to diffuse and
straggling undesired consequences - consequences which
result when persons do something that throws them
out of gear with the social system."

So that in a working world that is recognised to
be more or less competitive, perhaps what might be
called a strategic stance is taken up almost out of
habit. The strategy is not clearly formulated or
thought out, those of the dimly observed opponents
not analysed in careful preparation, the values and
purpose guiding behaviour and responses not in any

case at all clear. But each is on his guard against attack of some kind, eager to score a point when it is possible, anxious to validate his own ideas and opinions and to have them recognised by the rest.

When I talked to the tenant of one of the Bedford Street cottages, Mr T, he seemed to be expressing a view that supported this hypothesis. When I asked him whether he felt that his interests were being adequately represented by HAT (R had been to see him a number of times) and by the Planning Committee (two of the member councillors had come round one evening), he was both annoyed and resigned:

"I don't know what they're all up to. The chap from Housing (R) wanted to know what the councillors had asked. The councillors wanted to know if I would be interested in moving out to Oldfield Park. And then H came along and suggested I might like to move into one of his flats. They might never be built, I told him, and anyway I couldn't afford his sort of prices. It seems to me that everyone's chasing each other's tail just for the hell of it and nobody knows what they want to do. Even the builder isn't sure whether to go ahead or not. Trouble is, we're in the middle and we don't know whether we're going to have a roof over our heads this time next week."

We have been concerned in this section of Chapter 3
with the question of the extent to which the particular
case under discussion does or does not exhibit any
of the characteristics associated with Bennett's
(op. cit.) notion of a Hypergame. As we have explained
earlier, it is not our intention here formally to
construct such a system. This is not only a tortuous
and rather artificial process, but it is also our
belief that a model like this with the spaces 'filled
in' is of considerably less explanatory value than a
discursive interplay between its fundamental concepts
and the observed events of a case. Bennett (1978)
noted himself that:

"... it could be objected that the games and stability
criteria were constructed and chosen in such a way
that they had to give the expected and desired results.
Clearly it is impossible to completely disperse this
suspicion, but it is hoped that the sometimes rather
lengthy descriptions of players' perceptions do provide
a basis for critical scrutiny of the problem formu-
lation."

We would argue that it is precisely his 'sometimes
rather lengthy descriptions of players' perceptions'
taken together with the concepts surrounding the
Hypergame, that throw light upon the situation. On
its own, the bald and necessarily simplistic game

matrix structure is intriguing but not revealing.

Thus, in the present case, we have brought concepts

and observations close together to see how each can

illuminate the other. We are interested to try and

see the events in the terms of Hypergame and vice

versa. We continue this process more specifically in

the next section by considering the question of deciding

upon the players of a hypergame, and then go on in

similar vein to look at the definition of outcomes

and the attribution of aims and strategies.

3.4.2 Selecting the Players

Typically, in game-based analyses of empirically

observed events, the issue of who are to be taken

as players of the game is regarded as completely non-

problematic. The traditional game-theoretic frame-

work has as one of its primitive requirements a

precisely-defined set of participants and the 'analysis'

proceeds by attributing options, aims and strategies

to each.

This particular primitive is also a formal requirement

of the Hypergame. Although this more generalised

extension of the basic mathematical concept of a game

allows for players' differing perceptions of their

opponents' situations, it does not allow that they

have different ideas about who the players of the game

are. Yet, in real-life examples of strategic

interaction, although individual players may themselves

have very clear views about who the important partici-

pants are, there need not be either a complete or

even partial overlap of player sets in this respect.

So that, for example, A may include B in his set of

players, but B may not necessarily regard A as a

participant in the same terms. Also, there may be

a third party, C, known to A but not to B, who is

having a significant determining effect upon the

situation in which A and B have an interest. Or D,

regarded by B but not by A as an important person

in the affair, may actually be totally without

material influence, except in so far as B's belief

in his power affects his own actions and responses.

So that different 'players' may have different ideas

about who the other players are, and events which

are highly germane to a particular individual's

objectives may be triggered by people of whose

existence he was entirely unaware, i.e. by unknown

players. The effects of this kind of configuration

may be quite complex, in that such a participant may

be forced either to revise his ideas about the

players, or to attribute unexplained events to

'chance', or to assume that one of <u>his</u> set of players

was responsible.

By the same token, a particular player may have no

very clear idea about who are the important 'signifi-
cant others' within a given set of circumstances. He
may be unsure, that is, about who the rest of the
players are.

We shall look now at the different and rather loosely
defined, player sets as they seem to be perceived
by the five groups of interested parties that we have
been discussing in 3.4.1.,
i.e.   -   The members of the Housing Assessment Team;
           R, J and M in particular.
       -   The potential developers of the block of
           flats, Mr H and B's Ltd.
       -   The Councillors who sit on the Planning
           Committee; particularly H, R and A.
       -   The officers from the City Planning
           Department, J, G and M.
       -   The families who live in the Bedford Street
           cottages, represented by Mr T.

(i) <u>Players perceived by Members of HAT</u>
When I asked R who he thought were the people who
would be significant contributors to the outcome of
this case, he made the following observations:

"We've got quite a lot of power between us here on
the team. J and M are the professional planners and
the committee takes notice of whatever they have to

say, particularly J, and if the Housing Assessment
Report also ties in with that, it represents a lot of
weight. The developers can't do very much themselves
except keep an eye on how the land is lying and make
adjustments to their detailed plans as necessary.
At the end of the line is Mr T and the others next
door who can't do anything at all except put their
case when asked. The whole business is really being
handled by the bureaucrats."

R seems to see 'the professionals' as being the most
important players within this situation. The
Councillors have the final say, but will be guided
by what the officers recommend. J, in particular, he
sees as a key man whose judgement and opinions will
carry a lot of weight. R sees the developers as
players, but players who have essentially to react
to the moves of the officers and councillors. The
families who live in the Bedford Street cottages he
sees as being almost completely powerless. About them,
R went on to say:

"It's HAT's business to look after their interests.
We are their representatives and are here to act on
their behalf. We try to take what we think they
would like into account in any schemes that we draw
up."

In R's terms, the families are subsumed as players
under the auspices of HAT. They don't really exist
as separate 'strategic entities' except in so far as
HAT or the Planners will react to their requests or
perceived needs.

When I asked J about the players in the case, he
was inclined to attribute more power than R did to the
councillors:

"Sometimes they listen to what we say and sometimes
they don't. It's a bit of a game of chance and really
depends on how they feel on the night. One or two of
them are quite capable of disregarding anything that
the officers say and going their own sweet way."

J also regarded developers in general as having plenty
of room to swing events:

"These are the people who in the end can get things
done after all. They have the money and the motivation.
If we can work with them to design a scheme that is
beneficial to all concerned, including the city area
in a very general sense, then that is good news for
the council. People with proposals like that often
don't realise how much say they could have. The
councillors in particular always make it seem as
though they have the whip hand. But there is often

quite a bit of room for manoeuvre."

So that it is interesting to note that, even
between the two most senior and active members of
the Housing Assessment Team, there is a significant
difference in who they regard as being the most
influential players in the game. M, the second
planning member of HAT, was concerned about the
power of the families who lived in the cottages:

"They could make a mark in theory, but they don't
realise it. T could easily start kicking up about
how the interests of the underprivileged were being
trodden on by business. The local press would
lap it up and the council would soon take notice.
Whereas T could be at the centre of the stage he's
actually condemned to be a member of the audience."

Here M agrees with R that Mr T cannot be regarded as
an important player within the system, although he
does believe that T has the potential to make himself
one.

(ii) Players perceived by the Developers

When I asked Mr H about who was likely to be helping
to determine the future of his scheme, he seemed to
see the situation as a rather straightforward
competition between himself and the Planning Committee:

"It's just a question of whether they take to the
idea and whether they've got anything to lose or
gain by it themselves. I don't think they have
actually in this case. But one or two friends of mine
who've been in a similar situation have told me a
few interesting stories. Course you can swing
things your own way if you know someone on the
committee, but I don't know any of them."

Bearing J's earlier observations in mind, I asked
H how he thought the officers in the Planning
Department could effect the outcome of his application.
He didn't seem to attribute any influence to them
at all:

"They're just a load of civil servants really,
shuffling papers about and coming round with a tape
measure every so often. The councillors do what they
feel like in the end."

Whereas J had been regarded by R as a significant
influence upon events, here was H dismissing him as
a paper shuffler who took the odd measurement now and
again.

(iii) Players perceived by the Councillors

One of the characteristics of the Councillor's
responses to my inquiries was a certain formality

of response and a general reluctance to stray from
talking in terms of the 'proper' channels of communi-
cation. Their replies are, nevertheless, informative.
Councillor H was perhaps the most formal:

"We are sitting in committee to represent the electorate,
that is, all the inhabitants of the city whatever
their persuasion, colour or creed. We try to evaluate
every proposal on its own merits and take into account
how it contributes to the overall well-being of Bath.
The officers are there to give us impartial professional
advice although, between you and me, some of them have
got some pretty weird ideas. They may have planning
diplomas and this, that and the other, but when it all
comes down to it, common sense, judgement and a broad
view are what is required."

Here, it is possible to observe some tension between
councillor and professional, the latter perhaps being
regarded by the former as over-theoretical or not
sufficiently practical. Also, Councillor H sees the
planning process as principally an interchange between
the elected representatives and those that they represent.
Those that are applying for any form of planning
consent are seen as having their case judged in the
light of an implied set of community standards which
comprise a diverse set of criteria that requires
breadth of vision and experience to balance.

Councillor H has a somewhat paternal view of his
elected role and does not appear to regard any of
the participants in cases that come his way as standing
on strictly equal terms with the committee members. In
a hypergame sense, he would probably not accord such
participants the status of 'players'.

Councillor R operates with a similar kind of perspec-
tive. The elected representatives are seen to mediate
within the melee of conflicting interests that would
otherwise be pursued anarchically in the community
'outside'. But her view was different from that of H
in that she appears to have a sense of strategy as it
is operated by members of the electorate (although not,
apparently, by the councillors themselves). When I
asked her about how the various parties that comprise
a planning case interact with each other, she gave a
characteristically 'balanced' reply:

"It is up to us to try and see fair play and to
make sure that every relevant interest is taken into
account. Most of us are aligned with certain party
views of course, but Local Government tends to be
more tolerant of different sects than does Central
Government. We like to give the officers a good
hearing because they are the professionals and devote
a lot of time and thinking to their subject. But lay
opinions are just as important, even if they are often

not particularly well-considered or thought through.
What we have to be careful of is business interests,
because then you can start getting people trampled
on for the demon profit. It's still amazing to me
how devious individuals can become once there is
some money at stake."

For Councillor R, the 'players' are the business
men 'out there' whose behaviour has to be carefully
watched.

Councillor A's position was that of protector of the
underdog and, in common with Councillor R, believed
that business objectives would usually prevail over
everything else unless there was some specific
machinery set up to prevent them from doing so. The
Planning Committee was part of that machinery:

"If everyone had their own way, Bath would not only
look pretty sordid but the strong would be taking
advantage over the weak in all sorts of ways. I
mean in the case you've mentioned, although it
wouldn't be proper for me to talk about it in any
detail, I am sure you realise that someone's living
space is being strongly threatened by a commercial
development. Commerce must go on of course for us
all to survive, but at what price, that is what we
have to decide. The home environment of two families

is worth an awful lot, to them and, ultimately, to
everyone else."

None of the councillors that I spoke to about the
Bedford Street case would discuss the details, since
the application by Mr H and B's Ltd. was still current
and sub judice. Their general views of the planning
process and their own part in it was illuminating,
however, and there seemed to be some important common
threads running through each of their perceptions of
possible players of a hypergame.

Firstly, they tended to dissociate themselves from
the events of a case. They were the people who looked
at all the facts and arguments and arrived at some
compromise 'solution' that took into account the
variety of interests of those that they represented.

Secondly, strategy and deviousness tended to be
associated with business and the pursuit of profit.
Conversely, the ordinary man-in-the-street was
regarded as basically a good chap, if a little
helpless, and his interests clearly needed to be
protected from the inexorable march of commerce,
which in turn was seen as a necessary evil that
needed a tight rein.

Thirdly, they, the councillors themselves, were seen

as having the ultimate power to decide upon the outcome
of a case. They were not seen to be negotiating with
other parties so much as pronouncing verdicts upon
them.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly from the point
of view of looking at events with reference to the
notion of a hypergame, none of the councillors that
I talked with mentioned any ideas which suggested
how 'outsiders' might regard the Planning Committee
and its members. There was no articulated corporate
self-image and no sense that what they were presented
to deal with might have something to do with how they
were perceived both as individuals and as a body.

(iv) Players perceived by the Planners

We have partly covered this category in considering
J's and M's comments as members of the Housing
Assessment Team itself. But it was interesting to
discover some of J's views about his dual involvement
in this case i.e. as a member of HAT and as a planning
officer whose professional opinion was being consulted
in its own right. He seemed to see HAT as a separate
entity from himself the planner. Could they be, in a
sense, regarded as two different players?

"HAT takes up about 15% of my time. It is a sort of
day-to-day, sharp end planning activity really,

although I'm sure that R would call it something
different. Each small case gets the same treatment
and, bit by bit, the city gets tidied up and the
housing stock improved and increased. Our Housing
Assessment involves a lot of attention to detail -
the building regulations, the most tedious tome ever
written incidentally; tenancy agreements, conditions
for receiving grants. All that is none of my business.
I really oughtn't to be there for most of the meetings."

J is distancing himself from the more mundane
activities of HAT and reinforcing his identity as a
skilled professional with a wider brief. He went on
to say:

"If there is ever any conflict between me the planner
and me the HAT member, it is the planner that prevails.
Not that it ever comes to that really, since we are
all working closely together all the time."

It does not appear that J sees HAT and Planning as
opposing or even distinct forces in any strategic
sense. But G is not so sure. He is one of the more
junior planners as regards his location within the
hierarchy, although not one of the youngest. He has
some caustic opinions of Local Government Departments
which he is not slow to voice. He is generally
popular with the main body of the staff, but not so

much with the managers:

"Housing Assessment is a bit of a non-job really.
All this fuss about the 'Team' and the departments
working together. All they're doing is repairing
a few broken-down houses. M seems to quite enjoy
it, but then he's a bit of a conservation crank.
J would rather not have anything to do with it. I
mean with this Bedford Street business, all they're
doing is whistling in the breeze. The developers
probably know a couple of the councillors and they'll
all sort it out between them. The people in the two
cottages probably don't even want to stay there.
It's a pretty grotty area, let's face it."

On the one hand, G is inclined to the view that R
and J are in opposing camps of some kind, or at least
not in the same camp. But on the other, he doesn't
really believe that there is very much to be opposed
about. His two significant groups of players in the
Bedford Street case are the developers and the
councillors on the planning committee. Even then,
he sees them as likely to be working together towards
a mutually acceptable solution rather than being at
odds with each other. There are no real stakes, he
seems to be saying, so there is nothing worth getting
strategic about.

(v) <u>Players perceived by the residents of the cottages</u>

The only member of the families that I was able to talk
to at any length was Mr T, a retired lorry driver who
lived with his wife and youngest son in the house
furthest away from the main road and therefore closest
to the proposed development. He saw almost everyone
as players except himself, in a game that he couldn't
begin to understand.

"Nobody tells us what's going on. They're all arguing
it out among themselves. If they decide to pull these
cottages down I expect someone will drop in and let us
know the day before the bulldozers arrive. Heaven
knows who ever thought of putting a block of flats
down there anyway. It's a bloody crazy idea. I've
told them that the land all along this part of the
river is soggy but nobody listens to me. It's all a
storm in a teacup except they're talking of knocking
our house down."

T has no strategy himself, no sense of having any
hand to play. He is only free to observe events and
fit in with whatever is decided. His view of the
key figures in the case, H, whom he knows, the planning
officers, the councillors, is not that they are
cunningly manoeuvring in pursit of their own interests
but rather that they are locked into argument for the
sake of argument. He had already suggested that H

wasn't even sure himself whether he wanted to go ahead with the scheme or whether it was financially viable.

We have been concerned here to consider how each of the set of potential players that we have selected have perceived 'significant others' (Jones, 1982) to be part of the case. We move on now to look at how the same group of people visualise some of the possible aims and strategies of these significant others and how they see the scope for various outcomes to the case.

3.4.3 Aims and Strategies

For each of the groups covered in the previous section, we have sought to draw together some of their ideas about the objectives and likely plans of the other participants in the case. It must be understood that these all represent our interpretations of what the people concerned have said, and even these have been summarised for the sake of brevity. As aforementioned, we have deliberately avoided the arbitrarily constraining strategy structure of the hypergame, but have rather attempted to use the basic concepts proposed by Bennett (op. cit.) to give some perspective to the material.

(i) Aims and Strategies perceived by members of HAT

R's group of main players comprises the local

government officers, the councillors and the developers

in probably that order of importance. The officers

he sees as having essentially bureaucratic aims, laid

down by their job descriptions and possibly overlaid

by the desire to do well in order to maintain promotion

chances. R gets job satisfaction from his own work

and also attributes that to his colleagues. He

therefore believes that in making any decisions or

recommendations, both the planners and the members of

the Housing Assessment Team will be guided by their

own professional codes, each of which will influence

the content of what they will have to say. That is,

the planners will make planning oriented contributions,

R and his environmental health officers will be

concerned with public health issues and the building

surveyors will confine their recommendations to

structural matters and the interpretation of the

building regulations.

R seems to think that the councillors will be guided

by what the officers have to say. The only personal

aims that he sees for them are to do with appearing

competent as councillors and scoring debating points

at committee meetings, neither of which he believes

will have much tangible effect upon the eventual

outcome of the case. The developers he sees as

having a more or less clearly defined personal interest,
but as having very little scope for action within
the confines of the planning regulations. He
believes that they would like to get their plans
passed with as little amendment as possible and
without incurring any significant costs to do with
any housing provisions for the two families.

J has a less optimistic view of the power of the
officers than R does. He sees the councillors as
being rather unpredictable in their reactions to
recommendations from the departments, "depends on
how they feel on the night." He believes, like R,
that their main personal motivations come from a
desire to put on good performances and have their
contributions taken seriously and, preferably, agreed
with. At the same time, he sees most of them as
being essentially public spirited. As he remarked
to me:

"They're basically a good bunch, even if some of them
do go on rather. I think you've got to be a little
arrogant to be a councillor and it's a real ego trip
for one or two of them. But I can't really understand
why they do it. Just as well that somebody does, I
suppose."

J's perception of the Developers is tinged with

scepticism. Although he would like to see some
improving development in the Bedford Street area,
he doesn't believe that the present scheme is quite
right or that it is financially sound.

"I reckon that it's all a bit marginal, despite R's
calculations. I think B knows that as well, but
they're going for the planning permission to get it
under their belt. That site is a bit dodgy though.
I wouldn't like to say how far down you'd have to
pile to reach something solid. That could be quite
an expensive business."

J's view of the officers' objectives concurs broadly
with that of R i.e. that they operate within the formal
guidelines laid down by their departments and
professionals, much as proposed in Weber's 'Bureau-
cratic Administration' (op. cit.). He differs from
R in believing that there is considerable scope for
the interpretation of these guidelines and that
developers with valuable proposals and good backing
have the power to negotiate favourable terms with the
planners. This seems to imply the existence of some
pressure upon the planners from somewhere to 'get
things done', a pressure which R does not feel in
his own line of work.

Finally, M has a view of the situation which might be

summed up by a comment with which he once finished
a long plea for the families at one of the HAT
meetings:

"Once again, it seems to be business against the
innocent man-in-the-street. H and B want to turn a
bit of profit. T and his family want to live in peace.
Since T cannot stand up for himself, it's up to us to
do it for him."

Commerce against the underdog. M believes that the
developers are out to make a fast pound and don't
mind who they interfere with along the way. He believes
that they have the power to lobby both councillors
and officers in a way that T cannot. T's best plan
is to align himself with the Housing Assessment Team
who in turn, ought to mediate in his favour. M regards
the councillors themselves as being fickle, no more
likely to take one party's side than any other.

(ii) Aims and Strategies perceived by the Developers

It is probably true to say that Mr H regards the
officers of the Planning Department as being, to all
intents and purposes, aim_less_, "... They're just a
load of civil servants really, shuffling papers about
and coming round with a tape measure every so often."
He doesn't believe that they can have any serious
influence on the outcome of the case at all. The

councillors are his main stumbling block, as he sees
it. But H did not seem to have any clear idea about
what motivated them. He clearly found it difficult to
comprehend the satisfactions of local government
politics:

"Can't fathom what they're up to at all. Hours and
hours talking about the same old sorts of subjects.
It has got to be done I suppose, but it doesn't seem
that important and some of them get so worked up.
It wasn't as if they got paid. Perhaps they just like
hearing the sounds of their own voices."

B, proprietor of B's Ltd., had had a lot of dealings
with the council in his many years working in and
about the city. His line was that it is all really a
question of getting on with the people concerned:

"Very occasionally you come across a councillor with
business interests that may clash or coincide with
yours. But it doesn't happen very often, and even when
it does they tend to declare themselves and not get
involved. But if they take to you and you can get on
with them, then what would otherwise be obstacles can
be eased away. They're an OK crowd really, one or
two are a bit pompous but usually their hearts are
in the right place."

B's own strategy for dealing with the councillors
is to get to know several of them and then to carry
out his gentle diplomacy through these personal
contacts. There is no suggestion here that there
is any kind of improper collaboration over the scheme.
It is simply that B believes that if some of the
councillors know and like him, then the chances of his
scheme being passed will be significantly increased.
His implicit model of how the councillors carry out
their evaluation seems to assume that they are
inclined to favour a well thought through proposal
which has been carefully put together by a decent sort
of citizen who seems to know what he is talking about.

"If the thing first of all looks tasteful, or fits in
with the general area, that's the first hurdle. Then
it needs to seem to make financial sense, be well
backed and look as though it will get finished. One
of the most important bits of that question is what
sort of bloke they reckon they're dealing with."

Here B is imputing to the councillors a way of
thinking that is often associated with the small
business man i.e. that the most important aspect of
any working deal is to know your man. This is partly
a question of whether there is a basis for mutual trust
and, hence, whether both parties feel comfortable
about going ahead with the arrangement, since both

will presumably be taking some risks. But it is also a question of efficiency in the matter of dealing with complexity. If each side 'knows his man,' then a lot of details can be left to each other to handle without their having to be raised explicitly.

When I asked B about the families in the two cottages, not only did he not regard them as a problem; he seemed to think that they would benefit significantly from being forced to move out:

"Those places are damp and crumbling and nobody ought to be living in them. They're well under the regulations and, to be quite honest, it isn't worth anybody's money to bring them up to scratch. Listed they may be, but then so is most of the older stuff in this city. Quite a lot of that is not worth keeping either. I'd lay you a case of Scotch that both T and the family next door would be happy for an excuse to be moved at someone else's expense."

(iii) Aims and Strategies perceived by the Councillors

We have seen how the councillors on the Planning Committee maintain a degree of distance from those involved in presenting them with proposals, or recommendations about proposals. The likely strategists as far as they are concerned seem to be businessmen submitting planning proposals that endeavour to

minimise any costs associated with unnecessary
aesthetics or matching to the immediate environment.
Some of the gamesmanship in such cases lies in how
the schemes are presented. Making a proposed develop-
ment look stunning on paper is an important skill of
the architect. Enticing graphics and clever advert-
ising are what the councillors have to take in and
visualise in practice. On this subject, Councillor R
commented that:

"Some of them can make the most boxy, thrown together,
cut-to-the-bone development look like something out of
Country Life. And the imagination of the copy-writers
knows no bounds. That is what we're really trying to
get behind, that and some idea of the backing so as we
can estimate the likelihood of the thing being finished.
There's nothing more unsightly than building work
standing for ages half-finished because of lack of
finance."

For Councillor R, the gloss on a written proposal is
a form of strategy that it is her business to interpret.
For Councillor H, a different kind of gloss coming
from the planning officers also represents strategy
in a similar kind of way. In his view, the professional
planners are often trying to score points over the lay
councillors by dressing their recommendations and
comments in technical jargon:

"They'll often try and appear a bit cleverer than us.
Some of my colleagues are intimidated by some of the
planning department reports, but a lot of it is just
hot air. I mean, not only do we have to get behind
the blarney of the architects, but the people who
are supposed to be there to help us are at it as
well. I sometimes think they're a bit desperate to
justify their jobs."

Councillor A did not appear to have the same sense
of being surrounded on all sides by deception, although
she was strongly aware of the pressures from business
interests and was mindful of a need to keep them
under control. Her view of such interests was not
that they would always per se involve some deception
on the part of the protagonists, but that the built-in
incentives to succeed would somehow almost automatically
ensure that those interests were cast as vitally
important to all concerned and always presented in a
favourable light against all other lobbies:

"The developers that we come across have a way of
putting things that is almost second nature to them.
It is salesmanship I suppose, but it seems to carry
forward into everything that they do. They don't
even know that they're doing it half the time. But
we must never allow ourselves to be taken in by it."

Not necessarily strategists, but salesmen whose
slippery line needs to be handled with care. Whatever
the intentions of the developers are, the councillors
believe that their representations need careful
decoding.

(iv) Aims and Strategies perceived by the Planners

We consider only G here, as J and M were covered under
the Housing Assessment Team. As was noted in 3.4.2 (iv),
G's two significant players in the Bedford Street case
are the developers and the councillors on the planning
committee. But he did not, apparently, see the inter-
action in strategic terms. He did, however, regard the
two parties as having different, although not irrecon-
cilable, interests:

"The developers want to get their plans passed, even
if they're not too sure at the moment whether they
would want to go ahead. It always adds to the value
of the land anyway. They'd rather not have to make
lots of resubmissions because that's all expense,
what with the admin. and the architect's fees and so
on. Then the councillors would like to see something
that is an improvement over what is already there.
They are the guardians of the public standards. But
in a way, they're on the developers' side as well
if the scheme looks good enough."

G's view of the developers' scope for action was
that they could present their case more or less
convincingly or professionally, but that that was
about the extent of their room for manoeuvre. When
I asked him about the difference that it might make
by knowing some of the councillors personally, he
was inclined to think that the effect was marginal:

"It doesn't seem to make much odds. In fact with
the sort of people that you've got on the council,
you can find that they'll bend over backwards to seem
to be impartial and you might actually get a better
deal if you din't know any of them."

(v) Aims and Strategies perceived by the Families

I asked Mr T who he thought was trying to get what
out of this case:

"I'm not sure that anyone really knows. I suppose
B and H thought they might be able to make a bit -
I mean it's always good to have property isn't it.
I don't think that H knew what he was letting himself
in for though. If he knew he was going to have this
much hassle, he wouldn't have bothered I reckon. B's
a bit different of course, it's his bread and butter
after all."

I then asked him what he thought the council would like

to see happen on the Bedford Street site:

"They can't make up their minds, that's the truth of it. But so long as there's something there to argue about, they'll keep on at it. It doesn't really matter to them one way or the other."

It is difficult to attribute any sense of strategy to Mr. T. It is not just that he cannot work out what everyone else is trying to achieve. He also doesn't believe that the other 'participants' know themselves. His view of the councillors is that they will continue to keep on talking just so long as there is something on the agenda, but that none of them has any real interest in the outcome of the case.

3.5 Summary Conclusions

We now summarise below some important conclusions arising from our application of Hypergame concepts to the empirical data provided by this particular HAT case. Further discussion and consideration is given in chapter 8, section 8.3.

Explanatory Description

The principal and significant value of the Hypergame model from a research point of view is that it provides a systematic framework for generating commentary, description and conclusions from raw data.

Each primitive element of the Hypergame focuses
attention on a different aspect of the material and
provides a triangulation point for the generation
of meaning.

The Structure of Conflict

The Hypergame framework posits the basic elements of
a strategic interaction. The 'gaps' are not filled
in however. This can only happen when the data and
the structure are brought together. Although it is
probably true to say that there is a presumption of
conflict in the formulation of the model, it is not
true that by using the model we can only see and
deal with conflict. The notion provides a kind of
base-line from which aspects of conflict, non-conflict
and degrees of conflict can be given perspective.

Definitions of the Situation

Probably the most valuable contribution that Bennett's
notion of a Hypergame makes to the game theory and
conflict literature is to formally recognise that
different participants in a strategic interaction
will have, in general, different perceptions of the
circumstances of the interaction and different ideas
about the aims, strategies and preferences of each
other. This is an important starting point for useful
and realistic analysis, but one which has not been
reached hitherto in game theory.

What the structure then demands, of course, is an

informed basis for filling in the gaps, that is,

for attributing purpose, preferences and strategies

to the players. This is the difficult part of the

process, but one for which game theory itself has no

hint of a solution. We are thrown away from the

structure, which represents an initial statement of

a research problem, and back towards the task of

discovering the social meanings contained within the

data. For that we need plenty of good data, which

game theorists have in the past been more or less

content to do without.

Definition of Player Sets

We find empirically that, in order to correspond

more closely with real-life situations, the Hypergame

model requires a further extension of its perceptual

'degrees of freedom'. It was apparent in the present

research that the various participants had different

ideas about who were the other significant parties in

the interaction. Hence the Hypergame needs, strictly,

to define a number of, in general, non-congruent player

sets. Any possibility of a meaningful mathematic

analysis, based upon the manipulation of strategy

matrices, would probably then have to be given up for

good. Bennett has suggested that this is difficult

enough for straightforward two player hypergames.

The further insight from applying the idea qualitatively

could be valuable, however, and we have demonstrated
this in our own analysis.

4. A COLLECTIVE PURPOSE MODEL FOR THE HOUSING ASSESSMENT TEAM

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter we will examine the hypothesis that
a decision-making group such as the Housing Assessment
Team carries out its work against a pervading sense of
both collective and corporate purpose; that the indi-
vidual members will largely concur in their understanding
of these purposes; and that they will act and debate
in a more or less 'rational' way to further these
objectives that are principally associated with
official or group functions outside their own
personal domain.

We look first at some of the dimensions of the concepts
of collective and corporate purpose and consider how
they might relate to more individually based objectives.
In particular, we consider some of the ways in which
these concepts seem to be applied in different circum-
stances within the world at large.

We then go on to extract some formulations of collective
and corporate purpose for the Housing Assessment Team,
drawing on some of the discussions relating to the
Bedford Street case set out in the last chapter. The
intention here is to try and uncover the part that
these notions may play in determining the choices

and judgements made by the team members. Searching,
as it does, for various points of congruence of
the motives of some of the participants, this chapter
attempts to add perspective to the last which,
conversely, was more concerned to highlight differences
of interest that might be expressed in terms of strat-
egic behaviour.

4.2   On the nature of Collective and Corporate Purpose

It is clearly important to consider the distinction
between corporate or bureaucratic purpose in Weber's
organisational sense (Weber, op. cit.) and the kind
of formulation of group objectives that may occur
either completely outside the context of formal
administrations or within a local sub-group convened
under the auspices of an existing bureaucracy. March
and Simon (1958) have noted that:

"The bureaucracy is a set of relationships between
offices, or roles. The official reacts to other
members of the organisation not as more or less unique
individuals but as representatives of positions that
have specified rights and duties. Competition within
the organisation occurs within closely defined limits;
evaluation and promotion are relatively independent
of individual achievement."

This pure concept of bureaucracy must be regarded as
an analytical type and appears in practice in various
stages of dilution. Its most fundamental characteristic
is the backing and demands of a 'legal' authority,
of which Weber (op. cit.) has observed:

"... obedience is owed to the legally established
impersonal order. It extends to the persons exer-
cising the authority of office under it only by virtue
of the formal legality of their commands and only
within the scope of authority of the office."

Corporate objectives which have no foundation in a
formal organisation but which are rather understood
and recognised in terms of either collective interests
or of group membership have a more elusive nature.
The allegiance accorded them by participating indi-
viduals and the ways in which they are referenced are
much more difficult to uncover than explicit or implied
rules of bureaucracy.

Collective purpose models of group decision-making
are of particular interest insofar as they coincide
with many popular and widely held views of how groups
at work do and, even more pervasively, how they should
go about their business. Political rhetoric bandied
about by politicians and men-in-the-street alike is
rife with such expressions as 'what Britain ought to

be doing,' 'industry now needs to move forwards,' 'the
union has now decided.' There is the implicit assump-
tion, at least in the formulation of such expressions
if not in their understanding, that the people of
Britain, those who are involved in industry, the
members of the union, each recognise a common corporate
policy and are then able and willing to act in concert
in its execution. A quotation taken almost at random
from a recent edition of The Guardian illustrates this
point further:

"It has transpired that the internal accord was not
the panacea to the country's political ailments. Some
would say that it has worsened the plight of the
country's seven million people. Fragmentation of the
nationalist movement has continued until, today, there
are a plethora of political groupings whose policies
militate against a 'national' solution. Party
politics among the blacks have degenerated into
intimidation and thuggery, some of the culprits
proving an embarrassment to their party leaders in
the courts."

Perusal of this short extract will reveal a number
of notions and assumptions about corporate objectives.
First, there is the idea of the corporate body
'country', as expressed in 'the country's political
ailments', an idea with numerous parallels in

contemporary political discourse within the UK, for example in the commonly used expression 'the state of Britain today'.

'The plight of the country's seven million people' is another such expression, as is 'a plethora of political groupings whose policies (my emphasis) militate against a national solution'.

It is of course easy enough to case such concepts in a somewhat illusory light to underline the apparent crassness of grouping seven million people together and giving them a plight, to enquire caustically what it really means to talk about a country's political ailments, or to point to the real inherent conflicts that exist between many of those individuals working to generate 'the state of Britain today'. Yet it is a part of our thesis that, vague and simplistic as such ideas can be argued to be, they nevertheless hold a significant position in everyday discourse and therefore can hardly be ignored as being unreal. In the present context, they appear to be effective currency with the members of countless decision-making groups such as the Housing Assessment Team and clearly cannot be dismissed, therefore, as mere abstract ideals.

It is interesting to consider one or two hypothetical

examples of groups in action and to suggest how or
if a group objective might have meaning for the
members or for an outside observer.

'Survival' groups are rather extreme examples of
collectives which might ostensibly operate with a
clearly recognizable common purpose. Half a dozen
survivors from a shipwreck, say, drifting about the
ocean in a liferaft with a limited supply of food
and water. Is it possible for an outside observer
to formulate a common purpose for the group and how
reasonable would it be to attribute such a purpose
to the members? On the face of it, each individual
is at least likely to hold for himself the objective
of survival. This is a particularly human trait,
although it could still possibly be the case that one
or any of the members would regard the prospect of
death in this way with some relief. He might be
suffering from an incurable and increasingly painful
disease, or perhaps he was previously in such a state
of depression as to have been in any case contemplating
suicide. Such a member would have a fundamentally
different orientation to his circumstances than the
others who were desperate to live, and the notion of
a group objective would be difficult to define.

Even granted, though, that each person in the lifeboat
was keen to survive, it is not immediately clear that

we can formulate this simply as a collective purpose. Theoretical conflicts of interest in Vickers' sense (op. cit.) can be perceived by an outsider but these may or may not be perceived by the members. Each, for example, is clearly in competition with the others for the limited reserves of food and water. If a member were to kill the rest of his companions in the lifeboat, he would be able to live for very much longer than if he were to share these resources in the normal, morally acceptable way. On the other hand, notwithstanding the question of food and water, it might be the case that the increased morale to be gained from having companions to talk to is, and would be perceived as being, an important survival factor.

Individual differences in the definition of the situation can complicate the concept of a group objective although they never seem to quite dissolve it. The ship's padre, a member of the lifeboat party, might not perceive any conflict between the members of the group, and could even be thinking in terms of sacrificing himself for the good of the others. Someone else may have calculated very coldly and precisely his best chances of survival with respect to each of the others.

There are situations in which it is clearly in most of the members' interests that a particular action is

carried out. When a ship is sighted on the horizon, all who are keen to survive would probably agree that they ought to try and attract its attention. Yet although we might interpret this as a realistic piece of corporate policy, the execution of this policy might be a considerable source of disagreement. Should they let off all their flares together in the hope of creating a significant effect? Should they let off one flare first and see what happens? Is the ship in any case too far off to see any flares and so should these be saved against the occasion of another ship passing closer to the liferaft?

It is not always easy for members of groups (or theorists about groups) to conceptually separate what looks like a corporate objective which none will dispute, from executive strategies which are a matter of policy interpretation and a potential source of disagreement.

Another example of a survival group is an army platoon on active service. Again, the threat of death is common to those members as it was in the previous example and a 'common enemy' might be recognised in both situations - the sea in the former case, the opposing forces perhaps in the latter. But here, the notion of the opposing army is itself a somewhat reified and collective concept. Writers about war

have often discussed the strange disparity between the
abstract 'enemy' and the man 'just like you' but from
the opposite side who stands before the soldier when
the time for action comes. The notion of 'the enemy'
does presumably provide some cohesion when used in the
abstract for training purposes within the armed forces,
and it is clearly a concept of some significance to
troops contemplating a period of real action. It
might well be a widely shared objective of a fighting
company to 'destroy the enemy'. An articulated task
such as this provides a basic raison d'etre for the
group. Yet, when an individual soldier is faced with
one of 'the enemy' firing back at him, what then
happens to any notion he might have of the group
objective and, indeed, to his notion of the group.
Self-interest may then predominate, although there
are many examples of heroic behaviour which are
difficult to explain except in terms of some ideal
group objective taking priority over self-interest
(unless self-interest is itself defined in such a way
as to incorporate the satisfaction of an important
'heroic value').

The board of directors of a company provides a closer-
to-home example of the kind of situation that can
engender complex relationships between self-interest
and group interest. In many analyses of political
behaviour in such committees, what might be described

as a naive cynical perspective often pays close attention
to the inherent conflict between, say, company board
members, to the diversity of their individual interests
and to the 'politicking' that is carried out to try and
ensure that these interests prevail.

Yet in very few such meetings will it be impossible
to identify abstract 'personalities' founded within a
bureaucratic framework and with demands that require
attention. The Company, the Department, the Shareholders,
the Public, even the Board, may appear as referents in
the discussion, referents which carry a significant
amount of authority.

The marketing director may well have strong personal
interests relating to career, status, private wealth
and so on, but may recognise that these can be pursued,
may probably be best pursued and possibly even only
pursued by paying attention to the requirements of
the corporation. Almost all of those who work within
organisations appear to have some conception of the
identity of 'the organisation', if only as a triangu-
lation point for their own position. When asked, many
may apparently be working to further what they believe
to be the 'good of the company'. It is always possible,
of course, to link definitions of self and corporate
interest by asserting, for example, that the conscien-
tious secretary who works unpaid overtime and doesn't

even have the satisfaction of having someone know about
it, is acting in a self-interested way because by
doing the overtime she keeps ahead of her work and
hence reduces personal stress, or perhaps, one could
even argue, to indulge a personal 'value' for good
hard protestant endeavour.

Our board of directors, like the shipwrecked mariners,
may also have some conception of a 'common enemy' and
recognise that there will be situations in which they
will be better off individually by sticking together
and presenting some kind of common front to, say, a
threat from the shareholders, or a union, or the press.

What we have been trying to point to thus far is the
apparently complicated relationship between a group
member's self-interest and his conceptions of and
reaction to a corporate or collective interest.
Haworth (1959) has discussed this issue, which is at
once an important philosophical question and a real
practical problem in trying to uncover the predominant
determinants of a group decision.

"One of the levels on which the long-standing dispute
between reductivists and non-reductivists is going on
is the level of social organisations. In a general
way, the problem concerns the relation of men with
organisations of men. On one side, it is contended

that only individuals act, and organisations are only
men organised. On the other side, we find what is
often felt to be a mystical insistence that organis-
ations are entities in themselves apart from the men
who make them up, and that these organisations act."

One of the important assertions of our own thesis is
that these two perspectives ought not to be regarded
in dichotomous or mutually exclusive terms. That is,
it is quite possible for self interest to be pursued
by members of a group who have, at the same time, a
strong conception of the group and of group objectives,
together with the motivation to achieve group
objectives, sometimes at their individual expense.

Haworth (op. cit.) goes on to say something about the
obligations which an individual may feel towards
'his organisation':

"When an individual becomes involved with an organis-
ation, his involvement is not totally indefinite. It
is, rather, specific in the sense that he acquires
a function which is integral with the organisation's
system of functions. The relation with the organis-
ation which is thereby realised has, from the
standpoint of the organisation, two complementary
sides. Looking in one direction, we can say that
the relation <u>creates a duty</u> (my emphasis). In the

first case, the specific involvement with the
organisation implies that the individual will be
provided with all of the means for the performance
of his function which the organisation has to offer.
Provision of these means grounds a right to perform
that function, where 'right' means both capacity and
authority. In the second case, the specific involve-
ment with the organisation implies that the individual's
performance of his function is anticipated by the
system of functions in the sense that it can achieve
its characteristic result only on condition that he
does perform that function. **The expectation is struc-
tured** (my emphasis) and thereby grounds a duty to do
that which his specific involvement entails."

A decision-making group such as the Housing Assessment
Team clearly cannot sustain itself on the basis of
self-interest alone. Each of the members has entered
into and, more significantly, believes himself to have
entered into contract with 'the organisation'. He has
been provided with certain rights and there is the
expectation, even if sometimes only in himself, that
he will perform certain duties. This contract will
be difficult to disregard in the course of daily
business.

Simon (1964) has noted that:

"... we often have occasion to observe that the goals

that actually underlie the decisions made in an

organisation do not coincide with the goals of the

owners, or of top management, but have been modified

by managers and employees at all echelons. Must we

conclude, then, that it is the goals of the latter -

of subordinate managers and employees - that are

governing organisational behaviour? Presumably not,

because the kinds of behaviour taking place are not

those we would expect if the managers and employees

were consulting only their personal goals. The whole

concept of an informal organisation, modified by, but

not identical with, the goals either of management

or of individual employees, becomes hazy and ambiguous

if we follow this path."

Simon here reinforces our point that the relationship

between self-interest and group or corporate interest

may be a complicated one. In this discussion of complex

motives, it is also appropriate to question the extent

to which individuals are, in any case, motive-driven

and, if they are, to consider the nature of the

relationship between motives and action. There is

the theoretical danger here that the concept of motive

can be constructed as an intermediary explanatory

variable that has no empirical reference.

Simon (op. cit.) goes on to say that:

"If by motivation we mean whatever it is that causes someone to follow a particular course of action, then every action is motivated - by definition. But in most human behaviour the relation between motives and action is not simple: it is mediated by a whole chain of events and surrounding conditions."

Parsons (1965) highlights the interactive and dynamic nature of the relationship between motives and actions when he says:

"The essentials of the interaction situation can be illustrated by any two-player game, such as chess. Each player is presumed to have some motivation to participate in the game, including a "desire to win". Hence, he has a goal, and relative to this, some conception of effective "strategies". He may plan an opening gambit but he cannot carry advance planning too far, because the situation is not stable: it is contingent on the moves made both by himself and by his opponent as the game proceeds. The basic facilities at his command consist of his knowledge of the opportunities implicit in the changing situation; his command of these opportunities means performance of the adaptive function. Hence, at the goal attainment and adaptive levels, goals are defined and facilities are provided, but specific acts are not prescribed."

An implication here is further uncertainty for the
social researcher trying to relate the complex motives
of a decision-making group to the outcomes that he
observes. Parsons underlines the notion of <u>contingency</u>,
and the kind of model that he thereby implies for
explaining group-generated outcomes is almost a
parallel to the statistical notion of the Markov
Chain. The researcher is then faced with such questions
as:

"If A had spoken before B, would C have then said
something different and not reacted in the way that
he did; and would D then have remained silent instead
of disagreeing with B?"

Or

"Supposing that B's car had broken down this morning
and he had been unable to get to the meeting. Would
D have made his point so strongly? How might that
have affected the final decision?"

It is important here to highlight the difference
between what the <u>statics</u> and the <u>dynamics</u> of the
situation are. In thinking about the nature of group
objectives, it is on the one hand necessary to ask
whether or not we think the concept has any empirical
meaning and then what form group objectives take

for the members of the team. These are part of the statics of the group, what have been called elsewhere its purpose characteristics (Cumberlidge, 1978). Then, on the other hand, we can examine the way in which the statics relate to each other in the _process_ of determining an outcome, i.e. the dynamics of a particular decision. As Gross (1969) has pointed out, there may be difficulties in matching the statics with the dynamics or, in his terms, the intentions with the activities.

"... measurement of the gaols of the organisation requires a combination of the two measures of intentions and activities. We start with intentions as the basic measure and compare intentions with data on activities. In the usual condition they should support each other. Actual goals will then represent a type of average between these two measures when they are not too far apart. It is possible that there will be two kinds of divergence:

1. A goal may rank high as an intention but be only minimally evident in activities. Such a goal we call _utopian_. This condition indicates something that the members say they are trying to attain but are doing little actually to achieve it ...

2. A goal may be rated low as an intention but be much in evidence in activities. Such a condition indicates the presence of an unstated goal. Persons

may be unaware of this goal, be ashamed of it, or be unable or unwilling to talk about it."

Gross's last point again raises two important problems. First, that of drawing inferences about intentions from actions and, second, that of the status of 'goal' or 'motive' as a determinant of outcomes. Is it meaningful or useful to suggest that an individual might have a goal of which he is unaware?

Following on from this introductory discussion of the possible nature of a 'group objective' we turn back now to the case study outlined in 2.2 of the previous section and attempt, for a number of different groups involved in that case, to explain events in terms of a driving corporate rationale.

In order to lend substance to some of these ideas, we move on now to consider some articulations of corporate and collective purpose by members of the Housing Assessment Team. These expressions emerged in the course of the series of HAT meetings dealing with the Bedford Street case and from subsequent discussions with individual members.

4.3 Discovering Collective Purpose

The objectives of the Housing Assessment Team do not appear anywhere in any formal form, unlike most committees

which invariably have some kind of terms of reference

set down somewhere, usually in the minutes of the first

meeting. R, who had an important hand in starting

the team, supplied the following list of objectives

that he said that he works to both in an executive

sense and as the chairman controlling the discussions

at the HAT meetings.

4.3.1 R's statement of the objectives of HAT

(i) To keep up to date with properties within the
city area that require attention by the Housing
Assessment Team.

(ii) For each property on this list:

    (a) classify as fit or unfit for housing in
accordance with the criteria contained in
Section 4 of the Housing Act 1957.

    (b) If fit for housing, report to that effect and
remove from the list. If unfit for housing,
catalogue defects, suggest alternative
means by which these defects could be made
good and select the best alternative with
reference to (iii)

(iii) When deciding upon the best way in which to bring
unfit housing up to the standard required by the
Act, to try and weigh up the following:

    - the cost to the council, including rehousing

costs.

- The quality of the renovation, with respect to the body carrying out the works.
- the well-being of the occupants of the property.
- the middle and long-term housing requirements of the city, as defined at the time.
- the value of conservation versus demolition
- the overall quality of the surrounding environment.
- building regulations, as laid down by the Act.
- aesthetic considerations.

When R presented me with this statement, he also made the following supporting comments:

"All these criteria have got to be balanced and weighed according to the individual circumstances. That is our job, it's where the skill and experience come in. We're all professional really, answerable to our own departments and what their objectives are. But we are also working for the people of the City and we bear this in mind all the time. Sometimes it's possible to cut through a lot of red tape in particular cases."

Here, R seems to be accepting the bureaucratic objectives of his own department as important guidelines

for action, but he will 'interpret' these if they

appear not to best further the interest of 'the City'

in particular situations. The City appears here almost

as a second authority to which he feels obliged to

defer, within the principal constraints imposed by

the authority of his own department.

It is instructive to consider similar statements by

J and D. J is the senior planning department represen-

tative on HAT and D the senior valuer. We have singled

out these members for individual analysis since they do

much of the talking at HAT meetings and carry most

of the authority; they are, with R, the most significant

contributors to the output of the team.

4.3.2   J's statement of the objectives of HAT

J provided the following structure when I asked him

for some thoughts on the purpose of the Housing

Assessment Team:

(1)   HAT's basic function is to see that property in

      Bath that is unfit for habitation is brought up

      to the standard required by the 1957 Housing

      Act and its subsequent amendments.

(2)   There are usually a number of alternative ways

      that:

      (a)   necessary work can be financed and

      (b)   the 'conversion' itself can be carried out.

Although the Act itself provides the <u>primary</u>

guidelines for action, other considerations need

to be borne in mind viz:

(a) The particular needs of existing inhabitants

(b) The size of the City's housing stock e.g.

if a complete terrace of six houses is deemed

to be unfit, considerable flexibility may

exist as to how many housing units can be

produced in the final scheme and how many

bedrooms can be contained within each unit.

(c) The planned future for the area in which the

property lies. If a particular zone has

been set aside for light industrial develop-

ment, then this may well affect the way in

which HAT deals with the future of housing

units standing within that zone. (J also

commented that in the City of Bath and its

environs there are many examples of 'mixed

development' e.g. short terraces of 'artisan'

housing tucked in behind factories, or light

industrial workshops standing in ostensibly

residential areas.)

(d) The aesthetics of the area in which the

property stands and of the property itself

as a building.

(e) The cost of the various alternatives,

bearing in mind the total 'economic' cost

to the community and the actual cost to

the council itself, including consideration
of any rehousing that may be necessary,
either temporary or permanent.

J appears to see the appropriate Housing Acts as
providing the core 'purpose' of the team (i.e. item
(1) above) and that within any flexibility allowed by
the Act, or by money available, or wherever there is
a non-financially-dependent choice between ways of doing
things, then the considerations summarised in (2)
should be satisfied as far as possible.

Further discussion with J revealed that he saw his
professional concern and the concern of his department
as resting primarily with (c) and (d). He later
revealed that he had a particular personal interest
in (d) and interpreted aesthetics to include a
historical perspective i.e. he has an interest in
maintaining properties which have about them 'signi-
ficant' architectural singularities.

Although J was prepared to formulate a set of corporate
objectives for the Housing Assessment Team, the
institution with which he seems to identify is not
HAT, not Local Government in general, not the City
of Bath, but is rather the planning profession itself
and the principles that he believes that it stands for.
Planning provides his work identity and also some of

his 'extra-curricula' interests. He commented to
me that:

"I'm a Planner first and foremost. It's always been
what I wanted to do. I think it becomes more and more
important as our society becomes more developed and
complicated. It's difficult to say who the Planners
are working for. The community as a whole I suppose.
We're trying to fit in everyone's interests in the
best possible way. An impossible task really."

J's reference to The Community is in some ways similar
to R's concern with The City. These stated goals may,
perhaps, be Utopian in Gross's sense, but they seem
pervasive in what these two members have to say about
their jobs.

In order to articulate ideas relating to collective
purpose J, like R, refers back to a formal and author-
itative source, the Housing Act. When he then starts
to elaborate on this purpose he draws upon his own
interpretation of the principles of his profession.
His personal view of his job becomes blurred with
a perhaps rather abstract sense of what HAT ought to
be doing and his contribution to that.

4.3.3   D's statement of the objectives of HAT
(i)   P and I provide a back-up service for the

Housing Assessment Team. The main purpose of

HAT is to turn unfit housing into fit housing,

fitness being determined by the Housing Acts.

We advise on the financial <u>implications</u> of any

schemes that are discussed.

(ii) Two other kinds of consideration have to be taken

into account:

(a) Structural practicalities: The Building

Engineer, L, and his assistant, C, both

members of HAT, give advice here on what

can and cannot be done.

(b) Planning: J and M advise on matters of

planning and aesthetics.

So that D's initial statement of how he saw the 'purpose

of the Housing Assessment Team' is comparatively short.

His first point is both simple and macroscopic, simple

in the sense that his formulation of the main purpose

of HAT seems to be a readily understandable function,

a summary of the outcome that he believes ought to

result from the application of the team's resources to

a particular initial state; macroscopic in the sense

that he later reveals his understanding of this rather

bald statement to incorporate some of the issues that

R and J talked about straight away.

It is clearly vital to be able to differentiate

between a respondent's understanding of a particular

issue and the articulated response that he makes to
a question or a series of questions. J's style of
replying to the questions that I put to him and the
issues thereby raised was straight away discursive,
divergent and cognisant of complexity. A question
asked by me was usually opened up by him into a number
of other questions which were then discussed as
questions and sometimes left as questions. D's style,
on the other hand, was first of all more reserved
but also inclined towards closure. He would
listen to my questions and respond with 'an answer'.
Nevertheless D's later performance at team meetings
suggested that his conception of the work of the team
was as subtle as J's, which belied the impression
he gave at my early interviews.

4.3.4 Synthesising Corporate Purpose
We move on now to compare and contrast these three
statements and attempt to construe the basis of a team
objective, at least in so far as it might be understood
by these significant contributors.

The major similarity between these statements appears
in the reiteration of the almost text-book-like
formulation of a corporate function which identifies
property which is unfit as living accommodation and
makes sure that it is turned into housing of a standard
laid down by the relevant Housing Act. Yet there are

even differences between R's, J's and D's initial

statements in this respect. R prefaces his recognition

of this basic function with a recognition of an

administrative task for which he, in fact, is respon-

sible; namely monitoring the housing stock in Bath,

maintaining a Housing Assessment List, adding to it

as properties are discovered to be unfit for habi-

tation or become unfit for one reason or another,

and striking off properties which have been renovated

either because of HAT's activities or for any other

reason. Neither J nor D refer to this function, since

they only become aware of problem properties when these

are presented by R as items on the agenda of team

meetings.

Both R and D ostensibly share the assumption that

unfit housing will be turned into corresponding fit

housing, and it is only J who initially articulates

the possibility of changes in the overall housing

stock i.e. that unfit housing units may be demolished

and thus removed from stock or that the capacity of

unfit properties may be increased at the same time as

they are renovated. It is particularly interesting

that it is J, the planner, who first raises the issue

of demolition since he also holds that there should

be a general presumption in favour of restoration.

R, as co-ordinator of the team, seems himself to

operate with a presumption in favour of retention.
His track-record as one concerned with the <u>housing</u>
situation in Bath would probably not be regarded as
satisfactory if he were to be associated with a
continuing net decline in the housing stock. But it
is also part of his interpretation of HAT's brief
that the stock should gradually be building up over
time.

D articulates the unfit to fit conversion function
as the basis of the Housing Assessment Team's work,
but tends to set himself aside from this primary
function, casting himself in the role of specialist
advisor to those who have the principal responsibility.
This is part of D's personal style. He often prefers
to avoid responsibility for events. So that on the
few occasions when HAT attracted criticism from either
the Housing Committee or from the press D appeared
able to conceptually separate himself from this, on
such occasions almost alluding to the team in the
third person, although he is a full member of it.

D's distancing from HAT can perhaps be seen in terms
of his viewing the team as an 'inefficient' sub-
bureaucracy with its own formal rules, objectives,
and limitations. It is almost as if D believes that
the given structure of the team can never achieve

the 'right' sort of results by virtue of the fact that
it is, per se, an institution. A particular comment
that he made to me, as an aside from our discussion
about objectives, seemed to support this idea:

"Trouble is, when you create a committee like HAT, it
suddenly seems more difficult to get things done. When
R was doing the job on his own, he used to ring me up
from time to time and I'd give him an opinion, dig
out some information and I even went on a couple of
visits with him. He got what he wanted and it didn't
take up much of my time. Now the thing is all formal-
ised, we seem to spend hours talking round the point.
And we've all got different ideas of what we're
supposed to be doing."

It is D who is apt to highlight differences in
members' views of the purpose of the team, whilst R
and J tend to see HAT as relatively cohesive in this
respect. Note that D is also the only one of the three
who differentiates functionally between the various
kinds of expertise to be found on the team - himself
and his assistant as financial advisors, J and his
assistant as planning specialists and the engineers
L and C.

In their statements both R and J refer to the long-
term aspects of the Housing Assessment Team's function.

R includes in his list the middle and long term housing

requirements of the city and J alludes to 'the size of

the City's housing stock', and 'the planned future

for the area'. D, on the other hand, views HAT

principally as a processor of current problems,

rather than as a policy aware body concerned with

strategy.

In the course of the series of HAT meetings relating

to the Bedford Street case, each of these three

members had quite distinct preoccupations. It will

be remembered that HAT's official or bureaucratic

interest in Bedford Street was with the terrace

cottages which form the approach to the proposed

development site. R, however, whenever he referred

to the Bedford Street case, usually seemed to incor-

porate the whole of the debate and when he talked

about 'resolving the Bedford Street case' he had in

mind the whole complex of the development problem.

Clearly it is almost impossible in thinking and talking

about such a situation to try and attend to the

various aspects piecemeal, but R's viewpoint always

seemed to be that of the grand strategist, who had a

wider interest than just the renovation of a few

terraced cottages.

J was, perhaps rather surprisingly, almost entirely

focused on the particular question of whether or not

the cottages, which were listed for preservation, would

need to be demolished if the development went ahead.

He was rarely heard to express an opinion about the

block of flats themselves, which would have made a

considerable visual and environmental impact to the

surrounding area. The historical and finer architectural

characteristics of the terrace, difficult for most

people to appreciate, and in an obvious sense less

noticeable, weighed more heavily on J's mind. In a

sense, this tends to confuse our earlier model of J

holding a housing improvement view of HAT's objectives

and a broader planning view of his own as part of HAT.

D was largely unmoved by the Bedford Street case. He

did not express a strong preference for either removing

or retaining the terrace and neither did he pass a

definitive judgement on the suitability of the proposed

development for that area. His habit of distancing

himself from the recommendations of the team was

observed throughout this case. Some of this distance

can possibly be explained by a particular model of

professionalism which holds that Local Government

Officers should make clear distinction between

'Politics' and 'professional advice'. Officers, it

is often said, are there to advise the Politicians

on specialist matters and should not involve them-

selves in Politics (which is usually written and spoken

with a capital P). The Political contribution of

officers to Local Government debate is an interesting

and complex issue, but it is not our concern here.

However, the power of Local Government professionalisation

may well be an important factor in D being able to

say 'if this scheme, then these costs' or 'if these

cottages are converted by the private sector then

these costs, if by the public sector ...' and so on,

in a seemingly detached and disinterested way.

This trait is one which R, J and D all exhibit when

it comes to reporting to the Housing Committee.

They each regard HAT as in business to make recommenda-

tions - the buck, in their eyes, stops with the

politicians and not with them, although R as chairman

is aware of the dangers of taking no stand at all.

4.3.5   Some Summary Conclusions on Collective Purpose

(i) Notions of collective purpose held and used by

members of the Housing Assessment Team appear to be

strongly related to individual bureaucratic inter-

pretation of job roles. The senior members of HAT

take their briefs from the organisation which they

see above them; these directives come down not in

any formal sense because no such objectives have been

set out; the authority and ideas derive from E, who

has responsibility for the team, and are backed by

members' perceptions of the generally recognised aims

of Local Government and its constituent professions.

(ii)   Apart from the ties within the team caused by
such more or less common purpose references, some
members experience a sense of cohesion in the sense
that HAT appears to constitute a kind of sub-bureaucracy
in its own right, with sufficiently strongly absorbed
institutional authority to lend it its own official
status.

(iii)   The bureaucratic ties that the members have
with the team are further highlighted by the
distinction that some of them draw between themselves
the professionals and themselves in the role of members.
This distance seems to contribute to the fact that
the intensity of commitment and feeling at meetings
is generally not high.

(iv)   It is difficult to perceive any significant
forces of self-interest that can operate within the
structure of the Housing Assessment Team and the work
that it carries out. All members of the team are
jointly signatory to the final recommendations that
it makes and, in this sense, the eventual consumer
of these could be said to represent a 'common adversary'
for them. Each member has some unique and valuable
expertise that is apt to lend him some security within
the group. No member appears to be more 'expert' in
any of the fields than the officially recognised
expert. There is no seniority gap between the three

significant contributors and so there are no pressures
of discipline. Because each of these three is in any
case attached to a different department, the question
of fighting for promotion does not arise. In any case,
as we have observed, promotion within Local Government
at the levels of seniority we are dealing with here
is not so much a function of achievement as of
longevity.

The only dimension of self-interest which it seems
possible to attribute to HAT members is perhaps that
to do with the wish for each to appear competent at
meetings and to make 'good', cogent, and professional
contributions. Even so, the members know each other
so well that the atmosphere within the meetings is
relaxed enough for almost any kind of contribution
to be made without reserve.

It appears that self-interest runs parallel with
group or collective interest to the extent that
members recognise that it is a good thing for all
concerned if the business of HAT is conducted as
quickly and pleasantly as possible. In that respect,
there is a high level of co-operation amongst the
members and a high level of mutual support at the
meetings.

In the following chapter, we move on from considering

some of the various dimensions of purpose that may

operate to determine the outcomes of group decision-

making to look at some of the more elusive forces

they derive from the processes of debate and discussion.

5   A LEADER-DRIVER MODEL FOR GROUP 'DECISION-MAKING'

5.1   Introduction

We examine here a Housing Assessment case in which

a particular member of HAT was predominant in moving

the discussions, not altogether intentionally, towards

the final outcome. We discuss and discount the utility

of an explanatory model based upon notions of strategy

and postulate a much more passive context for the

'decision-making', a context characterised by routine-

ness, where ennui is never far away; a context in which

the moods of the day and the chance run of discussion

may have more impact than anything else upon what

finally happens.

5.2   A Summary Case Study

This case concerns a series of Housing Assessment Team

discussions about the future of a collection of

properties known as Rock Cottages, which are situated

within an old disused quarry at Combe Down, a small

suburb of Bath.

In May 1978, two unoccupied houses on this rambling

site came to the attention of R, co-ordinator of the

Housing Assessment Team. One of these houses was in

a particularly precarious structural position as it

backed directly onto the old quarry face at the north

end of the ground. This face was steadily crumbling

and slipping away and, hence, threatening the north wall of the cottage. Both this property and the one adjoining it were in a generally poor state of repair. They were also suffering from the damp that from time to time seeped down the quarry face from the field above.

The owner of both the empty cottages was resident in the Midlands and had inherited them several years ago as part of a relative's estate. R had been in touch with the owner, Mrs. Y, over a period of months, in an attempt to come to some agreement about putting the cottages into habitable order. She appeared to have no real interest in them however. Although she seemed to regard the cottages as a long-term invest- ment and wanted to retain ownership, she was either unwilling or unable to spend the money necessary for their maintenance.

The owner-occupier of the larger of the two sound houses, Mr P, was a retired market gardener, and the greater part of his strip of land was cultivated with fruit and vegetables. There was always an air of busyness about his corner of the quarry, a small farmland oasis flourishing in the heart of suburbia. Mr. P originally wanted to buy one of the empty cottages and convert it into accommodation for his daughter, a recent widow. But he was now beginning

to think that they had been too far neglected to be a good buy.

The owner of the second of these two sound semis, a plumber, was more or less retired, although he still did occasional jobs to keep himself occupied and supplement his pension. He lived alone. His house was well kept, the garden tidy. He and Mr P would pass the time of day amicably, chatting across the fence.

Separated from the two sets of semi-detached cottages was a detached house standing in its own walled square of land. This was occupied by its owner, an old woman now well into her eighties, and her three large red setter dogs. She had, until recently, managed to keep her house in good decorative order, but her health was beginning to fail, the outside of the house was gradually looking more derelict week by week and the grounds were slowly becoming over-run with weeds.

The quarry site on which all these properties stood was large, about two hundred yards by a hundred yards. More than one builder has considered the possibility of developing the site with readily marketable 'town' houses. Access to the site was good and the land itself firmly founded upon a rocky base. At the time of the HAT discussions, however, much of the site had

run to grass and the existing properties had a
pleasant rural if somewhat neglected outlook, with
a better view and more breathing space than the
occupants of the recently developed and expensive
estate behind the quarry.

I first visited the quarry myself one evening in early
summer. R and I had been talking at his office during
the afternoon, running over the events of the last HAT
meeting. This had been a rather extraordinary
gathering, notable for an unusually intense and
far-ranging discussion on the purpose of and constraints
imposed upon environmental planning and development
by Local Government. M, from the planning department,
had been standing in as senior representative for J,
who was on holiday somwhere in Cornwall. M is a
Canadian in his mid-thirties, an enthusiastic, indeed
almost fanatical conservationist of anything 'natural',
'traditional' and 'rustic'. He will argue fervently
and sometimes eloquently in support of such diverse
institutions as vintage cars, country churches, cottage
industry and real ales brewed in the wood.

D, the Estates Management member of HAT, is rather
inclined to go along with M's general outlook, although
he has no great affinity for vintage cars, but he does
at the same time regard himself as a realist. "You

cannot ignore the economic facts of life," he is apt

to say. "Efficiency must be attended to if we want

to make any kind of material progress." M's new

five-door hatch-back, he pointed out, was not exactly

hewn by dedicated craftsmen who were keenly in tune

with their working environment. Neither, he argued,

were these people particularly concerned that the

foaming sleeves of keg bitter that were no doubt

served in the cavernous pub outside their factory

gates, had started life an optimum number of weeks

ago in huge vats of stainless steel.

"It is all a compromise" asserted R, "A balance

between what we would like and what we can actually

have." Compromise seems to be one of his key operating

concepts. He is admirably suited to the task of

co-ordinating the activities of the Housing Assessment

Team. Balanced, reasonable, yet willing to put forward

a point of view if the situation demands, he pulls

in contributions from the other members and weaves

them into recommendations for action. Sensible,

piecemeal progress from an unsatisfactory state into

something a bit better. He lives his life and does

his job according to this incrementalist doctrine.

L, one of the Building Surveyors, is more pessimistic.

"There is nothing much we can do in any case. Events

sort themselves out in the end. Local Government

doesn't actually achieve very much in itself, it is just there, and it's large enough to make some people take account of its presence in what they do in the world outside."

And so it went on. Rock Cottages had been the starting point for this discussion. They were just number 3 on the agenda; two of the houses were unoccupied, one of these decaying fast, and what was to be done about them? R reported his correspondence to date with their owner, Mrs Y, and his attempts to persuade her to do something to make the properties habitable. Mrs Y was obviously playing a stonewall innings and each of her letters had picked up and expanded a detail of R's last, but drawn no conclusions. Between them they had built up a considerable file of material which had nevertheless had no effect at all upon the state of affairs that R wished to change.

Then D had said:

"Well they're not particularly interesting houses anyway. That quarry is a bit of a backwater."

M had then leapt to the defence of the cottages and the quarry itself, and started to argue about the preservation of living communities, saying that this was what planning was all about.

We never actually reached agenda item 4. R arranged
another meeting for the following week and the group
disbanded. R and I walked back to his office,
stopping off on the way for the customary beer and
sandwich. Over lunch and into the afternoon I asked
him about what he thought of the various members'
attitudes to their jobs and their views about
planning, conservation and housing assessment. He
made one particular comment that, as I reflected upon
it much later, seemed to help explain the eventual
direction and outcome of this particular case:

"For most of us, most of the time, it is just a job -
middle of the road, poorly paid really, but fairly
respectable and pleasant enough from a day to day
point of view. It's not exciting, in fact most of
the detail is rather boring, but from time to time
you get a case which seems more real somehow than
most. It seems to click with the sort of person you
are. Do you remember when J was so enthusiastic
about that tumble-down house out at Ashley? That
is the sort of place that he would like to own and
do up and so it interested him particularly. It was
the same with M this morning. He just felt a
sympathy with the people living out at Rock Cottages,
with the atmosphere of the place and so on."

I left R towards the end of the afternoon and took a

bus up to the quarry to look at the place for myself.
I alighted in the middle of a small shopping street
which was like dozens of others in the area - a
couple of model banks, a 'family' butcher, diminutive
supermarket, chemist, tobacconist and paper shop. We
had just travelled up from the city through two miles
of similar, unremarkable suburb. Neither really town
nor village, not built up yet hardly verdant either,
neither personal nor impersonal, friendly or unfriendly,
but each of these pockets of the community was known
in some depth, no doubt, to those that lived and grew
older there, year upon year.

I was directed to the quarry itself by the bus driver
and was surprised to find that it was only fifty
yards or so from the bus stop. An unmade track ran
in between the bank and a large detached house, and
I followed it away from the main street. The track
curved round behind a group of trees and then the
quarry lay set out ahead of me. It was vaguely
reminiscent of a wild west film set, a miniature
canyon almost, with two pairs.of cottages at the
far end under the shelter of the rock face. A small
pond lay between me and the villas, and two or three
ducks were paddling, rather proprietorially, round
in circles. A larger four square house stood within
a walled piece of ground to the right and I could see
two large dogs lying in the long grass. To the left,

a shallow incline covered with scrub was topped by

some aged pine trees that creaked heavily in the

freshening wind. The quarry itself was quite

sheltered, however, and the evening sun was warm.

In front of the most lived-in looking cottage a man

of about seventy was digging over a strip of garden

with practised efficiency. I ambled in his direction.

He looked up as I approached and nodded.

"Lot of visitors about this afternoon."

A broad Bristol accent, as if in parody of a rural

encounter over work on the land, like a scene from the

Archers.

"You're from the Council too, I suppose."

I disclaimed and asked who else had been disturbing him.

"Chap from the planning department was here after lunch.

American too."

He obviously found these two ideas disjunctive.

"Nice fellow though," he compounded, although whether

his visitor was nice in spite of his being a bureaucrat

or from across the Atlantic it was difficult to say.

It sounded as though M had been out in the field too.

I asked the old man what the planning department had

been interested in.

"Wanted to know whether I liked living here. Asked me

where I would like to live if I ever moved. Told him

I'd never thought about it, but that I'd been here

for thirty years and was quite settled."

I asked him then about the two empty cottages right
next to the rock face. He said that these had been
empty for the last two years or so and the owner lived
up North somewhere. He didn't know what was going
to happen to them but said that if they didn't have
some work done to them pretty soon they'd be in a
bad way.

"The damp from the cliff, that's the trouble. And
a bit of slippage as well. That field up there wants
draining properly really."
He pointed up to a piece of scrubland - field was
rather a flattering designation - which apparently
drained directly down the old quarry face onto the
back of the two cottages.
"Hope they don't fall down altogether. Might get the
developers in if that happens. One or two of 'em have
been interested in this bit of ground for a long while.
You could get quite a few modern-sized houses in
here you see."
I supposed that you could, but agreed that that would
change the character of the whole place for the worse.

I admired his garden, mostly of vegetables, which was
laid out in a highly organised and methodical way. We
exchanged weather forecasts for the coming summer and

I took my leave.

At the next meeting, the subject of Rock Cottages was once again on the agenda. R floated a proposal to encourage private development. "We are aware," he pointed out, "that one or two builders have shown interest in the site in the past. It is a substantial area and could support ten or a dozen modern semis or lines of town houses. The council does own part of the land anyway and might be prepared to give planning permission for a suitable scheme. We could also put any prospective developer in touch with the owner of the two cottages, who might then be prepared to sell out."

M was highly critical of the idea:

"That would be a monstrous thing to do. The whole character of the place would be lost. We're not just in the business of providing housing units you know. That quarry is an amazingly peaceful place to live in. I was up there the other day. Think about the people who are living there already. It would turn their world upside down."

D chimed in and said that from the Council's and indeed from HAT's point of view, to have the site built upon by a private developer would be a highly efficient

outcome. No council finance would be involved, the number of housing units in the area would be increased and the site would be tidied up from its present rather delapidated state to something more in keeping with a residential area. In the process, he said, the drainage from the scrub-land above the quarry could be properly provided for.

M reacted strongly against the idea of 'tidying up'. He argued that tidyness was a much overworked idea in planning and not one which HAT ought slavishly to pursue. R took a certain exception to this and pointed out that, to a large extent, they were in exactly the business of 'tidying up' properties that had been allowed to become run down.

"But I agree that tidyness shouldn't necessarily extend to how a development is laid out. I must admit I can see pros and cons for both arguments. Something has got to be done about those two empty cottages though. Somehow we've got to get Mrs Y to do the work, or get her to sell them to someone who will."

"They're not particularly marketable," said D. "No private buyer who would want to live there would be able to afford to pay what Mrs Y would want, and anyone who could afford it wouldn't really want to live there."

"It's difficult to imagine who would ever live there,"
R agreed. "The only people who seem to fit are those
who have always been there. It would be quite a good
place for a largish family. There's quite a bit of
ground to spread around in."

"That's just the sort of place it is." This from an
enthusiastic M. "If you do have to live in a built-up
suburb at all, what better surroundings to have kids
playing about in."

This discussion on Rock Cottages continued in this vein
for a while and eventually ended with M volunteering
to ring Mrs Y and talk with her himself about what ought
to be done. I went to see M myself a couple of days
later. He had not yet been able to contact Mrs Y. I
asked him what he thought about the Rock Cottages case.

"It's quite a fun spot, that quarry." His Canadian
drawl lent a certain cinematic drama to the line.
"It would be a pity if it was all built over. We
ought to take care of little pockets of quaintness
like that."

What did he think about using the land to supply
much-needed housing units?

"They're not much-needed actually, not now anyway,

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and certainly not in the middle of the market. The
pressure for new housing has been slowing down for
several months, except right at the bottom end. We
still have a lot of sub-standard housing in Bath, and
people needing basic homes, but we couldn't use the quarry
to help that situation. Any developer would be
looking to build smartish commuter houses. That's
what he could sell."

That all sounded reasonable enough and it more or less
tied in with R's recent statistics, some of which he
had been showing me the other day.

"This is one of those situations where there isn't much
scope for action anyway," M went on. "When I get
through to Mrs Y, I shall suggest to her that,
whether she wants to sell the properties or to maintain
them as assets, she will have to carry out repairs to
the back of the houses and to the roof, at the very
least. She could do all that on a modest bank loan
easily securable. That loan could then be serviced
by short-term lets. The houses would be maintained
in good order, would be self-financing, and she could
get them back at relatively short notice."

If Mrs. Y was to accept that line of argument from M,
the case would soon draw to a close. I suggested to
M that the circumstances were not actually all that

complicated:

"It's amazing what feeling those meetings can generate
at the time though. The issues are small enough as
you say, hardly affairs of state. Yet you can get
carried away on a flow of expansive argument. I can
anyway," he qualified with a grin, "But in the end,
what actually happens is not very much, couldn't
really be very much, and happens that way out of pure
chance more often than not."

We nattered on for a while longer as I couldn't resist
debating with him the idea of pure chance. Finally,
he said that he should have something to report by
the next meeting, and I left him to his business.

At the next meeting M reported that he had managed to
telephone Mrs Y and have a long conversation about
the houses. She had apparently been very uncertain
about what she wanted to do with the properties and
had left them empty more or less by default while
she made up her mind. She had no great need of the
capital at the moment and thought it a good idea in
principle to hold onto the houses. At the same time
she didn't want to spend much money on them. M
outlined his own scheme, which gave her some flexi-
bility of action in the medium term, and recommended
a reliable local estate agent who could act as a

letting agent. Mrs Y had agreed that this was a good
plan and she fixed up a date to travel down to Bath,
meet R and M and discuss what work needed to be
carried out. This meeting took place some weeks
later and the work was put in hand shortly afterwards.

5.3 Some Leader-Driver Characteristics

The notion arising from this case that we are concerned
to examine here is that a working group such as the
Housing Assessment Team, particularly when it is
dealing with issues which seem familiar and unexcep-
tional, can easily be moved in sometimes apparently
arbitrary directions if any one member adopts, for
whatever reason, a singularly strong or convincing
line of argument, or exhibits enthusiasm which is
uncharacteristic.

At one level of analysis this is almost a common-
place. It is intuitively rather obvious and also
well researched (e.g. Axelrod, 1976; Bales, 1953;
Bass, 1949; Mangham, 1978; Lukes, 1975) that indi-
viduals who occupy positions of power within a group,
or have strong oratory and reasoning skills, can
push events in directions in which they would like
them to move. What is less well researched is what
happens in circumstances where there is a fairly even
distribution of a low quantity of organisational power,
where relatively well-rehearsed and familiar business

is being transacted and the majority of the members
of the group have no great personal or organisational
stake in the outcomes of the decision-making process.

In the course of the last twenty years or so there
have been many styles of reaction to, first, the
classical bureaucratic models of organisations such
as were proposed and developed by Weber (op. cit.),
and then later the various systemic views with their
mapped-out hierarchies of interlocking and corporate
goals (Selznick, 1948; Ashby, 1956; Emery and Trist,
1960; Simon, 1956).

In the Management Sciences, and particularly in
O.D. and O.R., a counter school of thought has
gradually become identifiable and associated with
analyses of organisational politics. This school is
founded upon what might be termed a 'real-life' view
of organisations as ferments of political intrigue,
where grand strategies are continually being planned
and enacted, personal and departmental conflict is
a way of life and paramount in most individuals'
thinking is a desire to claw their way up the hierarchy
or build up their empire by the quickest and cleverest
means possible. Some recent representatives of
this school have been Argyris and Schon (1974),
Axelrod (1977), Brewer (1973), Eden (1978), Lerner
(1976), Mangham (op. cit.), Mumford and Pettigrew (1975),

Perrow (1972), Pettigrew (1973), Radford (1977) and Zaleznik (1970).

Whilst we would agree that such politically oriented models of organisations are widely applicable and contribute important real-life dimensions that are lacking in bureaucratic and systems representations, nevertheless they do not account for all types of situation. An important characteristic of the content and procedure of the meetings of the Housing Assessment Team is routineness. The members know each other well, they are approximately contemporary and each is situated towards the centre of his available career hierarchy. They are men of modest ambition, doing a job for reasons which perhaps they can't really call to mind, having arrived where they are simply by following the path as it has appeared in front of them, rather as one might wander through a wood. Family men, bar one, with all the concerns and obligations that implies. Thankful enough for a job with relative security, a job which is white collar and respectable. Unfulfilled yet phlegmatic, sometimes annoyed by this or that bureaucratic restraint, yet working peaceably for the most part within close limits of power and discretion. Each has some expertise in one field or another, all are reserved about forming judgements and pronouncing opinions.

To understand more fully the outcomes determined by a team so compiled, it is necessary to take account of a kind of organisational ennui against which professional judgements are often made. That is not necessarily to imply high levels of cynicism and world-weariness, but rather to suggest that, commonly, energy will not be mobilised beyond a certain point to argue for and support with action organisational or professional causes.

It is possible to identify some important parameters relating to group meetings conducted within this kind of structure, parameters which become the more significant as the potential for the differential distribution of powers of reason and rhetoric is reduced. These may be labelled:

- critical elapsed sequences
- stock polarities and agreements
- discounted standpoints
- novel standpoints
- extraordinary commitment

and we now examine these ideas individually in the context of the meetings of the Housing Assessment Team.

(i) Critical Elapsed Sequences

These are essentially conceived as particular sequences

of contributions which of themselves give rise to

particular other contributions, conclusion points or

actions by contributors. This is a similar idea to

the concept of Act to Act Tendencies proposed by

Bales (1953), although he was principally concerned

with the juxtaposition of classes of behaviour rather

than with the content of strings of spoken contributions.

It is possible to differentiate between powerful

sequences of content and sequences in which the

potential power is somehow diffused. D, for example,

followed up R's suggestion of encouraging private

development with his own thoughts on 'tidying up'

the site. The two taken together form a kind of

increasing gradient against which M reacts strongly.

Had D made a point which essentially disagreed with

R, the two taken together might have neutralised each

other and M might not have put his own view so

strongly or, indeed, might not have put it at all.

The apposition and juxtaposition of contributions

creates increased or decreased potential for new

contributions. This is a similar idea to that of

semantic determinism discussed elsewhere (Cumberlidge,

1978). It was argued then that the generation of

text or dialogue may follow something like a

Markovian process. That is to say, what has just

been said determines a set of probabilities for what

will be said next and that once a writer or speaker

sets off from a particular starting point he quickly

builds up a structure which constrains and helps to shape the finished contribution.

Common examples of critical elapsed sequences occur when arguments escalate to hostility in the form of tempers lost, or when, conversely, humour builds upon humour and a particular line of discussion breaks down into laughter and flippancy. Part of the skill of managing meetings and conversations to some desired end probably lies in anticipating critical sequences and their likely effect and then attempting either to construct such sequences or to block them, depending upon how the consequences are valued.

If none of the contributors has any particularly strong or salient objectives, then the process becomes much more of a game of chance, where the Markovian probability distributions are relatively flat. It is a well known feeling to many committee men to have been involved in a collective decision that has emerged from nobody knows where.

(ii) Stock Polarities and Agreements

Where, as in the case of HAT, the members of a meeting are well known to each other, stock reactions to particular contributions may become accepted into the culture of the group. These commonly take the

form either of polarities or agreements. So that

whenever D says, as he is apt, that "That doesn't

make commercial sense," then J is likely to respond

with something like "Our measures of profit and loss

are not so clear cut here." These two ideas frequently

come up in pairs and therefore tend to stand alone

in the proceedings, effectively neutralising each

other, forming a kind of standard diversion neither

connected strongly to what has gone before nor forming

a clear foundation for what is about to come; the

main sequence of contributions tends to restart

after the occurence of stock polarities.

Stock agreements are common and well-recognised pairs

of reinforcing contributions. When R, for example,

confronted as chairman by a maze of uncertainties

and conflicting objectives and opinions, reminds the

meeting that "All we've got to do is to find a workable

compromise," L will very often concur by saying "If

we try and find the very best solution we shall

probably be here all year. Let's just get something

done." This is a familiar pair of contributions as

well known as phrases in a popular melody.

Stock agreements can have the effect of raising the

power of a line of argument to a strong climax,

depending upon the mood of the meeting and what has

gone before. Alternatively, by their very familiarity

and air of cliché, they can sap the force of otherwise
strong rhetoric by introducing an awareness of deja
vu and banality.

(iii) Discounted Standpoints

We refer here to the occasions when stock contributions
are made, however prompted, but are easily recognised
as being hobby horses and hence regarded with indul-
gence and discounted as significant items of force
in debate. Even if the line of reasoning is clear
and sound, even if the rhetoric is powerful, discounting
will take place if it is a repeat performance, and
known as such.

One of L's favourite subjects is what he regards as
the impotence of Local Government to effect fundamental
changes in the provision of services, how it can only
hope to work incrementally and painfully slowly on the
status quo. Such was the tenor of his comment, quoted
earlier from a meeting about Rock Cottages.

"Local Government doesn't actually achieve very much
in itself, it is just there, and large enough to make
some people take account of its presence in what they
do."

Whenever L comes in with this theme, eyebrows are
raised, everyone sits back in their chairs, D grins

and the proceedings come to a momentary halt. L is
not providing a dramatic oratory climax, but quite
simply an interlude during which members can sit back
and relax, formulate their next point, write notes on
the conclusions reached so far, or think about what
they are going to do during the coming weekend.

(iv) Novel Standpoints

In apposition to the notion of a line of argument
discounted by familiarity is the idea of a standpoint
that has impact by virtue of its novelty and freshness.
New ideas, new themes have an undeniable attraction for
most people whose business is discussion and argument.
M, for example, as a relatively recent HAT member and
as a foreigner, clearly had some power of novelty in
the series of meetings relating to the Rock Cottages
case. He had the advantage of a new face and unknown
personality, of an unfamiliar voice and style of
argument, and of the somewhat radical stand he took
on some of the issues in the case.

The value of novelty in a rather different context is
affirmed by the research findings of Axelrod (1976)
who studied in some depth a number of high-level,
international, foreign policy meetings.

"The data refute a bombardment model of argumentation
in which the participants support their own arguments

to make them resistant to attack, while attacking the weak spots in others' stated positions. In fact, there are few assertions which are supported by specific evidence, almost no mutually supported causal arguments, and the assertions which were attacked were no less emphasised than the assertions which were not attacked. More in accord with the data is the 'novel arguments' approach in which the key factor in persuasive argumentation is the development of arguments which others have not already taken into account."

But it seemed, in the course of Housing Assessment Team meetings, that the novelty did not serve exactly the same purpose that it did during Axelrod's high level foreign policy discussions. In the latter case the novelty appeared to indicate to the recipient of the argument that the speaker had obviously considered some aspects of the question that he himself had not. The recipient here is brought up short by the new argument, first of all because it strikes him as new, second because he may be doing a bit of fast thinking in order to follow the argument at all, third, perhaps, in order to work out how this new line relates to what he himself has said and, finally, to consider any further implications of the argument and to revalue his opinion of the speaker and his case.

Some of this may have been going on as M made his

contributions, bringing as he did new perspectives to bear upon the scene. But an equally important effect of the modest enough novelty here was simply to stir some life back into the proceedings and to move the meeting out of one of its characteristic ruts.

(v) Extraordinary Commitment

Genuine enthusiasm is invariably infectious. Not only does it tend to be uplifting of itself, but in a group it can also help to convince flagging spirits that the activity they are engaged upon is worthwhile undertaking and that it can be carried forward to a successful conclusion. There is indeed more likelihood, if there is an enthusiast present, that it will be.

Extraordinary commitment is also an asset to a group in a rather obvious way. Clearly someone who is prepared to do some ground-work and also take responsibility for initiating action, will push up the output of the collective as a whole. He or she may then, having started a move forward, be able to mobilise other members of the group who were not significant contributors previously, and who could not be until events started to occur and tasks become mapped out.

Extraordinary commitment is particularly striking in its effect when it occurs against a background of unexciting hackwork and routineness. It can also,

however, have an effect which is quite unintended by
the person showing it, such as often happens when
somebody joins a new job and shows an exaggerated
keenness to become interested and involved in what
his colleagues are doing. Their keenness can often
get them carried away and they can find themselves
involved with work that they'd rather not be doing,
simply because their enthusiasm was taken at face
value.

5.4. A Leader-Driver Model

What we are suggesting here then, as an explanatory
model of some of the dynamics of HAT meetings,
comprises two distinct levels of analysis. First,
it seems important to underline the broad nature of
the relationship that the members have with their
organisation as a whole and with the housing assessment
team in particular. Then, within that framework, we
have identified certain parameters that have to do
with the way in which the observed content of meetings
unfolds.

We touched earlier upon the question of the authen-
ticity of models of organisational politics in the
context of the routine and humdrum. This point
requires some elaboration.

Pettigrew (1973, 1977) has been particularly concerned

with the reasons underlying political behaviour in companies and the extent to which individuals attempt to lead affairs in a selected direction in order to further their own ends.

Mumford and Pettigrew (1975) have noted:

"We would stress the importance of individual goals in decision-making behaviour. It is not always recognised that the desire of individuals to increase or maintain their power position may have as much influence on the decision-making process as departmental or other subunit goals ...

... Politics can be seen as one of the mechanisms by which individuals and groups seek to obtain power over others. They do this in order to secure some advantages which they believe will assist the achievement of personal and group goals."

Implicit in Pettigrew's view of politics here are, first, the existence of individual goals which are more or less clearly defined, or at least recognisable when choices have to be made, and second an assumption that these can be pursued fruitfully at the place of work, and, more specifically, within an organisation.

Burns (1965) also has some views on political behaviour.

"The notion either of a hierarchy of sub-goals which,

although generated within, and by the existence of, the

organisation, wander out of line so far as organisational

goals are concerned, or of an organisational goal

generated by the concensus reached by individuals,

each with personal goals, bargaining and learning their

way towards a satisfactory equilibrium between their

goals and those of the working community can itself

only be realised and made operational if we accept

the fact that the organisation represents only one of

several means - and systems for realising the goals

of the individual."

Burns has a somewhat different emphasis to that of

Mumford and Pettigrew. He is essentially saying that

individuals have personal commitments, some of which

may be realised through the membership of an organis-

ation. Mumford and Pettigrew are rather suggesting

that within a given organisational framework, individuals

are apt to have strong career commitments that bear

heavily upon any decision-making processes to which

they are party.

Pettigrew draws a distinction too between political

and non-political behaviour and tends to make implicitly

a rather complex ethical judgement about the former.

That is to say, at the same time as regarding the

pursuit of power as being in some sense not really

quite proper, he also seems rather to relish it as
'real life', the true stuff of organisations. This
is partly witnessed by his quotation from Bannester
(1969):

"It is immaterial who owns the gun and is licensed
to carry it; the question is, who has his finger on
the trigger?"

This conception of strategy and politics, whilst
possibly having some applicability for understanding
individual HAT members' dealings with their own
departments, is not considered to provide an
authentic model of the workings of the Housing
Assessment Team itself, for a number of important
reasons:

(a)   HAT is essentially an interdepartmental working
      group which has the most loosely defined lines
      of reporting. Suggested originally by a previous
      Chief Executive, the function was at first carried
      out by R alone. R's present senior, the Director
      of Environmental Health, later proposed that
      representatives from the various other departments
      be brought in and the function run on a committee
      basis. This idea was approved by the various
      Heads of Department and 'volunteers' were
      appointed. So HAT was started more or less

because 'it seemed a good idea at the time.' It
undoubtedly serves and is also believed to serve
a useful function and it uses relatively little
in the way of resources; but its results are
of a piecemeal and undramatic kind, not the sorts
of material from which dynamic career progressions
are made. The members are aware of this and
regard HAT business as just another part of the
job, and something of a change from their partic-
ular departmental affairs, and to be conducted as
quickly and pleasantly as possible.

(b)   There is a clearly discernible culture amongst the
foot soldiers of Local Government in Bath which is
somehow 'anti-political'. That is not to say
that individual officers show no concern for
their own career progressions, but rather that
there exists a strong ethos of 'playing a
straight bat' within the organisation, which
naturally attenuates competitive strategy in
Pettigrew's sense.

(c)   There are implicit but strong rules of precedence
which govern the career progressions of Local
Government Officers, and these curtail the advan-
tages to be gained from competitive strategy.
That is to say, there is little enough scope for
an officer to improve his career position by

dramatic action. The opportunities for dramatic
action are themselves few and far between and
in any case the impact would have to be very
considerable for it to outweigh the prevailing
corporate sense of when it was appropriate to
promote.

The situation changes, it is true, among the upper
echelons of the paid officers. The jockeying for
position and competition for resources is marked at
Director level and the battle for power a major pre-
occupation. Here, Pettigrew's political model has
much salience.

"... the power distribution within an organisation
at any one moment will be an important factor in
determining who shall gain a disproportionate share
in new resources as they become available." (Mumford
and Pettigrew, op.cit.)

But the Housing Assessment Team members do not touch
this world. They have little discretion; they are
receivers not writers of memoranda.

In thinking about what we have labelled the Leader-
Driver model, we have used the term leader in rather
a singular way, much in the same sense that it is
used in the phrase 'lead astray'; that is, to connote

a state of affairs in which there are not great a
priori forces to push events in any particular direction
and therefore the moods and preoccupations of the day
that members bring to the meetings and the order in
which contributions happen to be made are significant
determinants of the final outcome. This formulation
is at odds with models that pay great attention to
strategy and also those that would view the process
as being essentially driven by a sense of public
service and professional responsibility.

We are underlining here an essential indeterminacy
surrounding the outcomes of the deliberations of working
groups such as the Housing Assessment Team; groups
whose business is characterised by discussion that
searches for a workable solution to what has been
broadly defined, by the team or by somebody else, as
a problem area.

The problems here are typically not complex structurally.
A particular housing unit (or group of units) fails
to meet the minimum standards for habitation laid
down in the Housing Acts and represents, therefore,
a waste in the use of resources, in a total community
sense. The team is charged with the job of engineering
an improved use of resources and the restoration of
the housing unit to a working standard.

Often, what needs physically to be done is hardly a matter for debate. The question is usually one of financing - who is to pay for what and how. Sometimes, though, a number of possible schemes are proposed. The alternatives that come up for discussion in the course of the Rock Cottages case were renovation by the owner, purchase and renovation by the Council, purchase and either renovation or demolition and development by a private contractor. Only the first and the last of these options was considered seriously as the Council budget for property improvement was small and likely to get smaller. Wherever possible HAT was instructed to act as facilitator for external financing.

Either of the remaining schemes could have been the outcome. An important reason for the final result was a particularly strong stand taken by a relatively new member of the group who also took some initiative in facilitating action.

This stand was partly due to a belief in certain principles, but it was also the result of a debating reaction to other contributions in the meeting. There is a sense in which what finally happened was "nothing but words" that became transformed into action.

Part of the power of such words derives, we have
argued, from the background of routineness and famili-
arity which characterises the team's business. Against
this background events, contributors or contributions
of novelty can generate unaccustomed interest and
lead decision making away in a particular direction.

Even outside the team, Mrs Y was galvanised into
some sort of action by M's personal attention and
common sense suggestions. She probably would have
continued to reply to R's rather official letters for
months without coming to any decision about what to
do with the house, but an enthusiastic Canadian at
the other end of the line was something that she could
more easily respond to.

Bruner (1979) has looked at some of the implications
of regarding decision-making as discourse.

"... the making of decisions must be regarded not
only as an individual intrapsychic process but also
as a way of communicating something in a social
context ... decision theory tends to concentrate upon
those cognitive processes that operate in the mind of
a detached speaker to guide him to a well-formed
performance: knowing the alternatives, knowing their
estimated values and likelihoods, knowing the kinds
of pay off matrices that govern choice, being able

to make Bayesian transformations of empirical proba-
bilities, etc. But I wish to argue that a social or
political decision is not made with these rational
considerations as sole or even primary considerations.
Rather, it is made as a vehicle for carrying out the
intentions of those empowered to make the decision,
and the process of reaching a decision among those
involved is more like a conversation than like the
rational calculus. It usually results from the inter-
action of a set of speech acts."

We would go further than this in suggesting that it
is possible also to over-emphasise the significance
of intentions. Mrs Y herself didn't appear to have
any strong intentions, just a once articulated
preference for keeping the cottages if possible but
for not spending much money on them either. We are
suggesting that our leader in this model in a sense
doesn't really exist. He or it could have turned up
at any time to swing events away in any direction.

6   A PERSONAL INTEREST MODEL OF GROUP DECISION MAKING

6.1   Introduction

The analysis contained within this chapter examines
the hypothesis that individuals participating in a
collective decision-making process will be primarily
concerned with furthering their own interests, however
they define them, rather than with pursuing for the
group whatever they might regard as the objectives of
the group.   Arising from this assumption is the notion
that the outcome or outcomes of a collective decision-
making process can be regarded as a complex function
of the personal interests of the group members.

We illustrate this model with reference to a Housing
Assessment Team case which involved a public inquiry.
The fact of having to give formal evidence and to
account officially for their points of view, threw
into highlight some of the individual interests of R,
the co-ordinator of HAT, and E, the Director of
Department to whom R is responsible.   The events of
the case itself are of secondary concern here, but
are relevant in that they provided a stimulus and
backdrop for discussions that I was able to have with
R and E about how they perceived their involvement with
HAT.

We first summarise the events of the case and then
present an analysis of the personal interests that
gradually emerged in the course of the discussions.
Finally, we draw some conclusions about the utility
of adopting such a perspective and suggest aspects
of collective decision-making that can be highlighted
but, also, that can be missed in the process.

6.2 A Summary Case History

The case described here centres upon the future of a
terrace of ten, three-storey, 18th century, 'artisan'
cottages and an adjoining terrace of two cottages
which date from the early 19th century. All these
properties lie within what is known as the Bath
Conservation Area and also the Widcombe Priority Area.
One of these cottages was included in the List of
Buildings of Special Architectural and Historic
Interest issued in August 1973, and two others were
'spot-listed' in a Department of the Environment inspec-
tion carried out in January 1973. These cottages
became the subject of a public inquiry that was set
up when the County of Avon applied for listed
building consent to demolish them in order to accommo-
date a road-widening scheme. An extract from the
evidence presented to the inquiry by S, the Assistant
County Surveyor, serves to sketch in some background
to this proposal:

"In February 1968, Circular 1/68 issued by the then
Minister of Transport, asked urban authorities to
prepare traffic and transport plans showing how they
intended to relate their traffic and parking policies
to available road capacities and to immediate and
longer term policy objectives. The plans were used
as a background for consideration of investment and
grant applications.

"The Bath Traffic and Transport Plan was substantially
based on the Buchanan Planning and Transport Study
published in 1965 and was inherited by the County
Council on the reorganisation of Local Government
in 1974."

This plan contained the proposals to widen the road on
which the aforementioned cottages stood. These
proposals involved demolishing the cottages and, in
accordance with established procedure, the advice of
what was then the Medical Officer of Health was
sought. S's statement continued:

"In December 1970 the City Council received and
accepted the official representation of the Medical
Officer of Health concerning (the cottages), that:

(a)   the houses in the area were unfit for human
      habitation

(b)   the most satisfactory method of dealing with the

conditions in the area was the demolition of all

the buildings ...

"The City Council accordingly declared a Clearance

Area and made a Compulsory Purchase Order under the

Housing Acts which was submitted to the Secretary of

State for confirmation. At the same time as the

Compulsory Purchase Order was made a Statement of

Reasons was served on all owners. The reasons were

all related to the proposed widening scheme that had

crystallised in the Traffic and Transport Plan and the

opportunity was taken by the City Council to prescribe

a detailed road widening line. In order to implement

the widening it was necessary to acquire and demolish

all the properties in the Compulsory Purchase Order.

No objections were made to the Compulsory Purchase

Order and it was confirmed by the Secretary of State

in 1971.

"After inheriting the scheme from the City Council,

the County Council reviewed the proposals and resolved

to pursue the road widening scheme and it is the

formal application for Listed Building consent to

demolish, that has led to this public inquiry."

A public inquiry is almost always necessary before

consent can be given to demolish listed buildings.

In opposition to this particular application, made
by the Avon County Council, is the conservation lobby
who argue that the historical associations and archi-
tectural characteristics of the cottages make them
worth preserving, even at the cost of some inconvenience
to road-users. The County Planning Officer for Avon
made the following observations in his evidence to
the public inquiry:

"In addition to the documentary evidence available
to support the historical associations of the cottages
with John Wood and his employer Ralph Allen, the
architectural features of the design reinforce the
impression that the cottages were consciously designed
to create an impression of dignity and solidity
appropriate to their location at the entrance to
Ralph Allen's private carriage road ...

"The cottages are unusual for their date in that while
intended as 'artisan housing' they are designed to a
high standard incorporating architectural features
not normally found in such housing, and are extremely
well-built. The ten cottages Nos 6-24, are linked
visually in pairs by the grouping of doors and windows
so that there is a more stately rhythm to the elevation
than would be achieved by identical placing of doors
and windows in each elevation. The upper storeys
are dignified by pilasters rising through two storeys

on the line of the party walls, and by the massive
chimneys and raked copings. The door hoods and
brackets, and the band course and cornice are well
detailed. These features combine to indicate that
the buildings were considered to be something of an
architectural and sociological 'show-piece' by their
owner and architect.

"Other extant examples of artisan housing of the 18th
and 19th century date in Bath do not possess similar
architectural features or comparable homogeneity of
design, nor do any surviving on a similar scale retain
their original features to the same extent."

The main point of interest in this case, as it relates
to our analysis of the Housing Assessment Team, is
that the City Council, who were originally party to
proposing the road-widening scheme and who instituted
the compulsory purchase order on the cottages, are
now, after reorganisation, defending the retention
of the terrace on conservation grounds. In this they
are supported by the Bath Preservation Trust and the
Bath Society. It is true that the Buchanan Study
predicted a significant increase in traffic flow
along the road on which the cottages stand, which
has not taken place because a proposed development
of the Admiralty premises nearby at Foxhill was
subsequently shelved. It is also, presumably,

perfectly reasonable for Council policy and priorities

on conservation, traffic and housing to change

with passage of time. The Housing Assessment Team

was itself set up in the period between the original

Compulsory Purchase Order and the current public

inquiry and brought with it new ways of evaluating

housing potential. Nevertheless, the apparent turn-

around generated some strong feeling and, incidentally,

gave rise to some interesting data relevant to the

personal interest analysis that we now go on to

discuss.

6.3 An Analysis of Personal Interests

There are a number of key individuals concerned with

this case who could have been singled out for consider-

ation in an analysis of personal interests. For

example:

(a) L, County Engineer and Surveyor and Head of the
Department of Highways and Engineering, County
of Avon.

(b) S, the Assistant County Surveyor who has in the
past carried out a considerable amount of work
in measuring and elaborately analysing the
traffic flows in the road network adjacent to
the cottages.

(c) B, a leading member of the Bath Society, himself
a practising architect.

(d) D, managing director of the M Construction
Company, who has drawn up a scheme for the con-
version of the terraces into two and three
bedroomed units particularly suitable for first-
time buyers.

(e) E, the now Director of Environmental Health for
the City Council, who as Medical Officer of
Health recommended the demolition of the cottages
in 1970 and is now maintaining that they could
and ought to be preserved.

(f) R, co-ordinator of the Housing Assessment Team,
responsible to E, and at the time of this case
very much concerned with demonstrating the success
of HAT as a mechanism for saving housing units that
would otherwise have been lost.

We shall restrict discussion to those directly concerned
with the Housing Assessment Team and concentrate here
upon R, the co-ordinator of HAT, and E, the Director
of Environmental Health to whom R reports.

In trying to understand the meaning and causes of any
social action, particularly that which occurs within
organisations, with reference to the concept of
interests, it is important to construe the notion
widely enough to take account of more than merely
selfish behaviour on the part of the actors concerned.
Parsons (1960) has referred to this point in considering

the variety of causes that may lie behind directed
action:

"I do not think it is useful to postulate a deep
dichotomy between theories which give importance
to beliefs and values on the one hand, to allegedly
'realistic' interests, e.g. economic, on the other.
Beliefs and values are actualised, partially and
imperfectly, in realistic situations of social inter-
action and the outcomes are always codetermined by
the values and the realistic exigencies; conversely
what on concrete levels are called 'interests' are
by no means independent of the values which have been
institutionalised in the relevant groups. Thus churches
have 'interests' just as definitely as do business
firms or trade unions though of course the content
is different."

So that within the context of an organisation,
personal interests commonly have an organisational
reference. Although entirely external interests may
often be important and significant in determining
behaviour, they usually represent only a sub-set
of that which is of concern to the individual. It
is also useful to differentiate between means and
ends, so that we may attempt to make some judgement
about when to stop probing behind what people tell
us. Maslow (1954) has observed that:

"If we examine carefully the average desires that

we have in daily life, we find that they have at

least one important characteristic, i.e. that they are

usually means to an end rather than ends in themselves.

We want money so that we may have an automobile.

In turn we want an automobile because the neighbours

have one and we do not wish to feel inferior to them,

so that we can retain our own self-respect and so that

we can be loved and respected by others. Usually when

a conscious desire is analysed we find that we can

go behind it, so to speak, to other, more fundamental

aims of the individual."

Interests, aims, values, desires; it is not our

intention here to become embroiled in the exclusive

definitions of overlapping concepts. We are using

the term Personal Interest in this chapter to represent

either end states or more intermediary means that have

salience for an individual and therefore give rise

to purposive behaviour when he is faced with situations

of choice.

(i) R: Some Dimensions of Personal Interest

R has been co-rodinator of HAT since the team was

set up in 1975. The formation of this team, and

indeed of many similar teams in Local Government,

followed upon the reorganisation of 1974 and the

then current trend towards what has been broadly

labelled corporate management thinking. Interdisci-
plinarity was a key idea at that time and HAT was
conceived very much in those terms, its members
having diverse backgrounds in planning, surveying,
architecture, estate agency, costing and environmental
health. R, then a Senior Inspector of Environmental
Health, found himself caught up in this new inter-
disciplinary thinking and was given the task of
acting as chairman and administrator for the Housing
Assessment Team. He threw himself into his new job
with enthusiasm, initiated an extensive survey of
property in the City and ended up with a long list
of 'marginal' houses, that is, houses that are con-
sidered by the official standards for environmental
health to be unfit or almost unfit for habitation
and which will need either to be brought up to standard,
converted for non-residential use or else demolished.

The selection of actual team members was largely
out of R's hands, although he was able to contribute
some suggestions where two or more people appeared
to qualify more or less equally for membership. He
was, however, responsible to E for working out the
modus operandi of the team, for deciding upon the
procedures for meetings, the frequency of meetings,
for drawing up the agendas and writing the minutes,
for allocating executive, out-of-meeting work amongst
members, and for the progress of this work against

the team's timetable.

The original proposals about HAT conceived the team
as having a limited life, in that it was to be set up
rather as an interdepartmental working party to carry
out a particular task, and would disband when this
task had been achieved. A review date was suggested
and agreed, and was six weeks away at the time of the
public inquiry. R was at that time in the course of
preparing a review of HAT's work and was concerned
to argue three main points therein:

(a) That HAT had been instrumental in adding significantly
     to the City's housing stock and, at the same
     time, in helping to preserve its architectural
     heritage.

(b) That, in achieving these objectives, it has
     managed to mobilise private sector finance to
     a large extent, by negotiating each case carefully
     with the interested parties and finding common
     interests between them and the team.

(c) That there is a continuing need for this kind
     of work as ageing properties fall into disrepair
     and that HAT or something like it ought to be
     maintained on a permanent basis to deal with this
     need.

The timing of the public inquiry was rather apposite.

As R observed to me:

"Housing Assessment is normally pretty low-profile.
Not many people are very clear what we do and some
don't know that we exist. If we can make a good
case at the inquiry and are seen to be taking a
broad view of things, then we might get the team
established on a permanent basis."

I asked him then whether that was something that he
would like to happen.

"Oh, certainly. Apart from the fact that I'm a bit
higher on the scale than I would otherwise be, it
makes the work much more interesting. I get about
a lot more than I ever used to."

During the course of a number of discussions I had
with R about his position as co-ordinator of HAT, a
number of personal objectives emerged which seem also
to be, for him, important positive attributes of the
job. These are as follows:

(a) Increased job satisfaction; R seems to derive
     a considerable amount of interest and satisfaction
     from this position. He says that he enjoys
     being based in Bath, he gets on well with his
     colleagues and likes being able to 'get out of
     the office', visit properties and meet the public.

He finds the ambiance of his occupational
status quo congenial and would not like it to
change.

(b) Increased chances of internal promotion; R
believes that making a success out of HAT must
improve his chances of promotion within his own
department, not just as a direct result of the
team's achievements being 'officially recognised',
but also because as co-ordinator of the team
he is able to move within a wider circle of
potentially influential people, both Local
Government officers and elected council members.

(c) Increased job mobility; R considers that the
experience accumulated during his association
with the team will provide him with more career
options if he ever decides to change his job.
He sees the value of this experience as deriving
both from the actual business of managing the
team and from the fact that the work involves him
in meeting people with a wide variety of back-
grounds, expertise and seniority.

(d) Increased organisational status; from that attach-
ing to his normal Local Government grade of
Senior Inspector of Environmental Health to the
slightly higher status level afforded him on

account of the extra work, responsibility and
acting seniority associated with being co-ordinator
of HAT. This is status which, partly, he gives
to himself but which seems to be reinforced by
the reactions of the people that work with and
around him.

(e) Increased income; from the step up in grade that
accompanies the position.

R apparently associates these occupational attributes
with his job as viewed as a whole rather than linking
them specifically with individual cases. However,
particular cases seem to serve these interests to the
extent that they either result in 'successful' outcomes,
in R's terms, and/or are inherently interesting to
him as pieces of working life. R found it difficult
when asked to place these interests in an order of
priority or to assign them any kind of importance
weighting, but he did agree that the way that he views
his working world is significantly affected by an
important preoccupation which essentially seems to
combine both job satisfaction and status. He articu-
lated this as follows:

"It's good to feel as though you're achieving something
and having an effect that people can recognise. I'm no
more or less concerned about status really than anyone

else in this department, less than most probably, but
I like to think that what I'm doing is being taken
seriously by the people here and by the public outside."

We now examine these identified interests in greater
detail and reflect upon some of the comments that R
has made about each.

Job Satisfaction

R is by temperament lively and active. He likes things
to be happening and likes to be busy himself. He is
not a prevaricator and when faced with a list of jobs
to do against a deadline, which he often is, he presses
on and works his way steadily through them. He will
ring someone now rather than wait until 'later on' -
he will dictate a letter while he thinks of it, rather
than piling work up in his 'in' tray. As regards the
main business of the Housing Assessment Team, he prefers
to see results in the short term rather than the
longer term, to see some action taken which works
rather than to prolong debate about alternatives.
He is a kind of pragmatist, a seeker of quick compromise.

At the same time R does not take precipitate action
before having thought implications through carefully
and he also takes some satisfaction from contemplating
the complexity of some of the cases that come his way.
He is aware of and almost relishes conflicting criteria

and conflicting needs and he sees it as being the job

of HAT to mediate sensibly and steer a 'middle course'

between the requirements of different interested

parties. In this connection, R has noted:

"When a HAT case comes up, the first thing we are

normally trying to do is to maintain the housing

stock level. This can happen in a variety of ways

but there may be conflicts between us and the owners,

or between owners and tenants or between co-owners

who want to do different things with the property.

Then there are conservationists who will have a

different view again. Even on the team, there are

differences between the members. J (the senior

planning member) would sometimes be prepared to save

houses that would cost a fortune to keep in a habitable

condition, but then his business is the heritage of

the city more than anything else. Sometimes I disagree

with D. His background is in Estate Agency and he

still tends to look at properties in terms of their

open market potential. But I am mostly concerned

with providing as many acceptable housing units as

possible as economically as possible."

R is clearly operating with the assumption that the

various parties in a case will, in general, have

different starting points and views of the situation.

But he regards that as part of the interest of his

job rather than as a 'complication' to the smooth
running of things. He derives satisfaction from
handling such cases and bringing them to some kind
of successful conclusion. But this is a more
'intellectual' satisfaction than the immediate
gratification that he appears to derive from action,
from getting things done. The first might be said
to be connected with his image of himself in his
work setting. So that wherever he is, whatever he
is doing, whether he is at work or not, he will be
able to regard himself as someone who does this kind
of job and who is concerned with these kinds of things.
This is a more or less permanent picture of his work
situation which he can 'take out' and look at anytime
and gain some satisfaction from. It is almost a
savouring of his position in the scheme of things.
The second, shorter term, satisfaction is rather a
Conative-Affective than a Cognitive phenomenon in
Maslow's (op. cit.) terminology. It is associated
with immediate taste, with more serious gratification
than the more reflective pleasure to be obtained from
appreciating a particular view of the world and one's
place within it. R himself noted that:

"There's a difference between enjoying something
during the day and then looking at the total picture
from the comfort of your armchair in the evening."

Internal Promotion

R is not at the moment particularly keen to move away
from the Bath/Bristol area, although he says that he
would do so if an attractive job 'came up'. He is
comfortably settled in his home, his wife is working
at a job she enjoys and their two children are getting
on well at the schools that they're attending. R would
prefer to take promotion within the Bath City Council
itself. He views HAT as possibly helping towards such
a promotion because:

(a) There is scope for the team itself to be developed
     as a permanent entity which requires management
     and resources i.e. as a modest example of empire
     building.

(b) HAT, under R's guidance, can achieve some
     obviously beneficial results, and such success
     can itself be officially recognised and also
     noticed outside Local Government.

(c) As co-ordinator of HAT, R gets the opportunity
     to move within a wider circle of potentially
     influential people - Local Government Officers,
     elected council members and influential members
     of the public e.g. local solicitors, chairmen
     of local groups, etc. who have personal connec-
     tions with both the council members and the
     upper Local Government echelons.

(a) Empire Building

The Housing Assessment Team was established in 1975,
following upon Local Government Reorganisation and the
introduction of 'Corporate Management' practices.
However, the Team was originally conceived as a short-
term working party with a limited life set up to do
a particular job of work. What has since become clear,
over the period of its life however, is first that
the original task of dealing with a list of marginal
properties is taking longer than was then anticipated,
but also that the list was capable of considerable
extension even at the start and needed to be added to
in any case as time progressed, more properties became
marginal and therefore required attention. In order
to maintain HAT as a going concern in the future, R
has not only to demonstrate this last point but also
that he is achieving successes with the original list.
It is partly for this reason, as well as for the
reasons of job satisfaction mentioned earlier, that R
likes to 'press on' and bring cases to an early and
satisfactory conclusion. To be seen to be achieving
results is of some importance if HAT is to be kept on
the road with R in the chair. He commented that:

"I suppose you might call it a bit of a numbers game.
Anyone who doesn't really know what we've been doing
but is still trying to evaluate the work will be strongly
influenced by the number of properties we've dealt with.

They won't see all the things that we had to think about. They won't know about the quality of each job."

(b) Recognition of Results

If HAT, regardless of what form it takes in the future, is seen to have been responsible for producing some 'good' results, then these results may of themselves gain R kudos. His immediate boss, E, will in turn be regarded with some favour by the Chief Executive if some progress appears to have been made on the problem of restoring Bath's marginal housing. A pressure for success does seem to be passed down to R, although what really counts as success higher up is not at all clear. R pointed to the difference between a careful and considered evaluation of results and a rough and ready appraisal that is satisfied so long as something appropriate seems to be happening either often enough or in large enough quantities. It is by and large this last kind of measure which is perforce applied by senior executives or council members to HAT's output.

(c) Influential Circle

Being co-ordinator of HAT means that R comes into contact with a much wider circle of people than he would as a senior officer of environmental health, his normal designation otherwise. This is true both

because of the interdisciplinary/interdepartmental
nature of the work, but also because R is often meeting
members of the public, or their representatives such
as solicitors, accountants and estate agents. He
obtains two types of benefit from this. First, a
straightforward and immediate benefit because he quite
simply enjoys meeting different types of people. This
makes, R says, the working day more congenial, and
gives him a sense of greater significance. But it
also allows him the potential to move into prominence
and to escape from the relative obscurity of the
Department of Environmental Health into a somewhat
wider net of Local Government affairs. He made the
following observation about this issue:

"If you can get out of the office a bit and meet a
few people who are prominent in the town it seems to
me that there's a greater chance of opportunities
coming your way. But if you just swim in your own
particular little pond then you're likely to stay
there, even if you eventually rise to the top of it.
Besides, you can then get talked about to people who
are controlling your position in the pond and this can
be a way of filtering good P.R. into the system."

There is a certain pathos in this rather optimistic
suggestion that by exposing himself to a wider circle
of people engaged in local affairs R will somehow

increase his chances of doing better within his career.
Presumably, some opportunity or other 'might turn up'.

Increased Job Mobility

R has said that he regards the experience he has obtained
from working with HAT as potentially valuable if he
ever decided to move from Local Government (probably
an unlikely event) into administration or management
in some different organisational context. He sees
this value as deriving principally from two connec-
ted aspects. First, that he has now accumulated some
inter-departmental experience, some knowledge of
planning, of estates management and building surveying
and engineering practices. Second, that he is able
to say that he has been operating as manager of an
interdisciplinary working team, responsible for co-
ordinating its work and controlling its output.

Increased Organisational Status

The question of status did not often arise in discussion
with the people who work in the Department of Environ-
mental Health where R is based. There are four other
environmental health officers, one senior and three
junior to R. The atmosphere surrounding the workplace
has a distinctive Local Government flavour. It is one
of rather unexciting but homely respectability. Yet
one thing that R apparently obtains from his somewhat
novel position as co-ordinator of HAT is just a hint

of a different world, a world of appointments, meetings,

debate, deadlines - a world of 'management'. R gets

a taste of the life of the 'executive', on a small

enough scale, but nonetheless as a real enough feeling.

He has taken on certain mannerisms which are more

'businesslike' than the normal, rather languid Local

Government style. Crisp phone calls to elicit information

from obscure clerks, meeting minutes dictated and

produced in short time, use of the intercom to give

instructions to his secretary when it would actually

be quicker to put his head round the door and talk to

her.

Thus R has somehow elevated his position and changed

his image by becoming involved with the management

of this team. It is not only his image to himself

that he has changed in this way but also the impression

that he conveys to other people. One of the members

of the office staff has noted:

"R was always tidy and organised but he has become

even more businesslike since he became seriously

involved with HAT. We pull his leg about it sometimes."

When I asked R about any possible change of status

resulting from his involvement with the Housing

Assessment Team, he replied that:

"It doesn't make any difference really. Nobody worries much about that sort of thing here. People would soon pull you down from a high horse."

And yet the image he has of himself in his job is clearly important to R. It is not status based in a competitive way, but rather in a more absolute sense in that he prefers to see himself as making a useful contribution to the world at large rather than as a bureaucratic paper-pusher.

Increased Income

R has improved his position on the Local Government salary scale by taking on the extra responsibility of co-ordinating HAT. Welcome though this slight gain doubtless is to a family man whose salary is in any case modest, this aspect of the job appears to be of less significance than any of the others. R may be ambitious, up to a point and within the limited confines of his particular area of Local Government, but the relatively small differentials that apply to different managerial grades are unlikely to be serious motivators in themselves. What he seems to be more concerned with is his competence and self-respect.

R commented on the fact that, because the Housing Assessment Team had reached something of a turning

point in its life, he had been thinking more about what he wanted from his job just recently:

"You see, when the inquiry came up and also this review being due, I suddenly realised that I wouldn't like to revert to the pre-HAT days. That would be pretty dreary. So I'm doing everything possible to see that it continues."

We move on now to look at how some of E's interests came to the surface in the course of the discussions thrown up by event of the public inquiry.

(ii) **E: Some Dimensions of Personal Interest**

E is in his early sixties and was due to retire some eighteen months after the time that this case was current. He has been in Local Government almost all his working life and is a highly experienced committee man. Despite his longevity of service, however, he appears to be rather nervous, seems to lack self-confidence and is cautious about making final decisions. He is known to his staff as an arch prevaricator and is famed for sitting on the fence. E is an exponent of planned procrastination, a devotee of masterly inactivity in cases of doubt. His over-riding ambition is to arrive safely at retirement without any organisational disasters occurring. However, the particular case that provided the stimulus for this chapter also

proved to be something of a threat to the smooth

running of his affairs. It involved the public airing

and hopeful reconciliation of two contradictory view-

points taken by E and his department at different

points in time. The cottages that are the subject

of this case were recommended by the Bath City Council

for demolition largely on E's say so, in 1970. Quoting

again from the proceedings of the public inquiry:

"In December 1970 the City Council received and

accepted the official representation of the Medical

Officer of Health ... that

(a) the houses in the area were unfit for human

     habitation

(b) the most satisfactory method of dealing with the

     conditions in the area was the demolition of all

     the buildings in the area.

The City Council accordingly declared a Clearance

Area and made a Compulsory Purchase Order under the

Housing Acts ..."

The administration necessary to complete that order

took so long to operate that its final appearance was

preceded both by reorganisation and by an official

change in local government housing policy. This was

introduced by a white paper in 1974 which exhorted

urban councils to make the most of existing housing

properties and to rehabilitate and convert rather than
demolish and build afresh. The Housing Assessment
Team was eventually instituted in Bath as a direct
result of this policy change. The fate of the
cottages which had once been recommended for demolition
was thus once again up for review, this time under the
new Housing Assessment procedures and their stated
objective of finding an economically acceptable way
of converting them back into housing units. The
properties were duly 'processed' and accepted as being
economically convertible. R had negotiated a scheme
with an interested development company. Shortly
afterwards, Avon County Council re-proposed the road
widening scheme which necessitated demolishing the
cottages on Prior Park Road. Bath City Council was
then put in the difficult position of having to defend
in public the retention of the cottages that it had
previously recommended be demolished. This incon-
sistency could in principle be easily rationalised by
the policy change that had taken place in the interim,
but E, who had been involved in the earlier case and
was now giving evidence on behalf of HAT, was nervous
about the situation. He knew how these things tended
to be looked at. He commented to me that:

"It's never a question of rational reasoning in these
situations. People are always suspicious when you
change your mind. It smacks of indecisiveness and

incompetence. You are assumed not to have thought

things through carefully in the first place. It's

a great pity really. If officers felt more able to

change their minds I'm sure we'd have less really

major cock ups. Still, we all have to survive the

way things are."

Although E would undoubtedly be able to make a sound

and sensible case for the apparent change in viewpoint

of his department, he knew that something else would

rub off on them. When I asked him whether he was

seriously concerned about that, he replied that it

didn't matter much, particularly at his stage of the

game. I wasn't sure that he believed what he said though:

"Well it won't affect me really, I'll be retiring in

a year or two anyway. I'm quite secure until then,

I've got quite a fair track record you see."

That fact that E referred at all to the question of

security seemed indicative of a certain edginess.

He also mentioned his 'track record' to me, a confidence

I was rather surprised at. His staff had always told

me that E was basically good at his job, but was

forever worried about putting a foot wrong. In my

discussions over this case I had expected him therefore

to be rather reserved. In fact he told me a great deal

about how he saw his job. In particular, three factors

kept coming up which could be interpreted as personal

interest that E would always bear in mind when over-

seeing the work of HAT. They were:

(a) Providing competent output for the Housing Committee
     as and when required.

(b) Making sure that members of the public were never
     upset to the extent of generating bad publicity.

(c) Making sure that the Department of Environmental
     Health kept its end up with respect to other
     departments represented on the team.

Acceptable Output

The Housing Committee, comprising a small group of

councillors, meets approximately every month. Recom-

mendations made by the Housing Assessment Team are

put to this committee for action. E sees it as being

important to maintain a steady flow into this committee

as an indication that work is being continuously

carried out. He commented to me that:

"The Councillors need to see that we are processing

the business. They don't know what we do really. But

they're all puritans at heart and like to think that

the taxpayer is getting value for money. Unfortunately

that is often measured in quantity rather than quality."

Thus, when E is overseeing R, which he does on a

weekly basis, one of his important objectives as the
monthly committee meeting draws near will be to see
that HAT comes up with sufficient material for that
meeting, either in the form of recommendations or at
least a progress report in the case of work or nego-
tiations in process. This pressure drives R's work
along, so that quick and ready solutions to housing
cases are preferred to solutions which require lengthy
negotiations through correspondence or where there
are extensive external alterations proposed that
necessitate delicate, time-consuming, planning
applications.

Keeping the Public Happy

There are two significant sub-sets of the public at
large that can interact closely with HAT in the normal
course of housing cases. These are:

(i) Individuals directly concerned with particular
     cases, e.g. occupiers, owners, estate agents,
     bank managers, solicitors, property developers,
     contractors.

(ii) Members of local conservation and planning groups
     who are acting continually as watchdogs on the
     Council, on property developers and the environ-
     mental changes that they may bring about.

With the first group E exhibits a strong profession-
alism. He is careful how he treats them. This is
not always the same thing as being concerned about
their welfare. Rather, he treats them so as not to
infringe any rules of conduct in that situation, is
cautious in the construction of letters, for example,
or about what he says at meetings. He has learned in
a long career in local government not to promise what
cannot be achieved, to be circumspect in the quoting
of figures and cautious in estimating deadlines and
the time required for any particular piece of work to
be carried out. R differs from E in the extent of
such caution. He is more likely to open his mouth
in order to move the business on, even at the risk of
offending someone or at the risk of being misquoted.
At the same time he is aware of E's circumspection
and this is apt to affect his selection of courses of
action. R has noted:

"E is very careful when he is dealing with people
outside the Department. I suppose I do a lot of things
that he wouldn't, but at least I try and move things
along. But sometimes I'm aware that I will have to
explain to him some course of action I'm thinking of
taking and then I tend to fall into his way of thinking."

On the same subject, E confided to me that:

"R is very good at getting things done, but he sometimes gets carried away. He's been lucky so far, but if you don't cover your tracks very carefully, you can come unstuck when dealing with the public. When things go wrong, they will lay into the bureaucrats without any mercy at all."

Over a period of time, R has picked up something of this circumspection, E's wish to keep a clean record and his consequent caution have their effect, through R, upon Housing Assessment outcomes. R, because of E's operating style, tends to watch out for potentially serious brushes and conflict with the members of the public he is dealing with. Rather, he attempts as far as possible to maintain smooth external relations.

With the conservation groups, E is more relaxed:

"They're more a part of the system really, they know the procedures, know how to behave. Some of them have some very strong views of course, and they can put them over too. But they never play dirty, not in my experience. So long as you keep them informed and listen to what they have to say."

Representing the Department

Three other Departments apart from Environmental Health are represented on HAT. The Planning Department, the

Estates Management Department and The Building Engineers.
There are rivalries between these Departments, and
particularly between Planning and Environmental Health.
This is partly because of a certain overlapping of
professional concerns. Both are concerned with
evaluating buildings against certain criteria and there
are occasions when those criteria come into conflict.
Planning people tend to regard environmental helath
people as rather conservative, unimaginative and
pedantic, stolidly adhering to a fixed list of rather
'down-to-earth' requirements for buildings e.g. location
of WC's, size of doorways, amount of sunlight, and so
on. Environmental Health people tend to regard planners
as arty, impractical and over-liberal, often not
having sufficient recognition of the 'constraints of
real life'.

E is somewhat intimidated by his opposite numbers in
the Planning Department. He is by nature very reserved,
almost shy and, although he is overall a competent
administrator, he seems to find the social aspects of
meetings and committees difficult to handle. The
Planners, by virtue of the kind of people they are,
find such interaction entirely non-problematic and so
have a continuous process edge over E. E often responds
by retreating back to make or defend a particular
point, hanging onto this idea doggedly and thus
tending to enhance the caricature of Environmental

Health officers that the Planners hold. Nevertheless,
he is always trying in such meetings to keep his
department's flag flying, to ensure that his staff
are seen to be making a competent contribution and
to retain, as it were, the mandate to be co-ordinating
HAT's activities.

E observed to me that:

"My people are good at their jobs and I always try
and represent what they do as well as possible. The
Planners are inclined to put us down, of course.
They see us as a load of stodgy public health
inspectors. But R will often take a much broader
view than they do so they have to look to their
laurels."

E clearly relies upon R to keep his Department's image
fresh and up with the competition. Although he
is sometimes nervous about R's propensity for action,
he is pleased that R is able to get things done and,
also, that he puts up a good show in relation to the
Planners.

6.4 Some Observations on a Personal Interest Model

The foregoing discussion has dealt with some examples
of two sets of individual interests that were high-
lighted during the course of a particular HAT case.

We have not been concerned with the events of the case itself except insofar as they have triggerd comments that increase our knowledge about the preoccupations that members of the team take to their work and to their interactions with each other. We are interested here in the manifestation of the concept of personal interest and how the idea might or might not help us to understand the processes involved in group decision-making.

By personal interest, we have been implicitly referring to some kind of drive in an individual to look after himself within an organisational context. An extreme model of this form would presumably view such a team as HAT as a forum for all out competition between the members, in which they were each continually struggling to come out best, whatever they might each mean by that. It is quite clear, however, that in HAT this process is not happening in any strongly competitive way. We must somehow refine the concept if it is to have any useful explanatory power.

What might be described as the units of personal interest are apparently highly idiosyncratic. We have seen in this case something of the diversity in dimension of the aims recognised and pursued by R, and how E is a very different sort of person with different concerns. But even if there did exist some

commonality of concepts between such individuals,

the value that each might place on the ideas could

presumably vary considerably. Two people may each

be able to construe the notion of 'maximising annual

salary', but one might put a high value on this as

an activity while another, a devout Christian perhaps,

might actively attempt not to improve his financial

well-being at the expense of other organisation members.

In this example, though, do we then go on to say that

the salary-chaser is highly self-interested while

his more public-spirited colleague is the very anti-

thesis of this, or do we suppose that each defines

his own self-interest in a very particular way?

Maslow (op. cit.) would contend that simple definitions

of self-interest in this sense are in any case

impossible:

"We should give up the attempt once and for all to

make atomistic lists of drives or needs. For several

different reasons such lists are theoretically unsound.

First of all they imply an equality of the various

drives that are listed, an equality of potency and

probability of appearance. This is incorrect because

the probability of any one desire emerging into

consciousness depends on the state of satisfaction

or dissatisfaction of other prepotent desires.

There are great differences in probability of appearance

of the various particular drives.

"Secondly such a listing implies an isolatedness
of each of these drives from each of the others.
Of course they are not isolated in any such fashion.

"Third, such a listing of drives, since it is usually
made on the behavioural basis, neglects completely
all that we know about the dynamic nature of drives."

From a research point of view, it is important to
distinguish between what a person will state as a
personal objective and what can be implied from his
behaviour. D, the Estates Management representative
on HAT, is often to be heard espousing an ambition
to earn lots of money. He will make this point with
apparent seriousness and it does sometimes seem as
though part of the image that he likes to portray to
the outside world includes the possibility of his
being able to become a 'financial success'. Yet his
actions and strategies within his own department do
not always match those of a man determined to get to
the top and, indeed, the fact that he is relatively
securely employed in Local Government rather than
doing battle in private practice 'outside' might give
some indication of other objectives that are at least
as important.

Implied by identifying the notion of <u>personal</u> interest

is the existence of concepts which reflect other kinds

of interest. Concerns about the working group, for

example, concerns about other individuals in the

organisation, concerns for the institution itself,

concerns for one's family, concerns for a particular

political cause are other possible components in

the mix of criteria for adjudging the goodness of

ideas or events. The definitional question raised

earlier applies here too. That is, if an individual

is to be regarded as being driven by any such preoccupa-

tion, is it reasonable to say that he is acting in

his own self-interest, this being defined in a

different way, or might there rather exist some kind

of trade-off between personal interest and 'other'

interests or sometimes even the complete sublimation

of personal interest in favour of some other cause.

The question of the moral judgements that people make

about the pursuit of individual interests is important

in an organisational context. There is often a curious

ambivalence within commercial or administrative

organisations concerning the 'proper' pursuit, for

example, of ambition. Thus, whilst it might be

recognised and generally accepted by the staff of a

local government department that it is a <u>good</u> thing

for a junior officer to be hardworking, competitive

and concerned about his career, there are normally

quite fine social limits applied to this trait and
a point may be reached when other staff members will
start to make perjorative evaluations about an individual
who is seen to be exclusively concerned with himself
and not enough about his colleagues or the work group
or the institution or the public or whatever else.
That is, there are clearly more or less socially
acceptable ways of pursuing one's own interests within
the confines of an organisation.

Different individuals will have different ideas about
what those limits are and, moreover, will be constrained
by them in different ways and in differing degrees.
Whatever the philosophical issues, too, that surround
the reification of concepts such as 'organisation',
'committee' or 'department', there is no doubt that
individuals working within an organisation will often
have quite strong ideas about the extent to which they
feel that they <u>ought</u> to have individual freedom and
the extent to which the organisation <u>ought</u> to prevail
in given sets of circumstances. This sense of balance
derives partly from the fact that the individual is
himself party to at least an economic contractual
relationship with the organisation, partly from a
long process of socialisation which will have constantly
reaffirmed the idea that there is a time and a place
for everything and that the individual often has to
subordinate himself to a larger or somehow more

important cause, and partly from authority relationships

and rules of behaviour that exist within the organis-

ation and that are commonly deemed to be proper to

the business of working for a living.

So that while an individual may perceive for himself

a particular personal objective and see ways in which

that aim could be fulfilled, he may also be constrained

from following the strategy through by the belief that

he ought not really to be doing that sort of thing and

that the collective of which he is a part ought properly

to have a prior call upon his loyalties.

In this connection, there was a rather singular meeting

of the Housing Assessment Team that took place during

the late summer of 1978. The first hour of the morning

was entirely given over to the discussion of where

everyone had been or was planning to go on holiday.

R's visit to Wales, J's trip to Brittany, G's tour

of Italy, D's proposed camping holiday and the author's

recent sailing weekend kept everyone fully absorbed

until R finally remarked:

"We really ought to start working through this agenda,

less exciting though that probably will be!"

Then the team settled down 'to business', interactions

became more formal and more carefully phrased and the

team members became more serious as they once again
started to carry out their organisational duty.

As far as HAT is concerned, there appear to exist
levels of interaction at which it is difficult to
conceive of any kind of significant personal interest
as being able to have an effect upon the outcome
of a meeting. When, for example, the technical details
of a proposed property conversion are being discussed,
there is precious little scope for individuals to
cunningly turn affairs to their own advantage. The
stages are low and conversation turns upon the width
of a staircase, the state of the plaster in a kitchen
or the condition of the stone in an adjoining wall.
There does exist some kind of pressure for contributions
to be competent; that is, to be coherent, germane,
articulate and timely. A certain amount of off-the-
track rambling is allowable, but there is a close
consensus about when that limit is reached.

An important question now to ask is, in what sort of
way do the kinds of category of personal interest
that we have identified for R and E relate to the
typical sequence of discourse and events that constitutes
a housing assessment case. It has already been made
clear that we do not consider that attempts to con-
struct formal models that aspire to the status of
system specifications or simulation algorithms are

the most effective way to throw light upon the workings of a social group such as HAT. Our intention has rather been to draw out and elaborate from case material gleaned from a long association with the group, well-formed concepts which can contribute, in a similar way as would any relevant ideas or experience from other sources, to insight into its workings.

We have therefore identified five different areas of uncertainty that could possibly be reduced by consideration of a developed concept of personal interest; that is to say, five classes of knowledge which can be derived from the findings. These are:

(i)   Knowledge about the psychological make-up of particular individuals - that is, what they are like as people.

(ii) Knowledge about the kinds of ways in which particular individuals are likely to react to and treat a particular topic for discussion.

(iii) Knowledge about the likely reactions of individuals to simple turning points.

(iv) From these first three points, knowledge about likely outcomes in <u>dialogue</u> discussion or two-person meetings.

(v)   Knowledge about the nature of particular <u>group</u> outcomes.

We now examine these ideas individually

(i) <u>Knowledge about what individuals are like</u>

One of the first things that a researcher does, quite naturally, when starting to look at a particular social situation, is to build up a picture of what <u>sort</u> of people the participants are. At the very first meeting he will use whatever information is available (and it might be very sketchy) to construct caricatures on all kinds of dimensions - background, 'intelligence', occupation (if that is not already clear), 'personality', likely outside interests, seniority and so on. These initial models are modified and elaborated over time as more information is collected about each person and each is seen in an increasing number of different sets of circumstances and surroundings. As we learn more about what individuals are like then we are better able to predict what they will do in new situations. We tend to presume that this is a monotonically increasing relationship - that is, the more that we 'know' about an individual the greater our predictive power or, at least, the less likely we are to be surprised by his actions.

It is difficult to say, however, exactly how such knowledge about a number of individuals can be 'combined' to give us new knowledge about the overall characteristics of a group. What commonly happens,

it seems, is that the group is reified and treated
rather as a single operating unit. Over a period of
time anyone studying a group with some consistency
of membership will build up a model of what the group
is like, and how it, collectively, is likely to react
to new sets of circumstances. Knowledge about indi-
vidual members is clearly an important part of this
model. More interestingly, concepts or categories of
behaviour abstracted from the actions of individual
members in particular groups will have a more general
value in explaining how other similar groups might
operate.

What we are saying here is that gaining knowledge
about individuals in a group is probably the first
and most effective thing that a researcher can do.
It is relatively easy both to build up and articulate
that knowledge over time and to classify items of
behaviour and draw out abstractions. Consideration
of particular events and the relationship between
particulars and abstracted categories then improves
our knowledge about that and other groups. The
notion of personal interest seems to be a particularly
useful focus for thinking about that relationship.

(ii) Knowledge about reactions to work material

This is, in a sense, a second order class of knowledge
following on from (i). That is to say, information

about the personal interests of an individual member
of HAT may tell us something about how he is likely
to relate to his work and react to particular pieces
of subject matter. We may learn something about both
his style of treatment and about the likely kind of
content of his response. So that whilst (i) con-
stitutes knowledge about the individual, we can
move on further to consider knowledge about the kinds
of _effects_ he can have. One such class is essentially
the kind of work that he will generate.

(iii) **Knowledge about reactions to simple 'turning points'**

Knowledge about the personal interests, motives, aims
or preferences of an individual group member will give
us some basis for predicting and understanding how
he will react to simple choice situations. We use
the word simple advisedly and should probably restrict
consideration to yes/no turning points. So that in
a HAT meeting, when M, the second planning member is
confronted by the question, 'shall we demolish this
building?' he will almost always say 'no'. This is
because he is a staunch, almost fanatical conservation-
ist and will always be able to find a good reason for
retaining anything, at whatever cost. If this kind
of simple question comes up in a meeting, we believe
that we know how he will react. Similarly, D, if
confronted by the question of whether public or private
sector finance ought to be mobilised for a particular

conversion, will always vote for private sector finance.
This is a strong and apparently rather consistent part
of his sytem of political beliefs. What we are saying,
then, is that if certain types of simple decision
questions arise at meetings, knowledge about the
interests of individual members can enable us to predict,
sometimes with a high degree of certainty, particular
individual reactions.

(iv) Knowledge about dialogue outcomes

Extending the idea of knowledge about effects leads
us to consider knowledge about how two individuals
will interact. If we know something about the personal
interests of two group members, we may be able to go
on and say something about how those interests will
interplay in dialogue and what kinds of outcome will
be more or less likely.

(v) Knowledge about the nature of particular outcomes

We refer here not to the content of group output, but
rather to how we think it has been derived. That is,
there is clearly a difference between saying that a
particular HAT decision is the result of a group of
professionals conscientiously devoting themselves to
the task of finding the best solution to a housing
problem and saying that it is primarily the result
of a personal battle between a couple of particularly
careerist members. Knowledge of members' personal

interests will help us to appreciate what <u>kind</u> of
result the team has produced.

These five classes represent different ways in which
we believe that observations based upon an elaborated
concept of personal interest can contribute to under-
standing about the workings of a group such as the
Housing Assessment Team. In this chapter we have
outlined a case in which the personal interest of the
leaders of HAT came to the fore, mainly because a
public inquiry took place and E and R were principally
concerned with producing and making representations
to the inquiry. We have attempted to articulate
these interests and to illustrate how they can relate
in general to incidents in particular meetings. We
have also suggested some elaborations and problematics
associated with the idea of personal interest as an
explanatory concept. In this way, it was intended to
lend further perspective to the notion of strategy
and group interest discussed earlier in this thesis.

7   A SATISFICING MODEL OF GROUP DECISION-MAKING

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter we examine a model of group decision-
making based upon the notion of satisficing, developed
by March and Simon (1958). Satisficing is associated
with intentionally sub-optimising choice behaviour
and we discuss instances of such behaviour which
occurred in the course of a Housing Assessment Team
case. We review the concept of satisficing and consider
some aspects of the nature of the relationship between
satisficing and its parent concept, optimising.

7.2 A Summary Case History

The Housing Assessment case that is outlined here
has been unfolding over a period of several years.
It centres upon a small family business - a petrol
filling and service station - and upon a terrace of
five now crumbling 19th Century artisan cottages
adjoining the garage itself. Early in 1974 these
cottages, along with many other properties in the
City of Bath, were listed for preservation as a result
of an inspection exercise carried out by the Department
of the Environment. The process of listing confers
statutory obligations upon the owner of the property.
It becomes illegal for the property to be demolished
and anyone who does wish to take down a listed
building has to apply to the Department of the

Environment for formal consent. The owner of a listed

property is also obliged to maintain the building

in sound structural and externally decorative order.

Set against these restrictions, the owner may apply

for a variety of grants to help finance necessary

maintenance work.

In 1975, the proprietor of the filling station, Mr B,

who also owns the two terrace cottages immediately

alongside, submitted to the City Planning Department

proposals to demolish the end cottage and to thereby

extend his garage frontage and forecourt. Planning

permission for this project was refused on the grounds

that the cottage was a listed building and also because

it was thought that any increased traffic through the

garage that might follow the enlargement of the fore-

court would adversely affect the living conditions

for the residents in the remaining cottages. Mr B,

however, decided to pursue the matter further and,

after taking legal advice, submitted an application

to the Department of the Environment for listed

building consent to demolish the end terrace. This

application resulted in a public inquiry and, in due

course, the Inspector found in favour of the cottage

being retained. Mr B's plans, therefore, were

thwarted again and he continued to run the garage

using the existing facilities. Meanwhile, his two

cottages steadily fell into a state of disrepair

and soon became unfit to be used as living accommodation.
The general ambiance of the site was, in any case,
hardly congenial for residential purposes, the
properties being subject to noise from the garage
workshops at the rear, to engine noise and exhaust
fumes from cars using the filling station forecourt
and from the considerable volume of traffic using the
busy London Road on which the cottages and the garage
stand.

The external condition of the cottages deteriorated
further until it was in contravention of the standards
laid down in the listed building legislation. It was
at this stage, early in 1977, that the cottages first
came to the formal attention of the Department of
Environmental Health and, hence, of the Housing
Assessment Team. The complete terrace was then added
to the Housing Assessment Action List.

Thus began a drawn out series of discussions and
negotiations primarily between R, the co-ordinator
of the Housing Assessment Team, Mr B himself and
Mr B's solicitors. Mr B still hoped eventually to
be able to pull down the deteriorating end terrace
and extend his garage premises, but as R was continually
pointing out, the public inquiry had found in favour
of the cottages' retention and the law was the law.
R, meanwhile, had the task of trying to persuade

Mr B to renovate the two cottages to an exterior
standard that satisfied the listed building legis-
lation and, further, as part of the HAT programme,
of seeing that they were put to good social use,
preferably as housing.

The case was discussed at a number of HAT meetings
and several possible uses for the cottages were
suggested. Principal among these were office accommo-
dation for Mr B or a tenant, student living accommodation,
temporary (Class 2) living accommodation for the City
Council and overflow storage space for Mr B's garage.
It was generally thought by members of the Team that
the properties were not suitable for permanent living
accommodation because of their position immediately
adjoining the garage at the side and also the main
road at the front. They tended to favour the con-
version of the cottages into offices.

Mr B was not enthusiastic about any of these schemes.
Having twice been blocked from carrying out his
original plan and having incurred significant legal
costs in the process, he was not inclined to be
especially co-operative with the City Council or
with the Housing Assessment Team. However, the fact
still remained that his two cottages were listed
buildings and the legislation required him to maintain
them to a certain standard. This legislation is backed

by the sanction of the possibility of compulsory

purchase by the Council.

Notwithstanding this sanction, Mr B appeared to be

unwilling or unable to spend the money necessary

to bring the cottages up to the required standard,

even though, as R suggested, costs could be kept to

a minimum by concentrating effort upon the outside

of the properties and keeping the insides basic for

offices or storage space. Indeed Mr B himself, in

the very early stages of the negotiations, had sugges-

ted to R that he might use the end cottage as an

extra office for the garage. He has since lost

interest in the idea and it currently looks as though

HAT will recommend to the Housing Committee that a

compulsory purchase order be applied for with a view

to either forcing Mr B to take some action himself

or to the Council taking over the cottages and

carrying out the necessary work itself.

7.3 Satisficing Behaviour

Satisficing is a term originally coined by Simon (1957)

to refer to that kind of problem-solving behaviour

characterised by the searching for workable

rather than optimum solutions. As March and Simon

(1958) have observed:

"Most human decision-making, whether individual or

organisational, is concerned with the discovery
and selection of satisfactory alternatives; only
in exceptional cases is it concerned with the
discovery and selection of optimal alternatives."

The analysis of this chapter focuses upon this basic
idea and we shall be pointing to instances of what
appears to be satisficing behaviour in the case
outline in 7.2. But, at the same time, we shall also
contend that the notion of satisficing is rather
complex and ought not to be viewed purely in stark
contradistinction with optimising. March and Simon
(op. cit.) go on to say:

"... finding the optimal alternative is a radically
different problem from finding a satisfactory alter-
native. An alternative is optimal if: (1) there
exists a set of criteria that permits all alternatives
to be compared, and (2) the alternative in question
is preferred, by these criteria, to all other alter-
natives. An alternative is satisfactory if: (1)
there exists a set of criteria that describes
minimally satisfactory alternatives, and (2) the
alternative in question meets or exceeds all these
criteria."

In the current research, we are not concerned to
prescribe strategies for taking good decisions,

rather we are attempting to illuminate the processes
by which people do decide, particularly when this
activity is being carried out by more than one indivi-
dual negotiating together or by a decision-making
group.

For the great majority of people who have no grounding
in the analysis of decisions, the concept of best
outcome is usually rather intuitively formed. Criteria
for selection between options may exist but will often
be fuzzy and half-recognised. Where, indeed, there
is more than one criterion within the set, the process
of weighing them against each other quickly becomes
complicated. Ackoff (1962) has said that:

"It is not at all obvious what is meant by the 'best'
solution to a problem. A final definition of 'best'
in this context has not yet been attained, and it is
not likely that it ever will be."

This is underlining a philosophical difficulty of
deciding what is meant by optimum. Simon's (1957)
argument is rather that, whilst it is possible to
define what it would mean for an individual to take
a rationally optimum decision, the sheer complexity
of the required process is usually completely over-
whelming:

"It is impossible for the behaviour of a single, isolated individual to reach any high degree of rationality. The number of alternatives he must explore is so great, the information he would need to evaluate them so vast that even an approximation to objective rationality is hard to conceive."

Simon's use of the term objective rationality is interesting as a triangulation point, but it doesn't move us too far towards a better understanding of how decision-makers do actually cope with complexity. Simon almost views the human incapacity as pathological. Conversely, it could be argued that it is rather amazing how many apparently good decisions do get taken in cases where there is little reliable information to go on.

There are two particular and very different ways of considering the concept of satisficing, both of which March and Simon (op. cit.) acknowledge.

The first is simply to regard satisficing as an expedient for coping with the pressures of work or time that would preclude a full analysis of the situation. The model here is that satisficing is a kind of second best strategy. It is saying that we would like to take a lot more into account if only we had the time or the resources, but actually

we can only manage to pick out a reasonable looking
option that seems to work and make do with that.

The second way of looking at satisficing is to
recognise that the very process of analysis has costs
associated with it and that it is usually possible
to sense a point of equilibrium at which the marginal
cost of obtaining further information is equal to
the likely gain to be obtained from a 'more optimal'
solution. March and Simon (op. cit.) note that:

"In making choices that meet satisfactory standards,
the standards themselves are part of the definition
of the situation. Hence, we need not regard these
as given - any more than the other element of the
definition of the situation - but may include in the
theory the processes through which these standards
are set and modified. The standard-setting process
may itself meet standards of rationality: for example,
an 'optimising' rule would be to set the standard
at the level where the marginal improvement in
alternatives obtainable by raising it would be just
balanced by the marginal cost of searching for alter-
natives meeting the higher standard. Of course, in
practice the 'marginal improvement' and the 'marginal
cost' are seldom measured in comparable units, or
with much accuracy. Nevertheless, a similar result
would be automatically attained if the standards were

raised whenever alternatives proved easy to discover,

and lowered whenever they were difficult to discover."

People are often heard to articulate this kind of

idea in such comments as:

"It's not worth going into too much detail, I reckon

that would do the job nicely."

or:

"We can't afford to hang around talking about it all

morning, let's just go for this one and have done

with it."

There is another reaction to the notion of satis-

ficing that we have not yet mentioned and it has to

do with people's tastes and capacity for analysis.

Some individuals prefer to take quick decisions on

the basis of hardly any information as a matter of

personal style:

"Manoli's sixty-year old body reminds me of some

ancient boat, cankered and swollen at the seams from

years of sea-work; yet his heart is in repair still,

and with it that marvellous natural intelligence

which is only to be found among the semi-literate.

His daughter reads the newspapers to him. His interest

in world-politics is a consuming passion and it is
wonderful how clearly he reads between the lines of
a conference or a speech to deduce at once its failure
or success, its truth or intrinsic falsity ...

'Finland is waking up,' he says oracularly.

'Do you think they will give in to Russia?'

'Naturally.'

'I don't.'

'You are English. They never see things before they
happen. The English are very slow.'

'And what about the Greeks?'

'The Greeks are fast ... piff ... paff ... They decide.'

'But each one decides differently.'

'That is individualism.'

'But it leads to chaos.'

'We like chaos.'

      (Lawrence Durrell, Reflections on a Marine Venus)

By the same token, there are many people who feel most
uncomfortable if they haven't gone over all possible
ground before making a choice.

There is a sense in which satisficing may be a more
common and natural reaction to group decision processes
than to individual selection. When I asked Mr B
about the discussions he had had with R about his
listed cottages, he replied that:

"We've been going round in ever-decreasing circles.
Whenever I make a suggestion he says it can't be done,
whenever he makes one it doesn't sound any use to me
at all. When you're trying to work something out
with someone else, you never seem to get to the point
somehow. In the end, you go along with something you
don't really agree with just to get some action."

In this kind of situation, the model that each indi-
vidual has of the problem arena is continually being
upset by dialogue with the other. Even at best, much
of the interaction is taken up with trying to communi-
cate each other's point of view and understand how
the other is thinking and reasoning. What might be
described as the analytical stage of the process may
never be reached. Or at least if it is, there are
probably still two sets of ideas and terminology
being employed and, for each participant, the concepts
that go to make up his argument are always being
imperfectly expressed in the other's terms. In the
end one of them may agree with the other out of sheer
fatigue and frustration.

In my initial discussions with Mr B, I tried to obtain
some idea of how he viewed the alternative ways of
dealing with his cottages. I first asked him how
the problem started:

"Well it all began when the D of E decided to list
the bloody places at all. It's absolutely crazy.
I mean they're just a row of old, delapidated, damp,
unattractive workers' houses. Why on earth go to
all this trouble to hold them up. The whole thing
is a waste of public money."

What had he been going to do with the houses before
they were listed?

"I wasn't sure. I had some students living in one
of them and I was using the nearest as a store. Then
the students moved out and I never got any to replace
them. The place got a bit run down I suppose, then
this inspection was carried out and the list went on.
Those students would have laughed to know that their
place had a preservation order on it! I was a bit
too late. After they'd been listed, trade picked
up quite a bit and I thought it would be an idea to
extend the forecourt."

Did he think about doing anything else with them?

"Well not really, they're worth nothing much as living
accommodation. The students only just covered the
rates, I couldn't charge 'em very much you see. It
seemed easiest to knock them down, or at least one
of them, and use the space."

It did not appear that Mr B had considered at all
systematically the range of possible solutions to his
cottage 'problem' e.g. renovation and letting for
habitation, renovation and letting for office use,
renovation and selling-off for either of these two
purposes, renovation and use for offices and storage
space for his own garage - these were all possible
alternative courses of action. But Mr B seemed to
prefer the much simpler expedient of demolishing the
worst cottage, thereby saving the effort and cost
involved in renovation and avoiding the subsequent
administration involved in disposing of or renting
the property. Taking down the cottage would be a
comparatively cheap operation, would remove a source
of expense and aggravation and, at the same time,
provide the garage with more space and frontage.

The significant drawback to this simple plan was that
all the cottages in the terrace next to the garage
were now listed, i.e. there was a strong presumption
in favour of their not being demolished. However,
Mr B went ahead and applied for planning permission
to demolish the end terrace and waited for the
Planning Committee's decision. The Committee decided,
predictably enough, that the cottage should be
retained. Very soon afterwards, somewhat annoyed,
Mr. B took the very positive step of submitting an
application to the Department of the Environment to

have the cottage removed from the preservation list.
He rather resented being told by the planning authorities
what he could or could not do with his own property
and therefore put in the application to the Department
of the Environment more or less as a matter of principle.

B explained to me that:

"This is supposed to be a free country, and yet here
were these characters telling me what to do with my
own property. Why the hell shouldn't I take the place
down if I want to. Anyway, you can only fight them
on their own ground so I put in an application."

As is usual on these occasions, the Department set up
a public inquiry to examine the case. Mr B, however,
was not to receive much support for his project from
any of the parties giving evidence. R was of the
opinion that a proposal drawn up in collaboration with
HAT, for the demolition of the end terrace and the
renovation of the remainder, could have been successful.
But the inquiry found against Mr B's proposal and the
cottages remained on the preservation list. It seems
here that Mr B was not obviously concerned to optimise
his strategy for obtaining a demolition order. Having
decided that he would like to remove the end cottage,
although this was perhaps not in itself the 'best'
decision he could make, he did not then devote much

energy or thought to ensuring that his application
stood a reasonable chance of success.

When the application did fail, Mr B almost totally
ignored the cottage which then fell into a complete
state of disrepair, Again, his apparent lack of will
to 'optimise' in a given set of circumstances is
notable. Now that he was not in a position to
demolish his cottage as he at first intended, he was
at least free to decide upon his next move. Being a
listed building, the cottage was eligible for certain
renovation grants. It could have been regarded as a
sensible policy for B to try and turn the cottage into
a source of income in order to offset its own running
expenses. Part of the property could have been
converted and rented as office accommodation or
storage space or, alternatively B could have used the
office and storage space for his own business, also
obtaining some tax relief by so doing.

Throughout the long period of his negotiations with R,
Mr B, it could be argued, had not been serving his own
interests in the best possible way. He had always
shown a reluctance to take any decisions or to even
talk about the future of the cottage, although R had
tried many times to work out a suitable scheme with
him. B might have gained much by working with R, who
is in a position to ease the administrative way with

regard to renovation grants, to make useful practical
suggestions about the conversion of the cottage, and
to advise on what kind of schemes might find favour
with the planning committee and what they would be
likely to frown upon.

R, in his turn, has throughout this case tended to
react to Mr B's moves as they were made, rather than
to try and predict the situation in which they both
might find themselves and to pre-empt possible problems.
Although HAT had not officially noticed these cottages,
R knew at the time that Mr B made the application for
listed building consent to demolish that it was almost
certain to be turned down, and yet he allowed Mr B
to go ahead with his fight. Although it was not
strictly in his brief to do so, R could have saved
himself considerable trouble later on if he had
managed to liaise early and off the record with B to
work out a mutually acceptable and practical future
for his cottages. This would have involved presenting
himself as an advisor or consultant rather than as a
housing inspector, which latter role Mr B quickly
took exception to. In common with many small
businessmen, B is inclined to be intolerant of
'bureaucractic interference' of this kind.

R seemed to be satisficing, then, in so far as that
when Mr B presented him with a 'new move', R reacted

to that move and within its own timescale. He appeared
not to be thinking too far ahead about how events of
the case might develop. When I asked R about 'best'
and workable solutions, he said that:

"It's all a question of time really. There are only a
given number of hours in the day. We do the best we can
in the time available. But some cases seem easier to
get on with if you know what I mean. The B's garage
business has been dragging on for ages, but I don't
seem to be able to get him moving. And also, it's a
funny thing really, I always seem to put him at the
bottom of my list somehow. It's not too important, I
suppose, but it's also become a bit of an institution
for everyone, wondering what the latest on B is."

R is almost playing with the case here. He realizes
that something will have to be done at some time, but
it doesn't really matter how long it takes and it's
quite fun for all concerned to have the discussions
trickling on. R's notion of satisficing and expedience
is well-formed, however, and can be perceived through-
out his work. Compromise, do the best you can, get
something going, practical solutions, these ideas all
guide the way he sets about his job.

7.4 Summary Conclusions

Satisficing seems to be so pervasive as a mode of

behaviour in organisational decision-making as to be
almost a commonplace. Yet, one of its important facets
is that choice-making carried out in this way with
limited resources is often perceived as being 'sub-optimal'
even though the choice-maker concerned might be hard
pressed to define what he might mean by a best choice.
That is, satisficing can be and is often seen as a
pathological state.

But, at the same time, individuals like R who live
with satisficing all the time will have a well-
rehearsed and oft-repeated view about what 'we can
ever realistically expect to achieve in practice'.
It is perhaps an important stress-reducing mechanism
that the organisational decision-maker appears often
to seek to reduce his official sights, probably over
a period of time, and then attempt to ensure that
these achievable standards are circulated as common
currency within his immediate organisation.

An important part of satisficing behaviour is apparently
characterised by the use of contingent responses
rather than of forward planning. Problems tend to be
dealt with when they arise and not before. In the
group decision-making sense, issues for discussion
are attended to sequentially and not strategically.
R and B each had to be stirred into action by a move
that the other had made.

The centrality of a particular 'problem' within an
individual's current set of issues to be dealt with
appears to be important for the standards that he will
employ for coping with it. A problem may be despatched
quickly and sub-optimally if there is something more
urgent or important that needs attention. Conversely,
something that seemed to be vital and deserving of
optimising thinking may get shorter shrift if either
an even more vital problem turns up or, conversely, if
the problem solver gets fed up with thinking about it
and reduces his standards just to 'get shot of it'.

An interesting aspect of R's behaviour was that he was
keeping the B's garage case going almost because it
amused him to do so. It did not seem that the standards
of solution were being relaxed here, but rather that
the case was moving in and out of the problem arena.

8   CONCLUSION: Some Determinants of Group Decision Outcomes

8.1   Introduction

In this chapter we draw together the main findings and

conclusions about our particular group of decision

makers. First, there is a section containing some

important general points about the Housing Assessment

Team. We then treat the theme concepts individually

and a section is devoted to the conclusions reached

or implied by each of the chapters 3 through 7.

8.2   General Observations

    Before considering the principal findings that

have emerged from the examination and application of

the main theme concepts of this thesis, we set down

some rather more general observations that have

relevance to most of the situations we have been

looking at.

The Organisation within the Individual

Running through all the events that have made up a year

in the life of one particular decision-making group

has been a characteristic theme surrounding the

relationship between the HAT members and different

aspects of their organisation. Specifically, we

have encountered the pervasive nature of organisational

or bureaucratic purpose. However sharply or fuzzily

this appears to be formally laid down and however

particular facets are actually perceived by individual members, the existence of this concept provides a reference point for each individual, lending an orientation to his work and also some of his non-work activities. The labels of various organisational goals are continually being used as currency in bureaucratic interaction, even if those using it are not quite sure what the label means or if they disagree with what they think it does mean.

Cyert and March's treatment of organisational goals has provided some insights into this tricky idea. In developing their theory of corporate purpose, they start by viewing the organisation as a coalition. They note that:

"... over a specified (relatively brief) period of time we can identify the major coalition members; or, for a particular decision we can identify the major coalition members. More generally, for a certain class of decisions over a relatively long period of time we can specify the major classes of coalition members. As a result, we will be able to develop models of organisational decision making (for the short run) that pay only limited attention to the process by which the coalition is changed; but any such simplification involves some clear risks when we generalise to long-run dynamics."

One of the interesting aspects of Cyert and March's
conception of organisation is the way in which they
uncover the complication of thinking about a concept
of corporate purpose, underline the philsophical
difficulties surrounding the definition of such a
concept, go some way towards formulating ideas which
take these problems into account but in doing so seem
to be employing an epistomolgy which cannot preclude
the existence of the phenomenon of corporate purpose
in very much a systems sense. It is significant
that they refer to "The Problem of Collective Goals",
a problem, that is, from the theorist's point of view.
They summarise the 'problem' as:

"1. People (i.e. individuals) have goals; collectivities
     of people do not.
2. To define a theory of organisational decision-
     making, we seem to need something analogous - at
     the organisation level - to individual goals at
     the individual level."

In a way, we both agree and disagree with this reason-
ing. We agree, on a purely empirical basis, that there
is a need for a concept of organisational goal because
the phenomenon, in some form or other, is absolutely
pervasive within the world of organisations. The
notion itself is actually being employed by the
people out there. But we do not necessarily agree

with the deductive step that Cyert and March make.
What they are doing is recognising that the notion of
corporate goal is problematic and that it is difficult
to work out what it actually means; but they go on to
assume a formulation which is exactly analogous to
the notion of individual goal and bring it a mediating
model of coalitions to help make it fit. We are not
saying that this is not illuminating, but it does
tend to preclude thinking about collective goals
in different sorts of ways. Even when Cyert and March
are talking about organisations as settings within
which, per se, there is an inevitable conflict of
goals, it still seems as though the very process by
which that concept of conflict is recognised and
defined depends upon the positing of a 'real' purpose
somewhere for the organisation that, people being
people, they cannot get themselves together to work
towards. Cyert and March go on to say:

"In keeping with virtually all theories of organisations,
we assume that the coalition represented in an organis-
ation is a coalition of members having different goals.
We require some procedure for resolving such conflict
(why?). The classic solution is to posit an exchange
of money from some members of the coalition to other
members as a way of inducing conformity to a single,
consistent set of goals - the organisational objective.

"We propose an alternative concept of organisational
goals and an alternative set of assumptions about how
conflict.is resolved. Basically, we have argued that
most organisations exist and thrive with considerable
latent conflict of goals. Except at the level of
nonoperational objectives, there is no internal
consensus. The procedures for 'resolving' such
conflict do not reduce all goals to a common dimension
or even make them obviously internally consistent."

It is not clear here what Cyert and March mean by
resolving the latent conflict. Are they referring to
a resolution which must take place conceptually for
the theorist if he is to be able to explicate
behaviour in terms of some notion of corporate purpose?
Or is it more simply that they are arguing that
conflict cannot continue to exist <u>in practice</u> for
organisations to exist <u>coherently</u>? If the first is
the case, does not the fact that the theorist is
obliged to carry out some kind of conceptual resolution
imply that he is trying to fit a model that does not
fit? If the second is true, why do we need to accept
the idea of an organisation as exhibiting any degree
of coherence with respect to purpose?

Pettigrew (1973) has pointed out that:

"Cyert and March differ from March and Simon in one

major respect: the stress that the former give to their

conception of an organisation as a coalition (p. 27).

To Cyert and March, decision-making is very much a

political process. Unlike March and Simon, they

regard conflicts of interest based on sub-goal differen-

tiation as 'normal' parts of organisational life."

Whilst we accept this point, we would contend that the

paradigm upon which Cyert and March's concept of

politics is founded and which leads to their recognition

of conflicts of interests, is one which nevertheless

accepts the existence of a background and underlying

reason for the organisation to be there. Politics

and conflict are essentially conceived in organisational

terms and the area of discourse is restricted to those

terms.

The present research has not attempted to imply a

single or set of organisational goals from that which

members have said or done, but it has found that

members were always able to say something about what

they thought the goals of their organisation were.

The concept had salience for all the organisation,

particularly the HAT members that we talked to and

their recognition of it appeared to be supported by

their actions. There was no empirical sense in which

we could say that the subjects of this study themselves

regarded their employing body in terms of a coalition.

We must turn, therefore, to think in terms of models of bureaucracy which explain behaviour with respect to sets of formalised job roles. We are not necessarily arguing that these job roles are in any sense defined and disseminated by a purposeful organisation, but rather that, however they have come about historically, they are definitely extant for our set of organisation members, if only as reference symbols in Parsons' (1951) sense:

"Interactive relationships and the reciprocal roles of the parties constitute, on the relevant level, the units of which all social systems are composed. But certain further considerations come to be involved on the higher levels of organisation of collectivities. With extension of the role system beyond the particular interactive relationship, the problem arises of the extent to which the expressive symbolism is commonly shared within the wider role system. There is further the question of whether or not the symbolism is directly integrated with the common values which are constitutive of the collectivity and may, therefore, be considered to be symbols of the solidarity of the collectivity."

Not only are we saying that, for the particular group of organisation members of this study, there is a strong identification with notions of bureaucratic purpose, but also that at least a part of the personal

<u>interests</u> that were articulated by these individuals
were also couched in organisational terms. This is
what we mean by referring to the 'Organisation within
the Individual'.

The Pathos of Bureaucracy

We have been concerned with trying to understand the
'decision-making' behaviour of such individuals and,
in doing so, would underline a phenomenon that to some
extent runs counter to the now well-developed and
popular models of organisations as political forums.
Here, we refer to a kind of pathos in the extent to
which notions of organisational purpose have been
subsumed into the thinking of the members of the group.
Here is not the keen cut and thrust of career develop-
ment nor the strategic manoeuvring to receive favour
or an increased control over resources; there is no
competition for power in any Machiavellian sense, nor
for fame or recognition. The organisation that provides
the context for the work of the Housing Assessment
Team has no history of individual dynamic success and
progress at the kind of levels that we are talking
about. The issues that come to HAT for consideration
are not exciting or earth-shattering. Many of them
are rather dull, with just the occasional pocket of
interest. The meetings themselves are often tedious
for all concerned, and frequent asides are necessary

to sweeten the pill of ploughing through them. Yet,
through all this, there remains a dogged adherence to
what each individual believes or assumes to be the
driving purpose of it all. Sometimes they are apt
to question its strength, often they will disagree
about what the purpose is. But it is there somewhere,
they are sure, and it filters down from the organisation
above them. By the same token, they perceive insti-
tutionally imposed constraints upon their behaviour
as officials representing the organisation. These
are not the freely negotiated codes of conduct that
Coser (1964) has referred to and that Pettigrew (op.
cit) comments upon:

"Coser (1964) has suggested that the power struggle
itself may be a very necessary part of achieving a
new stability of relations between the parties over
time. Accommodation, he believes, can be reached
only when the contenders have assessed their respective
strength in conflict. Eventually 'the parties must
agree upon rules and norms allowing them to assess
their respective power position in the struggle.
Their common interest leads them to accept rules which
enhance their mutual dependence in the very pursuit
of their antagonistic goals. Such arguments make
their conflict, so to speak, self-liquidating' (Coser,
1964: 405)."

The essentially non-atagonistic relations that we have
observed as being characteristic of the members of
our decision-making group are not based upon a balance
of power. Rather, they derive partly from a sense
of how 'the organisation' expects them to conduct
themselves in the course of official business, but
also from what is essentially a sense of comradeship
founded upon a recognition that they are all in the
same organisational boat and that it is more pleasant
to co-exist as peacably as possible than it is to look
for reasons for conflict.

This pathos to which we refer might have been described
by T.S. Eliot:

> "No, I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;
> Am an attendant lord, one that will do
> To swell a progress, start a sence or two,
> Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,
> Deferential, glad to be of use,
> Politic, cautious, and meticulous ... "

Non-Strategic Behaviour

The concept of strategy in a game-theoretic sense is
used to describe competitive behaviour characterised
by (i) the participants within a situation having
interests which are to some extent incompatible;
(ii) for those divergent interests to be understood

by each party; (iii) where there is a variety of

possible outcomes contingent upon the elapsed sequence

of responses that each party will make to the others

and (iv) where the likely reaction of each participant

to these possible outcomes is known to everyone else.

This basic formulation is varied by game theorists

to correspond with different aspects of real-life.

Bennett's Hypergame model that we have examined in

Chapter 3 allows that different participants have

different perceptions of the total situation and of

each others perceptions of it.

Outside of game theory, strategy may have a less

restrictive meaning in that it can refer to essen-

tially non-competitive situations which nevertheless

involve contingency planning by someone who wants to

end up somewhere in particular, but who may be hindered

in this by events over which he has no control and

to which he must respond in the best possible way.

Hence people may refer to a strategy for launching a

new product, even where no clear competition is

involved, or talk about a strategy for getting a

holiday abroad next year. The term is then taken to

connote a form of contingency planning.

In the routine course of the work carried out by the

Housing Assessment Team, significant conflicts of

interest between the members were difficult to

identify. Conflicts sometimes seemed to arise amongst 'external' participants in a case, such as occurred in the Bedford Street story. But even in such circumstances, theoretical conflict in Vickers' sense was not perceived by all participants. Where it was, the interests often appeared not strong enough to be pursued aggressively and certainly not in terms of more than one move ahead. So that the essential requirements for strategic responses were generally absent in the situations examined.

Further, the prevailing culture both of the team and of its parent organisation tended to encourage and reinforce co-operation rather than competition and tended to discourage symptomatic conflict in Vickers' sense.

Unmotivated Behaviour

Maslow (1954) has observed that:

"... not all behaviour is motivated. There are many determinants of behaviour other than motives. For instance, one other important class of determinants is the so-called external field. Theoretically, at least, behaviour may be determined completely by the external field, or even by specific, isolated, external stimuli, as in association of ideas, or certain conditioned reflexes."

It was the principal theme of chapter 5 that certain

events in the external field of both an individual

contributor and of the decision-making group of which

he is a part can cause responses and outcomes that

appear to have no underlying direction and are

difficult to attribute to purposeful behaviour. If

the participants in a discussion have an official

brief to decide upon a policy, but the force of the

purpose behind that brief is weak, there may exist

a real indifference among the members about the

outcome of the discussions. There may be a limited

incentive to move the thinking and conclusions of

the meeting in one direction rather than another.

In this kind of situation, the 'linguistic forces'

provided by the gradually unfolding discourse may

be the most significant determinants of the position

of the meeting at the close. It may literally be a

question of 'where have we arrived at' come the time

of the summing-up. The ebb and flow of the conver-

sational interaction has essentially determined the

outcome.

For the members of HAT, there is a perceived bureau-

cratic brief to work to, interpreted variously by

each of them. Their personal commitment to it is not

high however. That, taken together with the often

uninteresting material of the meetings and a general

feeling that their efforts have a barely noticeable

impact upon the world at large, can provide this
condition of entropy within which the words can seem to
take over.

A Non-Decision Model?

If we begin to de-emphasize the notion of purpose,
either individual or collective, then we also by
implication move away from a paradigm of decision-
making for understanding group-generated outcomes.
To the extent that purpose dissolves, then so does
the utility of the concept of choice. Ackoff and
Emery (1972) have observed that:

"A purposeful individual can derive (infer) courses
of action from his model of a problem situation; that
is, the beliefs incorporated into his model can
produce a belief about which courses of action are
possible and which of these will produce a state of
satisfaction. The derivation may be conscious and
thus obtained through thought, or it may be unconscious
and hence be obtained by intuition. On the other hand,
a course of action may be selected by a guess or be
chosen arbitrarily (as by a random choice)."

Here, the notion of decision-making requires a purpose
and a model of a problem situation that presumably
thwarts that purpose. The individual then makes a

choice, reasoned, intuitive or at random. The
nature of the problem situation for members of the
Housing Assessment Team is difficult to uncover.
We have seen that a significant part of their
'purpose' derives from bureaucratic interpretations
of their job roles. That is, each member recognises
that there is an official task to be completed; but
the problem element of that appears to be weak and
there is no clear thwarting of purpose that gives
rise to choice-making behaviour in Ackoff's sense.

Partial Explanation and Multiple Models

It is important for both consumers and producers of
social research to understand the partial nature of
the findings that they deal with. We recall Popper's
(op. cit.) comment:

"... history must be selective unless it is to be
choked by a flood of poor and unrelated material.
The attempt to follow causal chains into the remote
past would not help in the least, for every concrete
effect with which we might start has a great number
of partial causes... "

Not only do chains of causality quickly branch and
multiply into a myriad strands, but there is also a
near infinity of concepts and ideas that can be
overlaid onto observed events to give them different

shades and facets of meaning. Bring an idea close to another idea and you will generate a third which both derives from the first two but also adds further meaning to them. We have seen from the present study that, not only can we look at the events of decision-making cases in slightly different ways in order to gain perspective and generate new possibilities for explaining what happened; the individual participants themselves are also able to do the same kind of thing. The process of collecting data from people who hadn't given much thought themselves to the emerging issues of a case or to the reasoning behind their own behaviour is a real example of knowledge in the making.

Our intention throughout this research has been to illuminate empirical events by the use of a particular set of concepts and, at the same time, to elaborate the concepts by bringing them close to data. The process is one of conceptual triangulation, such as Webb (1966) has referred to:

"... no method (with its own built-in limitations) is used exclusively or in isolation; different techniques are combined to throw light on a common problem. Besides viewing the problem from a number of angles, this 'triangulation' approach also facilitates the cross-checking of otherwise tentative findings."

We use the notion of traingulation in a slightly

different sense from Webb. It is not just that we are

hoping, by employing different concepts quite consciously,

to 'catch the data out' and to reveal inconsistencies

and gaps that would otherwise be missed; the traingu-

lation is also applied to the meaning of each of the

concepts that we use and to the findings that emerge

from their use. So that what is meant by personal

interest is given further meaning by considering

the concept of corporate purpose; what is meant by

optimising is informed by thinking about the process

of satisficing. This is a not dissimilar idea to that

of elaborating a system of constructs (Kelly, 1955).

We move on now to consider, more specifically, the

findings that have emerged from having offered up

the concepts that comprise the themes of the five

analysis chapters to some of the real events of group

decision-making behaviour.

8.3. The Utility of Hypergame Analysis

The Presumption of Conflict

Tedeschi, Schlenker and Bonoma (1973) have concluded

that:

"Interdependence of outcomes and at least partially

opposed interests appear to be ubiquitous in social

relationships; hence conflict (of greater or lesser

degree) sets the problem for human interactions. The
solutions for such social problems often require the
use of various modes of communications. These modes
include threats, promises, warnings, and mendations,
all of which can be contingent or non-contingent,
more or less explicit or tacit, and may refer to
specific types and magnitudes of reinforcements,
including sensory stimulation, rewards or costs,
provision of gains or deprivation of expected gains,
and social rewards or punishments."

The two senses of Vickers' use of the concept of
conflict are fused here. Tedeschi et al subsume
within their meaning both a demonstrable incompati-
bility of interests and also the forms of behaviour
intended to gain advantage. Competition is another
term widely used in the literature, with meanings
variously over-lapping that of conflict. Deutsch (1969)
has defined competition much as others have defined
conflict, as:

"an opposition in the goals of the interdependent
parties such that the probability of goal attainment
for one decreases as the probability for the other
increases."

Deutsch then uses the term conflict to refer to
incompatible activities rather than incompatible goals.

Game-based models of strategic interaction might be said to be founded upon a paradigm of conflict. Although mixed-motive and co-operative behaviour has been examined under the auspices of game theory, they have been treated rather in terms of deviation from conflict behaviour than as positions in their own right. Many writers on game theory have pointed to what Rapoport (1964) has called its 'inherently non-co-operative tendencies' (also, e.g. Schelling, 1958, 1963; Sandberg, 1976). The dangers of the analyst seeing conflict where there was none have to some extent been recognised, but, even the conflict paradigm has spilled over into many of the more subtle and 'real-life' treatments of organisational politics.

The application of Hypergame concepts to the group processes of the Housing Assessment Team resulted in a degree of 'mis-match' with the empirical con- clusions that could be drawn from the data. Although the notion of different players' different perceptions of other significant parties and their aims was illuminating when considered against events, it was not clear that there was any significant strategic behaviour being employed in the particular case being examined. Although the various parties made observations about their own objectives and those of significant others, we were unable to identify instances of premeditated attempts by 'players' to further their objectives

by consciously constructing a plan of campaign against
the prospect of other players' attempts to further their
own. The analysis therefore could not proceed beyond
the phase of identifying the various participants'
perceptions of the other parties in the case. To
have moved further into the realm of constructing
strategy matrices for each player would have been to
produce what could be described as a 'hyperanalysis'
of the situation.

Intrinsic Value of the Core Concepts

We argue empirically that formulating the essential
concepts of a Hypergame, appreciating the relation-
ship between them and then setting these against
the data provides a greater insight than any possible
manipulation of strategy matrices. In any case, by
far the most problematic and significant part of
constructing a model in practice is the attribution
of aims, perceived outcomes and preferences to the
players.

Bennett himself (1979) has said that the problems of
matrix manipulation become prohibitively complex
beyond two-player hypergames. He has also implied
that the commentary that precedes and surrounds the
mathematical analysis is probably more important than
the 'analysis' for understanding the dynamics of the
situation. This must especially be true if the former

is able to take account both of what individuals
have said about the events in which they have partici-
pated and, also, some deeper knowledge about what they
are like as people. Bauman (1978) has observed that:

"Social phenomena, since they are ultimately acts of
men and women, demand to be understood in a different
way than by mere explaining. Understanding them must
contain an element missing from the explaining of
natural phenomena: the retrieval of purpose, of
intention, of the unique configuration of thoughts
and feelings which preceded a social phenomenon and
found its only manifestation, imperfect and incomplete,
in the observable consequences of action."

This is essentially a hermeneutic view of understanding
which depends upon a degree of personal insight into
the character of those involved. This insight doesn't
necessarily need to be obtained through direct contact
with them although this is almost certainly the best
way. The hypergame analyses that have been conducted
by Bennett et al (op. cit.) have been relatively poorly
informed by this kind of data and sometimes not
informed at all. The attribution of aims, perceived
outcomes and strategies at a considerable 'distance'
has resulted in arguably rather tenuous links between
model and reality. Subsequent manipulation of the
parameters of the model to provide further 'analyses'

then seem to be academic in the worst colloquial

sense of the word.

On the other hand, bringing the essential concepts of

the model close both to the events of a case and to

what the participants themselves said about those

events is enlightening, especially if that process is

informed by a reasonable personal knowledge of those

participants. Here, the idea of triangulation is

invoked and the strategic components of the hypergame

throw the material into perspective. This perspective

may be gained by an observed correspondence between

the model and the data, or by the opposite, where a

definite non-matching seems to pertain, or by identi-

fiable degrees of correspondence somewhere between the

two. The process runs something akin to the following

simple example.

"Well, what colour was it?"

"Difficult to say really. Lightish I suppose."

"Was it a kind of blue?"

"Yes, but not exactly, more greenish than blue."

"More like a turquoise?"

"That's it. It was a light turquoise."

In this example there is a strong correspondence

between the starting concept offered up to an 'event'

in order to provide a triangulation point for understanding,

and the real character of the data. This character
was finally referred to the original notion of blue
and somewhere along a scale of lightness and of
greenness. This is analogous to the process that
we have been adopting throughout this thesis and it
is a process in which the Hypergame can undoubtedly
be of considerable explanatory value.

Definition of Player Sets

This research has indicated the need for a further
conceptual extension of the theory of Hypergames.
It is not only intentions, preferences, payoffs and
strategies that are subject to individual interpretation.
It is also clear, empirically, that the various
parties to a strategic interaction will, in general,
have individual interpretations of who the rest of
the 'players' are. There need not exist any overlap
of each players perceived set of opponents although,
in practice, there will usually be considerable
congruence.

In a Hypergame analysis that would account for this
additional complexity, the analyst would presumably be
forced to make a judgement about the constitution of
the set that he would like to work with. It is
possible that the evidence might support the inclusion
of a player or players that none of the 'other'
participants recognize in their own sets. Closing

off inclusions such as this may, in the end, be a
somewhat arbitrary matter.

Definitions of the Situation

Probably the most important contribution that Bennett's
model makes to the gaming and conflict literature is
to highlight the idea that different participants
within a conflict will, in general, have different
definitions of the situation. Although this is a
well developed notion in Sociology and Social Psychology
(see, for example, Berger and Luckman, 1967; Kelly,
1955, 1969; Deutscher, 1973; Harre and Secord, 1973;
Cicourel, 1973), strategy analysts have only relatively
recently started to operate this precept in practice.

Although Luce and Adams (1956) said that:

"A basic assumption of the theory of games is that each
player correctly perceives the payoff functions of the
other players. This assumption seems highly unrealistic,
and it is dropped in this paper and replaced by the
assumption that each player has a perception of the
payoff functions of each of the other players; these
perceptions may be incorrect ..."

Yet they still constrain their analysis to consideration
of a single strategy matrix which they presume the
subjects to agree upon. Much later, Schlaim (1976)

made the point that:

"Images, which may be defined as the organised
representation of an object in an individual's
cognitive system, play an all-important part in the
process of making intelligence evaluations. Actors
do not respond to the 'objective' facts - whatever
that might mean - but to their individual perceptions
of reality. Any assessment they make of a situation
is bound to be affected in varying degrees by a series
of personal images they hold, notably the image of the
antagonistic out-group they are combatting."

Schlaim's specific concern was with the competition
between national intelligence systems and hence his
operating paradigm is one of conflict in all possible
senses. Nevertheless, he realised that, in order to
predict the behaviour of participants, it was vital
for the analyst to understand their own definitions
of the situation.

Bennett's beginnings of a bridge building effort
between the game analysts and the various disciplines
associated with perception and meaning are welcomed.
Interestingly, what he has found himself is that
pursuance of this line takes him further and further
from mathematical definition and manipulation and
increasingly closer to the disciplines concerned. It

is likely that this trend will continue if the models

that are constructed are required to demonstrate

strong correspondences with the empirical world.

8.4   Some Dimensions of Collective Purpose

Bureaucratic Interpretations

It was found in the course of this research that

images of collective purpose amongst members of the

Housing Assessment Team appeared to derive principally

from bureaucratic interpretations of their job roles.

The group members were well imbued with the ethos

of their parent organisation and were inclined to take

their direction from it. We are here using 'bureau-

cratic' in the Weberian sense (Weber, op. cit.) in

which, within a bureaucratic structure:

"... each member of the staff occupies an office with

a specific delimitation of powers and a sharp segre-

gation of the sphere of office from his private affairs ...

The different offices are organised in terms of a

stringent hierarchy of higher and lower levels of

authority in such a way that each lower level is

subject to control and supervision by the one immediately

above it. This control and supervision above all

includes the power of appointment, promotion, demotion,

and dismissal over the incumbents of lower offices."

Despite the limitations of this traditional model

of organisation, with its emphasis on efficiency
and 'rationality' and its lack of attention to
individual interests and politics, it is nevertheless,
we argue, a very powerful model of institutional life;
powerful, not because of any strong support from
contemporary organisational theorists, nor yet because
it has particular empirical strength as an explanator
of behaviour. The principal power of this model is
that it represents a pervasive view of how people
within organisations perceive their membership of
them. To that extent, notions of bureaucracy might
be regarded as a self-fulfilling system of concepts.
Pettigrew (1973) has noted that:

"The formal structure of power and legitimacy is
regarded as problematic ... authority requires to
be fortified in interaction. A position may give a
leader authority, but the exercise of authority
requires interaction. It is at this point that the
leader's problems begin."

Whilst we accept the point of these observations, our
own data suggest that, in the case of HAT, the formal
structure of power and legitimacy is the major source
of those two commodities. According to our interpret-
ation of the various comments of the team members,
'the organisation' and institution of Local Government
provides most of the direction that can be discerned

in their work. The members themselves also believe
that this ought to be the case.

Sub-Bureaucracy

The Housing Assessment Team came to be regarded by
its members as a kind of Sub-Bureaucracy in its own
right. It was seen to have an official brief that
was partly explicit and partly implicit, and each of
the members perceived a formal role for himself
relative to that brief. It was also possible to
identify, for most of the members, a conceptual
separation between himself 'the individual' and his
membership of the Sub-Bureaucracy. There was a
distance between the man and the role.

This conceptual separation or distance was not sharply
defined, however; the two 'persona' were blurred at
the overlap. They also overlapped with allegiances
to each member's departmental activities, the total
enterprise of local government and the professional
body with which each was associated.

The Sub-Bureaucracy of the Housing Assessment Team
wielded less authority over the Team members than did
their own individual departments. Although conflicts
of interest between the departments were barely
identifiable at the level of HAT, save for some more
or less good-natured rivalry, the members (except for

R) were not completely at ease with having apparently

two directions of responsibility and authority. The

operation of the team was made possible by an agreement

between Heads of Department that staff time would be

made available for this inter-disciplinary activity.

The members were of course aware of this agreement,

but were still not inclined to spend too much time

and energy on a task which was seen as essentially

extra-curricula. When the pressure of their own

departmental work was high, the demands of the Sub-

Bureaucracy that was HAT took a definite second place.

By the same token, the nature of R's 'authority'

was tenuous. He was designated the Co-ordinator

of the team and that was very much the role that he

played, with considerable skill and perspicacity.

He was aware that he had no formal authority over the

members, yet he was anxious that HAT should achieve

results. In this, he managed to succeed, employing

a combination of enthusiasm, diplomacy, gentle cajoling,

an apparent belief in the cause and a demonstrable

willingness to get on with work himself. It was

mainly through his efforts that what was initially a

rather weakly held together committee became a recognized

Sub-Bureaucracy, with an authority of its own and a

generally recognized official function.

Professional Membership

The links that the individual members had with their

own professions added stability to the Housing Assessment

Team at the same time that they tended to reduce its

apparent coherence. These various professional

identities allowed members to participate with

a sense of independence, of security and with the

belief that they each had something unique to contribute

to the discussions. Thus was generated a feeling of

detached voluntariness which added, paradoxically, to

the strength of the group. It could be described not

so much as a balance of power, but rather the power that

commonly derives from an essentially amateur involvement

with an enterprise in which there is not too much work

involved and nothing much to lose.

As we have noted, this sense of voluntariness was

by no means total since HAT also developed a degree

of 'legal' authority in its own right. It is interesting

that these two intuitively opposing characteristics

somehow remained co-existent.

Non-Bureaucratic Collective Purpose

The cohesion of the team also increased at certain

points of interaction with outside parties, notably

with the Housing Committee (the official consumer of

HAT output) and with 'The Public' (the ultimate clients

of the facility the team was set up to provide). Both

these groups appeared as common 'adversaries' for the

HAT members and generated an occasional sense of

solidarity.

Various definitions of group cohesion, strength,
collectiveness and solidarity have been proposed.
Many of these bear upon the question of the satisfaction
that may or may not exist for the individual in being
a member of the group. Zander (op. cit.) has noted
that:

"If a member is to be concerned about the achievement
of a group that faces a challenging task he must
perceive the presence of at least three conditions:
(a) that a social unit exists, (b) that he is within that
unit rather than outside it, and (c) that events in
the group are likely to be relevant to his satisfaction
with that group. If these three are present for a
person, one may assume that he will be more interested
in the outcome of the collective's effort than when
they are absent. When these conditions exist for
members, the group is said to be strong, one that has
unity ..."

This is rather a diffuse definition of group strength
because it rests upon other difficult definitions.
A challenging task, perhaps, is one that can be
achieved to the satisfaction of a strong group, if
we care to reorganise the ideas somewhat. Yet we can
recognise the essence of what Zander is trying to say.

One of the characteristics of the Housing Assessment
Team that seems central to how its members behave,
however, is that the tasks that it has to carry
out are not particularly challenging by any definition
that the team members would use. This aspect of the
performance of groups is unfortunately given very
limited attention in the literature. Much is written
about conflicts of interests within groups and the
gleeful, strategic pursuit of individual aims; much
emphasis is laid upon the efficiency of groups faced
with a well-defined task, motivation and satisfaction,
trade-offs between individual and group purpose,
solidarity and alienation. But relatively little
attention has been paid to that most pervasive quality
surrounding organisational working units - indifference.
We have argued in chapter 5 that in a situation where
there is strictly limited concern about the outcomes
of a group activity, except within the broadest of
parameters, then what actually does transpire may be
highly contingent upon the ways in which the discussion
unfolds and the whims of the individuals on the day.

Yet, even in such circumstances, it is often not
possible to assert that the group is acting in a
completely purposeless way. The indifference is never
all-pervasive, but becomes a dominating mode which
contributors drift in and out of as the interest and
the content of the meeting ebbs and flows. Bureaucratic

interpretations of collective purpose come to the fore

as and when the subject matter dictates, but so does

another kind of aim that has to do with getting the

business done and drawing the meeting to a generally

acceptable conclusion. When that stage is reached,

the members of HAT who are still conversationally

active are scanning the content of the contributions

for some method of closure, perhaps some further

information that 'is required' before they can proceed,

a necessary visit to inspect the properties concerned,

a phone call to someone or other that one of the members

ought to make or, occasionally, a clear agreement

about the recommendations to put forward to the

committee. As a morning or long afternoon draws on,

most of the members will become involved in this

collective effort to reach the end of the meeting.

Collective Purpose and Personal Interest

The scope for the personal advancement of members of

the Housing Assessment Team is not significantly

affected by the activities of the Team. The structure

and interdepartmental nature of the relationship

with the parent organisation do not leave room for

political advantage and there is, therefore, no real

reason for political manoeuvring.

Individual competition appeared to be manifest only

insofar as it related to the competence of contributions

to specific meetings. The dimension of personal
interest apparently operating in such cases was a
concern to put on a good performance during the course
of the discussions. Competition in this respect was
not at all strong, however, and it could not be said
to represent a major component of the dynamics of the
team.

A coincidence of personal interest and collective
purpose appeared to be represented by the members'
recognition that the business of HAT was something that
they were all landed with and that it was in all their
interests that it be conducted as quickly and pleasantly
as possible with a minimum of heated disagreement.

Zander (op. cit.) has observed that:

"There has been a long standing interest in explaining
why a member attends to the goodness of his group's
effort. With few exceptions ... these explanations
have been based on the assumption that he personally
will benefit if his group performs well. Many studies
therefore have attempted to identify conditions that
facilitate individual gains for a member or make him
believe these gains will occur ... Yet, it is easy
to think of instances in which a person works hard for
his group when there is not the slightest possibility
of personal gain and even, in the extreme case, when

such effort may reduce or eliminate rewards he might have received. It is difficult to understand the intentions of such members without assuming some form of motivation that is primarily focused on the outcomes of the group - a more or less selfless concern with the achievement of the group as a unit."

The present research has indicated the operation of motives, if such they can be called, which are neither totally self-interested nor whole-heartedly 'groupy'. Principal amongst these has been a willingness to attend to the bureaucratic definitions of what the group 'ought' to be doing. Commitment to these definitions is not absolute however, and boredom and indifference can set in with rather unpredictable effects upon the group outcomes. We consider now some of the conclusions that can be drawn about the determinants that can come into play when this occurs.

8.5 The Leader-Driver: Some Dimensions of Non-Purpose

In chapter 5, we formulated some categories of discussion dynamics that help to explain certain kinds of outcome generated by decision-making groups when their sense of direction is rather weak. These categories were:

(i)   Critical Elapsed Sequences

(ii)   Stock Polarities and Agreements

(iii) Discounted Standpoints

(iv)   Novel Standpoints

(v)   Extraordinary Commitment

Critical Elapsed Sequences were conceived as strings

of contributions in which the probability of each

element being introduced appears to be strongly

determined by the contribution or contributions

immediately preceding it.

Stock Polarities are special cases of this phenomenon

in which particular pairs of contributions are apt

to turn up together, often representing either polarised

views or concurrent views.

Discounted Standpoints were taken to denote discussion

clichés, peculiar to the group, that tend to be

disregarded or to carry much reduced impact by virtue

of their familiarity.

Novel Standpoints were seen to represent the obverse of

Discounted Standpoints, being contributions that

appeared to carry extra weight by virtue of their

newness.

Extraordinary Commitment was said to be present when

a special enthusiasm from one of the members stood out

against a characteristic background of ennui and

thereby carried discussion off in its own direction.

All of these propositions have been suggested by a

prolonged involvement with the meetings of the Housing

Assessment Team and are supported by particular examples.

They are argued to represent some of the 'internal

forces' of a discussion and to be particularly

potent when other, essentially external, determinants

relating to purpose are not operating strongly or at

all.

The model of discussion upon which such notions are

implicitly founded resembles, in simplistic terms,

a game of dominos in which each player has a limited

set of pieces that he can set down, but these can only

be played when certain other pieces are laid by

someone else. Bales (1950) has classified different

types of contribution that can be made in small

problem-solving groups and he links some of these

behaviours as likely to occur together. But what

we are suggesting here is that the content matter

of discussion may be serially determined by association.

Separating the effects of intentions from this kind

of process is an almost impossible task in practice

and, indeed, a certain class of intentions could be

said to operate even in driving this sequencing. Such

intentions relate to the support of particular points

of view, opinions and ideas rather than to the satis-

faction of more tangible goals. Critical Elapsed

Sequences sometimes occur, for example, to bend the

meaning attributed to a particular contribution

towards a different meaning preferred by the respondent.
Similarly, Stock Polarities may represent opposing
positions adopted by two contributors and Stock
Agreements may indicate two strong beliefs in the
same principle.

Extraordinary Commitment is a category which is
dimensionally distinct from the other four. In a
sense, it could be said to represent pockets of
enthusiasm which stand out against the background of
relative non-purpose that accentuates the appearance
of the other, language-based categories. This
enthusiasm can still be unintentional, however,
generated by a particular juxtaposition of ideas, a
sudden mood, a whim, a burst of inspiration or merely
a desire to relieve a prevailing level of boredom.

An important finding of this research has been a
recognition of the surprisingly high levels of
'un-intention' that can exist during the process of
meetings of decision-making groups such as HAT. We
argued in chapter 5 that models of group interaction
based upon political formulations of objectives and
behaviour need to be applied judiciously, particularly
at the lower levels of organisation hierarchies.
Indeed, it could be said that the 'political' position
and, conversely, one that takes a more undirected
view of organisational interaction are each based
upon fundamentally different paradigms concerning

how individuals relate to their working lives.
Implicit in the first model is an essentially
materialist view of occupational satisfaction, whereas
the second recognizes that the contract that an
individual may strike with his organisation does not
anticipate or necessarily value the successes or
advantages that can be derived from 'political'
awareness and competence.

Although we are not concerned here with the ethics
of organisational behaviour, we are interested in
the values adopted by those who engage in analysis
and commentary upon organisations. This is an important
part of tracing the lineage of the concepts that they
use and the conclusions that they draw. For those
that would follow and interpret the results of the
present research, it is important to realise that we
would incline to emphasize what we have referred to
as the pathos of organisational life as much as, and
probably more than, the potential rewards of the cut
and thrust of its politics.

8.6 Some Characteristics of Personal Interest

Whilst we have argued in chapter 6 that Personal
Interest could take many forms for the individual,
the results of our empirical study indicate the import-
ance of organisationally oriented definitions. We have
found that aspects of an individual's purpose-directed

behaviour that have to do with satisfactions relating to himself rather than to 'goals' of the organisation may nevertheless be expressed in terms of his well-being within that organisation. We have alluded to this characteristic in considering 'the pathos of bureaucracy', a feeling that the paid official is never really able to liberate himself from the definitions of himself provided by and through his involvement with his organisation.

This became apparent when we were able to obtain data on both R's and E's views on their own interests with respect to the continuing operation of the Housing Assessment Team. The categories expressed were, almost without exception, dimensions of well-being pertinent to their everyday working lives within Local Government in general and as part of HAT in particular. Since these categories were covered in some depth in chapter 6, we do not propose to reconsider them here. A number of more general points stand out for comment however.

First, it was clear that the positions of R and E with respect to the Housing Assessment Team were different, in terms of personal interests, from those of the other members. R, in particular, had a considerable portion of his job and professional identity tied up with the operation of HAT.

Second, the categories of interest articulated by R

could be described in the sort of terms normally

associated with the pursuit of political advantages.

That is, they all had to do with improving his status,

working standard of life, prospects and salary. In

all cases the real scope for improvement was slight,

however, and it is arguable how powerful these factors

would be in any political action that involved a

significant degree of personal conflict or unpleasantness.

Third, these personal interest factors only emerged

for discussion when a public inquiry forced R and E

to justify some of their recommendations and, also,

the existence of HAT to parties outside the usual

circle of their work. Significant for R was the

possibility of HAT being discontinued at the end

of its experimental term and he was forced, therefore,

to consider the disagreeable implications of this

possibility.

Finally, despite R's particular interest in the

continuation of the team, he always conducted the

business and his handling of the other members on a

co-operative basis and not obviously as leader or

manager. Whether that policy stemmed from an intuitive

or considered notion of the most effective likely

approach or whether it was merely part of the gentlemanly

culture of Local Government Officers was difficult to

say. It was never apparent within the meetings,
however, that R had any particular axe to grind.

The balance of attention that is deemed to be 'proper'
to devote to the pursuit of personal well-being is an
interesting issue. The economic contract that indi-
viduals make or imply with their organisation, the
extent to which they feel dependent upon that, the
Puritan Ethic pervasive as a background presence
within the world of organisations, all lend a kind of
schizophrenia to organisation man which is usually
deeply imbedded. When you come to ask him about his
aims and aspirations and about the objectives of his
part of the institution, these ideas merge and blend
in the reply. Ambitions are perhaps at first expressed
in the jargon of career progression, then later, and
more tentatively, might be an admission of some
more personally material goal, a small cottage in
the country, a caravan in which to get away from
whatever it all is, a holiday in Greece. On the one
hand, is a natural aspiration for these 'just compen-
sations', at the same time there is often a hint of
a layer of guilt for mentioning them out loud. The
problem for the researcher is that a person will
normally take a considerable time to reveal what it is
that keeps him driving along, or rather what he thinks
some of his important motives are. The situation is
of course desperately complex. Maslow (op. cit.) has

observed that:

"Man is a wanting animal and rarely reaches a state
of complete satisfaction except for a short time. As
one desire is satisfied, another pops up to take its
place. When this is satisfied, still another comes
into the foreground, etc. It is a characteristic of
the human being throughout his whole life that he is
practically always desiring something. We are faced
then with the necessity for studying the relationships
of all the motivations to each other and we are
concomitantly faced with the necessity of giving up
the motivational units in isolation if we are to
achieve the broad understanding that we seek for."

What we have observed in this study is not only that
the aims and motives operating within the context of
a particular decision-making group are difficult to
separate, but also that two seemingly important
dimensions, collective purpose and personal interest,
merge in a complex way. More specifically, the
Personal Interest that often underpins 'political'
models of organisational behaviour may be conceived
by the individual in terms of what he does and what he
can do within the organisation rather than what he
might imagine being able to do as a hypothetical
free agent outside it. It is in this sense that
corporate purpose and individual purpose may not be at

odds. The limits of discourse and possibility can be similar in both cases. The irony of the political analysis, though, is that it tends to attribute degrees of freedom to the individual as he cunningly manoeuvres his way through the maze of the institution. The cage outside the cage, unfortunately, our very modest, modern, Machiavelli may not be able to see.

8.7. Satisficing Behaviour

Our research has shown that, in one sense, satisficing behaviour could be said to characterise most decision-making situations of complexity, since there is rarely the time or the resources to be able to amass all the data that could have a bearing upon the outcome. This was true of the standards that the members of the Housing Assessment Team applied to their cases and it was a well-accepted principle that they were always looking for workable solutions to the Housing problems that came before them.

There was a difference between the members' acceptance of this principle and the way in which satisficing appeared to be regarded by a 'non-professional' decision-maker involved with the case outlined in chapter 7. The latter tended to view sub-optimal choice as a pathological state even though he was not in a position, and had no inclination, to work

out the 'very best' plan to follow. However, the
professional decision-makers had, perforce, come to
terms with what they could practically hope to achieve
and had learned to promulgate amongst significant
others the acceptance of standards that could easily
be met. Their working set of values was so arranged
that, for the most part, they were seen to be getting
useful things done rather than to be always falling
short of what could in theory be done.

The amateur decision-maker, Mr. B, did not perceive
in the same way that he could exercise control over
the standards of achievement. As a small business
man, perhaps, he had more reason to judge choice
selection against an abstract ideal. To some extent
better decisions for him would mean better progress.
Neither did he have the background of operating within
an organisation in which judgements are apt to be
evaluated by peers as a matter of course. This
exposure develops the kind of caution and the ability
to define standards that the HAT members take for
granted.

An important characteristic of the satisficing behaviour
that we have observed has been a tendency to respond
to problematic events contingently rather than
strategically. As part of the acceptance of sub-
optimal standards there is often a tendency to put
problems off until later and wait to see what happens.

Optimising behaviour, on the other hand, might dictate a more proactive stance in which difficult situations were predicted and pre-empted, or else a sound strategy for their disposal drawn up in good time. In the case of B's garage, both Mr B and R were quite happy to leave events to determine their actions and to wait until the other had responded before they thought about what to do next.

9   FINAL THOUGHTS

We have tried, in the course of this thesis, to

develop a number of distinct yet interlocking themes.

In a sense, these serve to chart the progress of

incremental thinking that has taken place over a number

of years, thinking that has led off in various direc-

tions as important issues and questions have made

themselves felt. Ours has been essentially a dual

concern, but in the end the duality has come together

to provide a coherent, even scientific basis for

some propositions about the nature of certain aspects

of decision-making behaviour in groups at work.

This duality reflects concurrent interests in both

the process of social research and the substantive

content of ideas that can derive from it. An important

argument of this thesis has been that these two areas

are inextricably linked in a number of important ways.

Perhaps the most significant point could be summarised

by saying that we believe that in order to say that

we have knowledge about a particular subject of research

then we must have access to both the ideas and language

that constitute the research output and, also, the

process that generated the output. This is not to say

that any particular method of inquiry is valued, _per se_,

more highly than any other, although we would certainly

be prepared to make some judgements on that subject.

The argument is rather that we do not know the essence
of the product of research if we do not know something
about both the method <u>and</u> the mind that gave rise to
it. It is in these terms that our notion of a scien-
tific inquiry has come to be based.

This is a well established position in the philosophy
of science, but it is interpreted variously in the
natural sciences and even more variously in the social
sciences. We have intentionally steered away from
much of this debate, except that surrounding those
specific issues that seem to be important as a
foundation for our own chosen methodology and model of
knowledge. The debate is endless, in any case. All
good researchers should engage in it from time to
time to sharpen, develop and update their ideas about
what it is they believe they are doing. But none
should let a realisation of the tenuous nature of the
castle of part-formed precepts and assumptions that
contains his knowledge prevent him from going out and
getting some more. There is much to discover and
communicate, no more so than in the world of organisations.

Indeed, at no time has it been more important that
knowledge about organisations be readily accessible
to those that participate within them. This is true
whether you are arguing from the point of view of
efficiency and productivity, whether you are concerned

to make organisations better places in which to live
or whether you are supporting a plea for a greater
egality that depends upon an improved access to knowledge
about the structure of their organisational world for
those destined to live out their lives there.

Our own presentation has been intended to be both
academic and accessible. By presenting some of the
raw material of empirical data alongside the commentary
and discussion, we have hoped to make more explicit
the origins of the conclusions that have been drawn.
We have also hoped to convey knowledge of a different
kind than that we have put together by reasoning,
knowledge that rests upon the reader being able to
pick out some instant truth from the stories we have
presented.

Damian Grant (1970), writing about realism, has observed
that:

"Truth may be seen as either scientific or poetic;
discovered by a process of knowing or created by a
process of making. The first is technically referred
to as the correspondence theory, and the second as
the coherence theory.

The correspondence theory is empirical and epistemo-
logical. It involves a naive or common-sense realist

belief in the reality of the external world (as
expressed in Dr. Johnson's kicking a stone to prove
that matter exists) and supposes that we may come to
know this world by observation and comparison. The
truth it proposes is the truth that corresponds,
approximates to the predicted reality, _renders_ it with
fidelity and accuracy ...

In the coherence theory, on the other hand, the
epistemological process is accelerated or elided by
intuitive perception. Truth is not earned by the
labour of documentation and analysis but coined, a ready
synthesis, and made current - as in any currency - by
confidence, 'the confidence of truth.' Evidence is
replaced by self-evidence."

In Grant's terms, the basis of the knowledge obtained
from our own research depends upon both the corres-
pondence theory and the coherence theory. On the one
hand, the only way in which we can examine the efficacy
and insight provided by a particular set of concepts
is to try and establish a correspondence between the
concepts and the events that constitute our empirical
data. Yet, in the end, the links between particular
pieces of data and things that are said about them will
only be evaluated by coherence. A different commentator
might disagree with particular links, and assert, for
example:

"I don't think that's true. What R's comment suggests to me is that ..."

At the same time, if we consider Grant's interpretation of the concept of coherence to have some truth, then the presentation of some of the data in the form of conversations and quotations may give new meaning to the reader beyond the scope of the discussion that we have provided. We have had both these intentions in mind.

Turning now to the substantive findings of this research, let us reconsider the part-formed hypothesis that started it all off. An important concern in devising the present programme was to try and illuminate some of the more humdrum, unspectacular determinants of group decision-making. This was, in part, a reaction to some of the political and strategic analyses of organisational life that were themselves reactions to the unreal models proposed by various forms of systems analysis. These dry formulations tended to reify the organisations they described, they assumed a broad congruence of purpose for the participant individuals and concerned themselves with notions of efficiency and productivity.

But everybody knew that there was more to organisations than that, and so models were developed which accounted

for conflict, ambition, power, politics and all those
facets of real life which investigators recognised as
important, but didn't think it quite proper to theorise
about.

The result, in our view, was a swing in the other
direction. The cut and thrust models seemed to miss
out the routine dreariness, the limited commitment,
the 9 to 5 syndrome, the pathos of all the millions of
organisation people doing their bit in return for a
meagre salary and doing it to the best of their ability
when their mind was not wandering somewhere else, or
they were getting bored, or just waiting for the
weekend to come. It is a part of that ordinary yet
pervasive context that we have been concerned to
examine. We have attempted not to go overboard with
this theme and have chosen to consider a spectrum of
concepts that bear upon both strategic and non-
strategic behaviour. We highlight the incidence
of conflict in some cases and de-emphasise or refute it
in others. We have paid attention to situations where
there are relatively strong intentions and where there
hardly appear to be any at all. We have looked at
dimensions of corporate purpose and of personal interest.

An important guiding principle for our method of
research has been to become partly involved with the
work of the Housing Assessment Team and to get close

enough to the members over a long enough period of
time so as to be able to understand some of the meanings
that they give to the behaviour of others and which,
we presume, informs their own action. We agree with
Goffman (1961), who summed up the process rather
neatly:

"It is my belief that any group of persons - prisoners,
primitives, pilots or patients - develop a life of
their own that becomes meaningful, reasonable and
normal once you get close to it, and that a good way
to learn about any of these worlds is to submit oneself
in the company of the members to the daily round of
petty contingencies to which they are subject."

Perhaps the only way to really understand a piece
of action is to participate in it yourself. But, to
theorise about it, you also have to be able to see
what you have been doing. It has been our intention
to steer some kind of middle course between involvement
and distance. In the same way, we have hoped to
achieve a balance between correspondence and coherence,
science and history, strategy and non-strategy, conflict
and harmony. We have examined a number of different
points of view which, in the end, all depend upon each
other for their meaning.

10   GENERAL THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS AND SOME DIMENSIONS OF PROCESS AND CONTEXT

10.1   Conclusions for Group Decision Making

Our research connects with a number of important traditions of thinking about decision-making in groups and organisations. Perhaps the most established is the social psychological body of knowledge, rooted firmly in experimental investigations. Many of these have been based upon the social and linguistic dynamics that operate in decision-making groups attempting to reach a consensus (Black, 1948; Burnstein and Vinokur, 1975; Deutsch and Gerard, 1955; Festinger, Schachter and Back, 1959). Particularly important concepts have been attitude changed (Anderson and Farkas, 1973; Gough and Fraser, 1972; Moscovici and Zavalloni, 1969; Schonback, Gollwitzer, Stiepel and Wagner, 1981), exchange theory (Homans, 1958; Chadwick-Jones, 1976), the structure of argumentation (Thorndike, 1938; Vinokur and Burnstein, 1974; Axelrod, 1976), reactions to risk (Vinokur, 1969, 1971), linguistic style and persuasion (Festinger and Thibaut, 1950; Sandell, 1977; Vinokur, Trope and Burnstein, 1975) and various measures of group shifts (Burnstein and Vinokur, 1973; Kogan and Wallach, 1967; Stoner, 1968; Vinokur and Burnstein, op.cit.). Many of the results in this field have been derived empirically from the study of groups engaged in variations of the theme of 'problem-solving'. Recently, however, Davis and Hinsz (1982) have observed that:

"Almost any area of research having to do with the
collective performance of a set of persons working at
a task was at one time called 'group problem solving'.
According to at least one system of group task classifica-
tion (Davis, 1969a), problem solving tasks emphasize the
processing of information in order to formulate an answer,
and may be contrasted with decision-making tasks which
emphasize less a construction of some response than a
specification of one alternative out of several defined
by the task. Such a system, of course, is largely a matter
of convenience and cannot easily be maintained in strict
logical form."

Davis and Hinsz's last point is important and we would
also argue that any distinction between problem-solving
and decision-making is difficult to draw in practice.
The two might be said to be paradigms for analysis rather
than empirically observable categories of behaviour. In
these terms, our own work has perhaps been grounded more
firmly in the problem paradigm than the decision paradigm,
even though it is a concept of 'group decision' that we
have been concerned to investigate and develop.

The location of sources of intention for group members
has been given little explicit coverage in the social
psychological literature. The authority for and rightness
of problem-solving or decision-making tasks has tended to
remain an assumption of group studies rather than be

treated as an important explanatory variable. Our own research, on the other hand, has been concerned to highlight how members of a problem solving group construe both the content and the source of the issues set before them. The pervasive nature of bureaucratic models of organisational purpose has been demonstrated and some of the substance of such models elaborated.

Another important finding of the present research is that for decision-making groups concerned with relatively nontraumatic tasks, a process of 'content manufacturing' is often central to their activities. That is, in response to a bureaucratic demand to address a particular work issue, group members at a meeting will begin to generate material in the form of ideas, comments, arguments, pros and cons, notes agendas, timetables, tasks and so on. The resulting web of content not only develops a life and coherence of its own, but may also inspire standards and criteria for its evaluation. This important process of manufacture has been neglected in social psychology. Content has tended to be regarded as given in experimental group studies and treated as the subject matter for processes which they have attempted to uncover.

This concept of manufacture has also received scant attention in the literature of organisation theory. Perhaps the closest approach to it has been the formulation proposed by Cohen, March and Olsen (1972). They have

viewed organisational decision-making as an anarchic kind
of process:

"Although organisations can often be viewed conveniently
as vehicles for solving well-defined problems or structures
within which conflict is resolved through bargaining, they
also provide sets of procedures through which participants
arrive at an interpretation of what they are doing and what
they have done while in the process of doing it. From this
point of view, an organisation is a collection of choices
looking for problems, issues and feelings looking for
decision situations in which they might be aired, solutions
looking for issues to which they might be the answer and
decision makers looking for work."

Cohen, March and Olsen develop a model of organisational
decision-making which is characterised by the idea of
there being an abundance of content to begin with. They
argue that series of decision situations that arise within
an organisation can be seen as 'garbage cans' that attract
issues and participants according to the identifying labels
that they come to acquire. Cohen, March and Olsen stress
the idea of a stream process in which elements that end up
in one garbage can are not then available to be placed in
any of the others.

This model is simplistic in a number of ways. A central
assumption is that organisations in which this kind of
decision-making occurs are essentially anarchic. Cohen,

March and Olsen see organisational behaviour as fragmented, where participants operate on the basis of a variety of ill-defined and inconsistent preferences, where its own operating processes are not understood by its members and where these members vary considerably in the amount of time and effort that they devote to different issues. Accordingly:

"... the boundaries of the organisation are uncertain and changing; the audiences and decision makers for any particular kind of choice change capriciously."

Much of the research upon which the garbage can model has been based was carried out within Universities. These are organisations notable for the high degrees of freedom perceived by their members to define rules and standards of behaviour. They are therefore highly likely to exhibit certain anarchic characteristics. Concentration upon this idea draws attention away from much stronger perceptions of order to be found in many other kinds of organisation. The reference concept of an organised anarchy is inappropriate for many decision making situations.

The present research has pointed to the importance of bureaucratic interpretations of organisational purpose and meaning, the very antithesis of anarchy. Within the middle ranks of Local Government, meanings relating to job roles and corporate direction are handed down to the officers

from above, handed down and also accepted, for the most part, as being official, validated by those that are presumed to know what they are doing and where they are going. Participants within the organisation realise that policy is not always clearly set out; they can recognise that inconsistencies and stupidities can and do occur - after all, people are only human - they observe that those above them can sometimes be argued to be incompetent and self-interested. But, through all this, there still remains a constant, underlying belief in the rightness and officialness of it all. There is a strong sense of duty to the objectives of the organisation, whatever particular individuals believe them to be. Our middle ranking decision-makers have been seen to operate with a highly Weberian notion of organisation.

A second important weakness of the garbage can model of corporate decision-making lies with its tenet that the raw material of the process is somehow there to start with and that issues are gradually settled as this content is sorted under the various headings. This is to ignore the manufacturing of content that is such a fundamental part of group decision-making and that our research has brought out for consideration.

Within another view of the organisational theory literature, Bachrach and Baratz (1963) have been concerned to highlight political processes by which community and policy issues

are effectively decided at a high level through the manage-
ment of publicly accessible meaning (Pettigrew, 1977) so
that consumers of outcomes are not even aware that a
decision as such has been taken. Bachrach and Baratz
observed that:

"Many investigators have also mistakenly assumed that
power and its correlatives are activated and can be
observed only in decision-making situations. They have
overlooked the equally, if not more important area of
what might be called 'nondecision-making', i.e. the
practice of limiting the scope of actual decision-making
to 'safe' issues by manipulating the dominant community
values, myths, and political institutions and procedures.
To pass over this is to neglect one whole face of power."

Bachrach and Baratz refer to a state of 'false consensus'
in which members of a given population appear to stand
in agreement about the rightness of the current state of
affairs without being aware that an opportunity existed
for a different state to pertain. This is a similar idea
to the Marxian notion of false consciousness and to Lukes'
Three-Dimensional View of Power which focuses upon the
way in which political agendas may be controlled (Lukes,
1974).

The uncritical acceptance by Local Government officers
of bureaucratic interpretations of corporate purpose

might be said to represent a particular example of false consensus. However, it can also be argued that this concept is rather difficult to validate. Merelman (1968) has criticised what he refers to as the Neo-Elitist Critique of Community Power exemplified by Bachrach and Baratz (op.cit.), Schattschneider (1960), Vidich and Bensman (1960) and Oppenheim (1961). He argues that:

"The argument on the problem of 'false consensus', as it is presently stated, is not an empirical argument, though it makes certain dubious empirical assumptions. Rather, it is a purely deductive, tautological theory which, if one accepts its empirical assumptions, does not admit of empirical proof or disproof ... the argument does not allow us to distinguish between 'real' and 'false' consensuses."

Whether or not false consensus is a viable concept is not our concern here, however. The present research has not attempted to trace the lineage of particular images of organisations held by participants. Rather, a widely held view of how a corporate enterprise functions has emerged as we have examined the case studies of this thesis. Nevertheless, it was our intention to investigate the relative applicability of bureaucratic and politically oriented models of organisation, particularly at middle management levels within the hierarchy. On this question, Pfeffer (1981) has noted:

"Distinguishing between the bureaucratic and political models of organisation may be somewhat more difficult. After all, if the distribution of power is stable in the organisation, which is a reasonable assumption, particularly over relatively short time periods, and if power and politics determine organisational decisions, then organisational choices will be relatively stable over time. But this stability is also characteristic of the use of precedent in decision-making, which is one of the hallmarks of bureaucratic organisations."

Pfeffer here makes the mistake of assuming that bureau-cratic and political explanations of organisational behaviour need to be kept separate. He also frames his analytical terms from his, the analyst's, point of view. One of the important arguments of this thesis has been that it is vital to consider the models of their organisation being used by the members themselves.

So that, whatever systemic structure or political characteristics might be attributed to this particular section of Local Government from the outside, we have attempted to uncover the inside view. We have shown that bureaucratic models of their institution are widely held by the members, particularly away from the higher, discretionary levels of management and particularly where the members also belong to a profession which tends to emphasize community and vocational values.

We have also endeavoured to contrast these essentially
Weberian representations of members' participation in
decision-making with various political models which lay
stress upon individuals' self-interest and the scope for
competition, conflict and the diverse interpretation of
goals. Such models can, in certain circumstances, mislead
from what is, fundamentally, a strong sense of cohesion.

At the same time, we have pointed out that real commitment
to organisational goals can in practice be severely
limited and that routine decision-making tasks in particular
may be accompanied by high levels of boredom and marked
indifference to the outcomes. In recognizing such indiffer-
ence, we have pointed to a kind of non-decision making
that is fundamentally different to that conceived by either
Cohen, March and Olsen (op.cit.) or Bachrach and Baratz
(op.cit.). It is a process in which the participants are
themselves aware that they are engaged in a kind of
decision-making task for their organisation, this self-
subsuming institution to which they owe a duty and which
has corporate goals which they are more or less clear about
and which they believe themselves to be more or less
agreed upon.

By non-decision making in this context, we mean to say
that the process is not characterised by the rational
enumeration and comparison of alternatives, and their
systematic evaluation against well-formulated criteria;

nor by the stream sorting of issues into garbage cans.
Rather is one in which decision-making type content is
manufactured 'on site' in response to an official call
for choice, and in which a group such as HAT will generate
contributions, ideas, arguments and options as it goes
along. This process will exhibit a degree of serial
dependence and what is generated at any point in time
will be inextricably linked to what has gone before.

10.2 Decision-Making in the Local Government Setting

In the analysis and presentation of our research, the
context to the decision-making has been considered through
the auspices, as it were, of the participants themselves.
We have, through the variety of data obtained and employed,
attempted to build up a picture of how the individuals in
particular cases perceived the immediate and wider situ-
ation of which they were a part. A number of specific
issues, however, peculiar perhaps to the Local Government
context, can be identified for particular consideration.
These largely have to do with an essentially structural
view of the decision-making process.

Ranson, Hinings and Greenwood (1980, 1982) have been
amongst those who have chosen to concentrate upon the
analysis of organisational structure and its relationship
with the generation of events. In particular, they have
adopted what is essentially an evolutionary model of

organisation in which, over time, institutions adapt to and are contingent upon the circumstances that they have encountered in history. Ranson, Hinings and Greenwood (1980) point out that:

"The concept of structure is usually understood to imply a configuration of activities that is characteristically enduring and persistent; the dominant feature of organisational structure is its patterned regularity. Yet descriptions of structure have typically focused on very different aspects of such patterned regularity. Some have sought to describe structure as a formal configuration of roles and procedures, the prescribed framework of the organisation. Others have described structure as the patterned regularities and processes of interaction ... The continual counterposing of framework and interaction is unhelpful because of its implicit and inaccurate opposition of 'constraint' to 'agency'. The recent works of Bourdieu (1971, 1977, 1979) and Giddens (1976, 1977) suggest a more fruitful perspective, focusing upon the interpenetration of framework and interaction as expressing a relationship that is often mutually constituting and constitutive."

This relationship essentially exists in the idea that interaction can only take place between individuals, that these individuals have perceptions of the structure that surrounds them and that they attribute various meanings to what they perceive. We have, in the present

research, highlighted a particular way that members of
an organisation perceive structure. We have also pointed
out that, whatever the empirical, predictive validity
of a structural, Weberian model of organisational partici-
pation, the fact of participants believing in many of
its essential characteristics reinforces bureaucratic
behaviour. However, Ranson et al (op.cit.) seem more
inclined to think of structure as a strictly analytical
device to which the participants are in no sense party:

"The properties of structural frameworks have important
consequences for the organisation's effectiveness: the
extent of functional differentiation, the degree of inte-
gration, connectedness, and 'coupling', the centralisation
and concentration of authority, the formalisation of rules
and procedures, etc. will influence the effectiveness
of control."

This is essentially a Weberian analysis from the analyst's
point of view. We argue, however, that bureaucratic
models are also important for those being analysed and,
hence, have an important impact upon the nature and detail
of organisational interaction. It is in this way that
structure eventually has its determining effect upon
action. Ranson et al go on to say that:

"Much comparative research in organisational analysis
has in fact examined the contextual determinants of
structural variability in organisations. This has

become known as the 'argument from contingencies'
(Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967) which suggests that the
relationship of structural characteristics to be found
in any organisation - the particular constellation of
rules, differentiated labour and hierarchy, for example -
arises because of the pressure of contingent or situational
circumstances."

Here, apparently, is another level of cause and effect,
where that which is deemed by the analyst to lie outside
the organisation he is looking at provides a determining
force upon the structure of the organisation itself. But
how does this evolution take place? Not, presumably, by
a mysterious, impersonal process of osmosis. Contingency
forces are activated by individuals within the organisation
who are able to gauge the extent of any perceived mismatch
between what they might regard as the external environment
and the structure of the system of which they are a part.
It is the subjective delineation of context and the meaning
it assumes that will eventually result in changes of
structure.

Of course, for Local Government in particular, certain
elements of context are strongly established both by
statute and tradition. Friend and Jessop (1969) have
observed that:

"Any form of planning activity by a local authority must

take place within a procedural setting which is laid down
in the standing orders of Council, and in the more specific
instructions to individual committees. Although each
local authority has a measure of autonomy in developing these
procedures within the legal constitution of the local
government system, no local rules of procedure can in
themselves do more than provide a basic framework within
which groups and individuals can act. Inevitably, certain
patterns of behaviour and expectation evolve which tend to
become an integral part of the local government system even
though they have no official procedural basis."

This is another structuralist argument of a similar genre
to that of Ranson, Hinings and Greenwood (op.cit.),
although with an explicit reference to the particular way
in which legal forces can determine behaviour. There is
a presumption here that the scope for interpretation and
construction of such institutions as standing orders is
slight. Nevertheless, the vital process by which partici-
pants derive meaning from the structures that they perceive
is not examined.

Saunders (1979) is more thorough in this respect:

"It has become a sociological cliché that the formal
structure of an organisation does not necessarily indicate
what actually goes on within it, and there is no reason
to expect that local authorities constitute an exception
to this. Both functionalist (eg Blau, 1963) and

interactionist (eg Silverman, 1970) approaches to the

sociology of formal organisations have stressed the need

to examine how members routinely accomplish their 'roles',

and it follows that the analysis of the formal organisational

framework of local authority decision-making can only be

a first step in understanding how policies come to be made."

The present research has considered the context to the

decision-making of the Housing Assessment Team in essen-

tially the same way as other kinds of data. Analytical

categories that might be otherwise subsumed under the

general heading of context have emerged and been treated

in the accounts collected from members. We pick out a

few of these categories here for specific consideration.

First, it was an important part of Housing Policy that

conversion of marginal properties was to be preferred to

new construction. This factor was apt to place constraints

upon the range of options that could be considered by HAT

members to be feasible. This policy of renewal had its

roots both in financial and architectural issues. It had

historically been the case that the improvement of existing

buildings was normally a cheaper option, unit for unit,

than demolishing and reconstructing from scratch. This

practice had lingered on, even in the face of the relative

increase of labour costs over material costs which now

meant that, in some instances, new construction would be

a less expensive alternative to adopt.

Overlaid upon the simple budget questions were issues of quality. There was, and still is a strong presumption in most quarters of Local Government in the city - amongst officers, councillors of all parties, the public at large - that the conservation of the city's architectural and cultural heritage was fundamentally, per se, a good thing. Which parts of the heritage are deemed to be valuable and which of lesser significance is a more contentious question, but the general acceptance of the policy of conservation works against demolition and favours the practice of conversion. There is also the point that with smaller conversion schemes, it is often relatively easy for ways to be found of mobilizing private capital, which is another important working principle within the Housing Department.

A second important contextual factor was a gradual diminution in the real value of the housing budget. This tended to work against large, ambitious construction plans in favour of relatively inexpensive piecemeal conversions. The time horizon of the work was also being gradually reduced as a matter of policy; that is, standards of construction were being pared and building work was being carried out that had a shorter and shorter life expectancy. As is often the case when budgets are under pressure, the long term had started to become less important than the short term.

A third important element of context for the decision-

making of the Housing Assessment Team was the existence,

and continuing strength, of local conservation pressure

groups. One of these in particular was well organised

and run by articulate people who had access to professional

skills and technical advice of all kinds. The presence

of such groups was a determinant of the range of 'solution'

options that members of HAT felt able to raise.

Finally, we point again to the kind of organisation we were

looking at and the location of the HAT members within its

hierarchy. There is a clear difference between the culture

and constitution of, say, a University and that of a Local

Government department. There is a tradition within

Universities of freedom in how members interpret their

job roles. This is not the case within Local Authorities.

Our subjects for this research were all middle management

officers, also, and not accustomed to the more discretionary

behaviour that is to be found higher up the scale.

Recognizing as we do the importance of considering

contextual variables in the analysis of organisational

decision-making, our focus in the present research has

been with the process of decision-making interaction

and we have treated context, along with the other data,

through the meanings attributed to it by the participants

concerned. In this we differ from most other analysts

of Local Government decision-making. Structuring context

variables around the central issues of this thesis, however,

would not change the outcomes of the research as it was
conceived and designed.

In the next and last section, we move on to consider
briefly some theoretical questions which finally set
our research in the context, so to speak, of a range of
possible systems of analysis.

10.3 Some Analytical Questions

Pettigrew (1979) has argued that:

"In the pursuit of our everyday tasks and objectives, it
is all too easy to forget the less rational and instrumental,
the more expressive social tissue around us that gives
those tasks meaning. Yet in order for people to function
within any given setting, they must have a continuing sense
of what that reality is all about in order to be acted
upon. Culture is the system of such publicly and collectively
accepted meanings operating for a given group at a given time.
This system of terms, forms, categories and images interprets
a people's own situation to themselves."

We have not, in the present research, been concerned
explicitly with the concept of culture. We have, however,
been interested in uncovering meanings accepted by a
particular decision-making group, meanings that relate
to the members' sense of direction with respect to the

perceived goals of the organisation of which they are a part. We have attempted to define empirically and to elaborate a number of important concepts that bear upon a sense both of individual and corporate direction.

The case study chapters of the thesis have each dealt with a particular concept. In developing the notion of the Hyper-game in chapter 3 we focused upon some aspects of strategic conflict. We considered the efficacy and authenticity of models of strategy in the particular context of the case. Strategic behaviour was differentiated from non-strategic behaviour and conflict juxtaposed with co-operation.

In treating the idea of Collective Purpose in chapter 4, we aimed to uncover some of the ways in which corporate goals could be formulated by a particular group of organisation members. This development built upon the previous chapter to the extent that dimensions of Collective Purpose had been seen to operate within the frame of a Hypergame.

The Leader-Driver model in chapter 5 was a formulation to explain the phenomenon we have referred to as the manufacture of decision-making content. In this model we de-emphasize the importance of intention and instead posit a situation in which discussions in response to an official call for choice develop a life and logic of their own.

In looking at the concept of Personal Interest in chapter 6, we aimed to take further one of the important elements of strategic interaction, comparing it at the same time with the ideas on Collective Purpose developed in chapter 4. Our contention has been that it is not possible to understand the notion of, for example, Personal Interest without reference to other kinds of interest such as Collective Purpose.

The final case in chapter 7 was concerned to investigate the concept of satisficing originally proposed by Simon and forming such an important adjunct to the idea of optimising implied by strategic formulations of organisational interaction.

Our intention, then, has been to develop a web of important ideas, each of which represents in itself an important facet of behaviour and each adding further dimensions of meaning to the others. The process has been an empirical one to the extent that our starting point for fleshing out these core concepts has been the actual behaviour of a particular group of decision-makers.

The continuing interplay between the group members' ideas of self and corporate direction has also reflected an interest in the relative utility in particular cases of bureaucratic and political models of organisational behaviour. Our findings for the group concerned show

that bureaucratic models and images of organisational
structure and purpose are pervasive amongst the middle
management participants. Earlier in this chapter we have
referred to a distinction between categories of analysis
that are solely accessible to analysts and those that also
have currency for the subjects of analysis. We have
found that although, for example, the full depth and
implication of Weber's theories of bureaucracy are only
available to analysts and not, commonly, to 'citizens',
its essentials are nevertheless well accepted by many
citizens.

In chapter 2 of this thesis, we argued that the semantic
links between social data and derived commentary could
be said to imply a gradually unfolding theoretical
position for the observer. We also argued that such
theory can be regarded as scientific to the degree that
these links can be identified and explained. The
particular medium of the case study has been employed
for this purpose, incorporating as it does two distinct
levels of language use - that of description and that
of reflection upon what has been described.

The concepts or variables that we have chosen to focus
upon have related more to the social processes of group
decision-making than to any system or structure that
could be said to contain those processes. Hence, our
concern with Weberian bureaucracy has not had to do with

any formal, functional analysis of the machinery of Local
Government within which the Housing Assessment Team is
located. Rather, our interest has been with the ways
in which the participants themselves have articulated
and appeared to understand their own situation and its
relationship with the organisation. We have attempted
to develop and elaborate explanatory concepts that
illuminate decision-making processes by understanding
different aspects of the decision-makers' points of view.

This is in distinction to any kind of systems analysis
or to any of the theory fitting procedures of the
structuralist schools of Sociology. To pursue a geo-
graphical analogy, we have focused attention upon the river
of process as it has flowed through the landscape of
structure. We have not been concerned with the landscape
qua landscape, juxtaposed against the path of the river.
Rather, we have been intent upon the fluid dynamics of
the river itself and, perforce, particular features of the
landscape that have seemed to have affected the rate and
direction of flow.

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