The new planning, and the new planner: modernisation, culture change and the regulation of professional identities in English local planning

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the award of doctor of philosophy

August, 2009

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Abstract

Reforms to the English planning system introduced from 2001 by the New Labour government under the rubric of "*modernisation*" have made a series of claims to revitalise planning as a governmental and professional activity. In order to realise the ambitious goals of reform there have been widespread calls for a "*culture change*", particularly amongst professional planners in the public sector. The discourse of culture change is rooted in the managerialist thinking that has been central to long-term processes of state restructuring, and suggests a concern to regulate the attitudes and identities of workers.

The thesis aims to interrogate the claims that have been made for a reformed planning system and practice. In so doing it seeks to uncover the cultural politics of modernisation, assessing the ways in which the discourses of reform have targeted and sought to change local planning cultures and planners' roles and identities. It therefore opens up identity as an analytical lens for assessing the modernisation of planning.

I argue that the modernisation agenda has been marked by a series of tensions, simultaneously positioning planners as the agents of modernisation, but also as objects to be modernised. Reform has therefore imposed a considerable burden on planners as they seek to understand what is expected of them, and negotiate their professional identities in the midst of a complex set of changes that have intensified the demands of their practice. This suggests the need for greater attentiveness to the lived experience of processes of reform, and its impacts on those charged with realising change.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AAP – Area Action Plan
ADF – Area Development Framework
ASC – Academy for Sustainable Communities
BME – Black and Minority Ethnic
BVPI – Best Value Performance Indicators
CBI – Confederation of British Industry
CLG – Department for Communities and Local Government
CPT – Communicative Planning Theory
CPRE – Campaign to Protect Rural England
DC – Development control
DETR – Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions
DPD – Development Plan Document
DTI – Department for Trade and Industry
DTLR – Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions
DVLA – Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency
GO – Government Office
GOSE – Government Office for the South East
HBF – Home Builders' Federation
HMSO – Her Majesty's Stationery Office
LDF – local development framework
LDS – Local Development Scheme
LGA – Local Government Association
LGMA – Local Government Modernisation Agenda
LSP – Local Strategic Partnership
NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation
NHS – National Health Service
NPF – National Planning Forum
NPM – New Public Management
OCC – Oxford City Council
ODPM – Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
OEP – Oxford Economic Partnership
OSP – Oxford Strategic Partnership
PAS – Planning Advisory Service
PDG – Planning Delivery Grant
PDHG – Planning Delivery and Housing Grant
PINS – The Planning Inspectorate
POS – Planning Officers' Society
PPS – Planning Policy Statement
RICS – Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors
RSS – Regional Spatial Strategy
RTPI – Royal Town Planning Institute
SCS – Sustainable Community Strategy
SEERA – South East England Regional Assembly
SEEDA – South East England Development Agency
SPA – Special Protection Area
TCPA – Town and Country Planning Association
WBC – Wokingham Borough Council
WDC – Wokingham District Council

Chapter 1 The new planning and the new planner

Introduction: questioning planning's metaphors of renaissance?

In recent years a variety of different metaphors have been employed to describe the revitalisation of planning as a governmental and professional activity in England. These have variously described a *"planning renaissance"* (Andrews, 2006); a *"cyclical restoration"* (Walker, 2003); a policy sphere shrugging off its *"Cinderella"* status (Dewar, 2004), and moving *"centre stage"* (RTPI, 2007); and even the possibility of making planning *"sexy"* (ODPM, 2004a; Andrews, 2006). These, more and less optimistic, *metaphors of renaissance* each describes how planning, having come to be viewed in primarily negative terms in the 1980s, is showing signs of re-emerging to play an enhanced role in relation to a range of high profile government initiatives.

Central to this have been calls for a *"culture change"*, focusing on professional planners in the public sector and designed to change the way in which planning is approached and the attitudes of those involved. Planners have been promised empowering new opportunities if they accept this change:

> *...we want to liberate the profession so that it can focus more on the real professional challenges – the substantial, creative and productive work that makes the difference to the places people live and will live in the future* (Andrews, 2006)

Such bold claims, however, stand in contrast to the tenor of most accounts of planning in the last three decades. They also contrast with accounts of the experiences of other public sector professions under the modernising state project of New Labour since 1997 (e.g. Taylor-Gooby, 2000; Newman, 2001; Barton, 2008). It is also unclear to what extent such rhetoric fits with the complex series of reforms to both the planning system, and profession that it has accompanied.

The thesis therefore seeks to interrogate the claim that these *metaphors of renaissance* make about the empowerment of planners. It does so by reading the culture change agenda as an attempt to bring about change in planners' professional identities. The thesis therefore opens up identity as an analytical lens

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for assessing the modernisation of planning. Overall, I argue that the modernisation agenda has been marked by a series of tensions, simultaneously positioning planners as the agents of modernisation, but also as objects to be modernised (cf. Finlayson, 2009). This has imposed a considerable burden on planners as they seek to understand what is expected of them, and negotiate their professional identities in the midst of a complex set of changes to their working lives.

This chapter introduces the empirical problematic at the heart of the thesis. It starts by placing the *metaphors of renaissance* in the context of the problems planning has faced in the last thirty years, and the effects this had on the environments in which professional planners work. I then move on to briefly introduce the modernising narratives that underpin the metaphors of renaissance and recent reforms to the planning system, and profession. I suggest, following Peel and Lloyd (2007), that reform has been an attempt to articulate a *new ideological ethos* for planning and that, within this, the role of the planner has been a subject of some concern. As a result, the impetus for culture change in planning emerges, in part, from doubts about the ability and desire of planners to embrace this new ethos. Culture change can therefore be considered, in part, as an *"identity project"* (du Gay, 1996), intended to change the ways in which planners understand and relate to their roles.

Planning's paradigm crisis and the planner

Town planning emerged as a professional activity in the early decades of the twentieth century, but the character of the modern planning profession was most strongly shaped by the passing of the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act. The act greatly increased employment opportunities for planners, and effectively tied the profession's fortunes to those of the public sector, and particularly to local government where most planning activity was based (Healey, 1985; Thomas, 1998). The pervasive shift to the right characteristic of governments from the 1970s (and particularly marked in the UK by the election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979) was therefore widely understood to pose a serious threat to planning practice (Thornley, 1993). New Right governments set out to dismantle and transform the post-war state, rolling back its frontiers and changing its working practices to free markets and promote a more entrepreneurial culture (Clarke and

Newman, 1997). The connotations of "planning" as a term closely associated with the interventionist post-war state were particularly distasteful to the Hayekian enthusiasms of the New Right's neoliberal ideology (Brindley et al, 1996; Low, 1991).

The impacts of the New Right on the British state (Marsh and Rhodes, 1992; Hay, 1996), and on planning (Allmendinger and Thomas, 1998) have been debated. However, the transformation of British society since the 1980s has presented a series of challenges to the contexts and conditions in which planners work (Thomas, 1998; Campbell and Marshall, 2001; Campbell and Henneberry, 2005):

- The role of the state has been transformed, particularly in relation to a resurgent free market[1] (Clarke, 2004). In planning, the regulation of property and development markets was reassessed (Brindley et al, 1996; Campbell and Marshall, 2001), and has been the subject of consistent calls for liberalisation (Thornley, 1993). At the same time land and property development in England has become increasingly politicised (Tewdwr-Jones, 1999; Murdoch and Abram, 2002)

- Changes to the wider role of the state saw the gradual displacement of the bureau-professional regimes that dominated the post-war state by new managerial regimes (Clarke and Newman, 1997). As part of this, corporatism has displaced the single service departments that were previously a stronghold of professional control in local government (Campbell and Marshall, 2000; 2002).

- This was part of a backlash against the public sector professional groups that worked within the post-war state, including planners and was motivated by a crisis of trust in professional expertise (Schon, 1983; Giddens, 1990; Swain and Tait, 2007), and public choice infused critiques of professionals as self-interested rather than altruistic actors (e.g. Niskanen, 1971). As a result there has been a concerted attempt to hold professionals accountable to the economic consequences of their work, and the needs of clients (re-cast as customers) (Clarke and Newman, 1997).

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[1] In the light of the recession and economic crises of 2008/9 this may be poised to shift again (e.g. Lovering, 2009), although this remains far from clear at the time of writing.

This complex set of changes impacted on the planning profession in a variety of different ways in the 1980s and 1990s:

- Planners *dispersed* in response to a contraction in employment opportunities caused by cuts in public spending, moving outwith the traditional core areas of planning activity (development plan-making and control) and into new areas of local government work, such as economic development and tourism. They also moved into new state agencies created to by-pass local government. In both cases planners' claims to be able to "*get things done*" afforded them new opportunities within the fragmenting state (Thomas, 1998).

- A marked growth in private sector consultancy work saw the steady *privatisation* of the profession throughout the 1990s (ibid; Campbell and Marshall, 2005). This trend accelerated markedly in the 2000s until less than 50% of RTPI members were employed in the public sector (Fyson, 2008). This represents a sea change for a profession whose primary source of employment and identity has been within local government since the creation of the post-war planning system in 1947 (Healey, 1985).

- Planners remaining in the traditional core areas of plan making and development control in the public sector were increasingly subject to *centralisation* of government control over policy, and to managerial regimes that reduced decision-making to the *routinised* pursuit of performance targets (Tewdwr-Jones, 1999; Tewdwr-Jones and Harris, 1998).

- The growth of new funding mechanisms and bodies (e.g. for regeneration) raised further concern at the narrowing of planning into a *residualised*, local government function, with more dynamic challenges increasingly *by-passing* the statutory planning system (Tewdwr-Jones, 2004).

In addition an atmosphere of academic critique of the rational-technical, or modernist bases of planning knowledge (Beauregard, 1989; Healey, 1997; Sandercock, 1998; Fainstein, 2000), and of the effects of planning's claims to professionalism (Hague, 1984; Healey, 1985; Reade, 1987; Low, 1991; Evans, 1993; Evans and Rydin, 1997) has further challenged planning practice. The result has been a pervasive impression that planning and planners have faced a "*paradigm crisis*" (Graham and Marvin, 2001, 110) struggling to retain relevance in a rapidly changing world (for different versions of this widespread sentiment see

e.g. Beauregard, 1989; Sandercock, 1998; LGA, 2001; Allmendinger, 2003; Vigar et al, 2000; DEMOS, 2007).

Modernising narratives: beyond planning's paradigm crisis?

By the late 1990s there was a sense that change was required. This sentiment was, to some extent, shared by both the planning profession's representative bodies, and a New Labour government that had based its broader project in government on the necessity of "modernisation". Below I briefly introduce these three, interrelated modernising narratives, as articulated in relation to: the planning profession, the planning system and policy, and the wider New Labour project.

The planning profession

Based on a sense that it had lost its way in the 1980s and 1990s (e.g. Grant, 1999; RTPI, 2001), the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) has engaged in reforms to reinvent the planning profession. Central to this was the proclamation of a "New Vision" for planning in 2001 (RTPI, 2001a; also, 2009). This has pressed the case for a *"radical evolution"* to steer its members towards a *"new institute"*. The "New Vision" was presented as a re-affirmation of old values, reinterpreted in the light of changing circumstances and new challenges.

This programme of change to the profession has run in parallel to the changed opportunity structures presented by the New Labour government. As part of a broader commitment to the modernisation of the state, New Labour has sought to pursue a wide-ranging set of reforms to the planning system and to planning policy.

The planning system and policy

The government has hailed its reform agenda as a *"fundamental change"* designed to modernise the workings of a system that had become sclerotic (DTLR, 2001). As a result, the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act introduced a new regime of spatial strategies (HMSO, 2004), replacing the system of structure plans and local plans first introduced in 1968. In addition, there has been wholesale and ongoing revision of national planning guidance, and a succession of further reviews of various aspects of the planning system and its operation. The

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government has claimed that the "modernised" planning system will resolve perennial problems related to the speed and flexibility of development plans and decision-making processes (cf. Ward, 2004; Prior, 2005), whilst also enabling planning to achieve a range of other objectives including: integration and joining up of the spatial implications of sectoral policies; improved delivery and customer service; sustainable development; and enhanced community and business involvement in the planning process.

The New Labour project

These goals suggest links between the modernisation of planning and the wider modernisation agenda pursued by New Labour since 1997. This has sought to create a more "joined up" approach to government, better able to meet the needs of business and communities (e.g. Cabinet Office, 1999; Newman, 2001). However, the label "modernisation" has also been a rhetorical means by which New Labour has linked together a wide-ranging set of reforms since 1997 (Finlayson, 2003). Thus the modernisation of planning appears to be coordinated with the wider local government modernisation agenda within which it is embedded, even if in practice there are considerable uncertainties about how this will work (e.g. Allmendinger et al, 2006).

For Finlayson (2003, 67), "modernisation" has performed a range of functions for New Labour: serving as an "*up word*" to give an exciting gloss to processes of change and to render any challenges as automatically conservative and regressive; providing concrete images of what a modernised Britain should be (based on concepts like the knowledge economy); and also acting as a strategy of problematisation – where, by recognising something as in need of modernisation, it is represented as out of step with the modern world.

This range of different uses render the term's meaning elusive, and performative – gaining definition in each moment of its articulation (ibid; Hall, 2003). As such, however, it mirrors the elusive nature of New Labour's ideological orientation (Hall, 2003; Finlayson, 2009), and therefore becomes perhaps the single word that most clearly defines the party's project in government (Finlayson, 2003). The narrative of modernisation, by presenting change as an inevitable response to a changed world, has allowed New Labour to present government as a managerial rather

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than a political challenge. In this way policies are presented as a pragmatic response to externally imposed realities, such as those associated with neoliberal globalization, individualization, or the knowledge economy (ibid; Rustin, 1998; 2007; Fairclough, 2000; Newman, 2001; Levitas, 2004). This depoliticising perspective has been central to the party's *"third way"* attempts to position itself beyond both the old left with its dirigiste connotations, and the anti-state, free market rhetoric of the New Right (Mouffe, 1998; Levitas, 2004).

Reform has therefore been based on a series of narratives that describe a necessary adjustment to the changed realities facing planning, planners, and the wider British state. In planning, this has seen an attempt to articulate a new ideological ethos, better attuned to the challenges of contemporary governance (Peel and Lloyd, 2007).

A new ideological ethos and the awkward subject of the planner

The idea of "spatial planning" has therefore emerged to denote a shift away from the narrow, land-use concern of the 1990s to a new, more holistic role within local governance (Tewdwr-Jones, 2004; Nadin, 2006; RTPI, 2007; ODPM, 2005). Both the government and profession have described modernisation as an opportunity for planners to take on a more proactive and dynamic role (RTPI, 2003a; ODPM, 2005), closer to core values of the profession that were lost in the 1980s and 1990s (e.g. Goodstadt, 2003; Tewdwr-Jones, 2004; Andrews, 2006; Morphet 2007).

As part of this, planning has been implicated within a range of high-profile political agendas, including: delivery of housing to address serious shortages; sustainable (economic) development; local democratic renewal; building sustainable communities; and climate change mitigation and adaptation. However, planning's insertion within these agendas has not always been positive. New Labour has maintained an apparently ambivalent attitude towards land-use regulation, continuing to view it as a barrier to economic competitiveness (see chapter 5 below; Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones, 2000). The new planning system has therefore been marked, in keeping with the wider modernisation agenda in local government (Wilks-Heeg, 2009) and other areas of the public sector (Hall, 2003; Newman, 2001), by the presence of apparently contradictory aims. As such

planning, and planners, have been cast as both a valued partner and *agent* in the shift to modern forms of local governance; but also as a barrier to necessary reform (e.g. in relation to the delivery of housing), and therefore as *objects* requiring modernisation in their own right (cf. Finlayson, 2003; 2009).

Within this complex set of reforms the planner has, then, been a somewhat paradoxical presence. This has been exacerbated by concerns about whether the profession is capable of recruiting and retaining enough planners (Audit Commission, 2006) in the face of an acknowledged image problem (Clifford, 2007, cf. Tewdwr-Jones, 1999); whether the quality and skills of those planners already in the profession is sufficient (Barker, 2006; Glasson and Durning, 2004; ODPM 2004; HMSO, 2008; ASC, 2008; Allmendinger, 2003); or, following years of retrenchment, whether the profession enjoys the status required to make spatial planning work (NPF, 2008; Hylton, 2008). On-going debates have also questioned whether the attitudes and commitment to change of planners is acting as a barrier to the realisation of spatial planning in practice (Tewdwr-Jones, 2004; Richards, 2007; RTPI, 2007; CLG, 2008). This has led to the return of a persistent motif in the history of planning – the need for the profession to attract "the best and brightest" in order to succeed (Barker, 2006; e.g. Schuster, 1950; Keeble, 1961; Eversley, 1973).

In this way, the planner emerges as a subject of considerable concern for the modernisation agenda. As both agent and object of reform, the ability of planners to make the new ideological ethos of spatial planning work in practice becomes important. This raises a series of questions about the changing nature of planning professionalism, and how planners (and particularly those in the public sector who I shall argue have been a particular target for the reforms) have coped with change. It suggests the importance of being attentive to how planners make sense of their practices and negotiate their professional identities in relation to imperatives to be simultaneously modernising and modernised.

This has been particularly apparent in repeated calls for a culture change (Shaw, 2006; Shaw and Lord, 2007). As one government minister suggested:

> *Culture change permeates every single aspect of our approach to planning reform. We have to reform the way we go about planning as well as*

reforming the system itself. Planning is a vehicle which cannot be fixed only by looking at its engine. You need to change the way the machine is driven. (McNulty, 2003)

Changing the culture: towards the new planning and the new planner

The culture change agenda in planning has been described as having various combinations of *"key strands"*, generally entailing: providing a vision and purpose for planning; improving skills and attitudes; raising the profile and improving the image of planning; and ensuring all stakeholders are able to engage with the system (see e.g. Ash, 2002; ODPM, 2002; ODPM, 2004a). The last of these suggests that this agenda requires the cooperation of all actors in the planning process. However, as the idea of *"changing the way the machine is driven"* above implies, there has been a particular focus on professional planners, and especially those in local authorities (the ODPM's (2004a) "Changing the Culture" supplement to *Planning* magazine, for example, only makes reference to public sector planning). Recognition that, *"it will not be possible to deliver the change that is needed without more and better resources and **a different attitude and ways of working** amongst those who operate the system..."* (Ash, 2002, 2, emphasis added) further suggests recognition of the need to change the way planners relate to their roles in order to realise the shift to a modernised planning. However, in keeping with the wider discourse of modernisation, culture change can also be understood to function as a *strategy of problematisation*, containing an implied critique of existing attitudes and ways of working. Moreover, the discourse of culture change, with its roots in the human relations school of management, suggests reasons for caution about accepting an upbeat account of modernisation as an empowering agenda for planners (Alvesson and Svenningsson, 2008; Shaw, 2006).

Culture change and new forms of control in the public sector

The managerial remaking of the state has been fundamental to the successive waves of public sector reform that have been a hallmark of all governments since 1979, and a crucial element of New Labour's agenda. The new public management (NPM) as it came to be known in the 1980s and 1990s (Flynn, 2007) has been most closely associated with the imposition of regimes of target-driven performance management and audit (Cochrane, 2004). In practice, however,

managerialism has been a flexible set of discourses concerned with governing change in the public sector (Clarke et al, 2000; Newman, 2001). Culture change has been an increasingly crucial element of this. Indeed, as I shall go on to argue in chapter 2, it has arguably been expanded under New Labour to constitute a new mode of governance.

The discourse of culture change suggests a concern with fostering commitment to reform rather than simply ensuring compliance to targets and the high-output, low commitment workforce that this relies upon (Newman, 2001; Hoggett, 1996). In particular it has been synonymous with images of transformational leadership in the public sector, and the creation of a cadre of managers committed to the NPM as a means of better delivering public services (Cochrane, 2004; Newman, 2004; 2005). It is in this context that du Gay (1996), for example, has described culture change management in the public sector as an "*identity project*", designed to bring about change in the public service ethos by changing the identities of public servants.

The use of the discourse of culture change in relation to planning reform therefore raises questions about the types of control that *modernisation* has sought to exert over planners. More significantly it suggests planners' identities have been an explicit *object* of reform. This emphasises the need to interrogate how this agenda has been constructed, and how it has impacted on those whose attitudes and practices it has targeted. This is the crux of the empirical problematic that the thesis seeks to investigate - questioning the *metaphors of renaissance* and their empowering rhetoric to assess how planners' identities have been affected by the modernisation of planning.

Aims, contribution and structure of the thesis

This chapter has introduced the empirical problematic that the thesis seeks to explore. It is now possible to identify the aims of the thesis, the contribution I seek to make, and the structure of what follows.

Aims

The discourse of culture change, and its concern with fostering commitment to an "*ideological transformation of the planning ethos*" (Peel and Lloyd, 2007, 4) places

public sector planners in a paradoxical position. It positions them at the heart of the prospects for the modernisation of planning, recognising them as both agents and objects of reform. This then becomes the point of departure for the thesis, raising a series of significant questions about the nature of the modernisation agenda, and its capacity to bring about cultural change in planners' identities. Such questions include: how should we understand the nature of the new ideological ethos, and the culture of the new planning that is claimed to be necessary to modernise planning? What does this change imply for the identities of planners, and their capacity or desire to renew themselves in its image? Has change empowered planners to take on new roles as agents of modernisation?

In order to address these questions the thesis explores the modernisation agenda at two levels. At the national level I aim to assess the construction of the planning reform agenda, how it has sought to reframe planning cultures, and the implications of this for the roles and identities of planners in local authorities. At the local level I then explore how modernisation has been experienced in two local authority planning departments, and whether planners have taken on new identities. In so doing, the thesis seeks to address the following, overarching research question:

Has the modernisation of planning succeeded in articulating a new ideological ethos for planning and empowered planners to take on new, positive professional identities?

Contribution

The thesis therefore seeks to make a distinctive contribution to existing understandings of the modernisation of planning, and to accounts of planning cultures and planners' identities. This contribution can be outlined in two ways – empirical and theoretical.

- Empirically, it aims to inform understandings of the modernising planning agenda. There is an emerging body of work that has sought to interrogate aspects of change in planning under New Labour (e.g. Marshall and Inch, 2009; Doak and Parker, 2005; Cowell and Owens, 2006; Allmendinger and Haughton, 2007; Peel and Lloyd, 2007). However, this remains under-

developed in comparison, for example, to previous work on the New Right (Marshall, 2009). Existing understandings of spatial planning have been shaped by officially funded research (e.g. RTPI, 2007; CLG, 2008), with much work marked by strong normative commitments (Allmendinger, 2006, e.g. Tewdwr-Jones, 2004). As such there is an absence of critically orientated research with an empirical focus on the modernisation of planning.

Whilst there is widespread recognition of the importance of culture change to realise the aspirations of spatial planning (e.g. Tewdwr-Jones, 2004; Shaw, 2006) and of the new roles planners are required to play to make this work (Allmendinger 2003, 77), there is as yet little work that has sought to explore this, or its implications for planners' professional identities. There has been some interest in planners' experience of recent change (Campbell and Marshall, 2001; Tewdwr-Jones, 2003; Clifford, 2006; McClymont, 2006). However, an absence of detailed accounts of such processes has been widely recognised in relation to British planning (Thomas, 1998; Tewdwr-Jones, 2001; Campbell and Marshall, 2005; Healey, 2005; Shaw; 2006). The thesis therefore aims to contribute to empirical understanding of how planners' identities have been affected by these developments, and how they have coped with the exhortation to change themselves.

- Theoretically, the work aims to contribute to the development of a field of study exploring the cultural dimensions of change in the state, and policy; and how planners' professional identities are constructed in relation to policy and professional discourse.

As such it does not aim to provide a comprehensive or instrumentally focused account of the capacity for, or progress of culture change in English planning. Rather it is concerned to expand the metaphor of culture change as an *"identity project"* - using it as a particular lens through which to interrogate and interpret modernisation as an attempt to instil a new ideological ethos. It thus seeks to explore culture change as a particular problematisation of planners' professional identities.

As I shall argue in chapter 2 below, planners' identities have often been an implicit rather than explicit focus of attention within planning theory (Beauregard, 1998). However, in recent years identity has become an increasingly central focus of attention in the social sciences, and particularly in relation to change in the public sector and professions. The thesis therefore seeks to develop the value of identity as a lens through which to understand change in relation to planners.

Structure

The next two chapters develop a conceptual lens through which to assess how planning cultures and planners' identities are governed. Chapter 2 further explores how the managerial discourse of culture change is related to the question of identity, and to exerting control over the identities of workers, and particularly professionals (like planners) working in the public sector. This provides a basis from which it is possible to consider planners' professional identities. Chapter 3 then develops these insights, outlining a conceptual framework through which to interrogate how planners' identities are regulated, and introducing the research questions through which this will be explored. Chapter 4 describes the methodology, and the way the work was carried out. Chapter 5 describes the construction of modernisation at the national level, and the type of change it has sought to engineer in planning cultures and planners' identities. Chapters 6 and 7 then introduce two case studies of local planning cultures, and the experience of the planners working within them. Chapter 8 draws all of this together in relation to the key themes explored in chapters 2 and 3, and chapter 9 presents the overarching conclusions, comments on the suitability of the approach, and makes recommendations for further work.

Figure 1.1 overleaf provides an overview of how the thesis is structured, and its different elements fit together.

Figure 1.1 Outline structure of the thesis

Conceptual framing/ Methodology

Chapter 1
- Introduces empirical problematic and aims

Chapter 2
- Explores the discourse of culture change and its links to questions of identity.
- Assesses the scope for governing culture and identity in the policy process.
- Introduces planners' identities as an object of analysis.

Chapter 3
- Establishes the "*thinking tools*" through which the concepts explored in chapter 2 are operationalised in the empirical work and analysis.
- Sets the research questions to be answered in the empirical chapters.
- Identifies key dimensions of these chapters for later analysis.

Chapter 4
- Describes the methodological approach and how the empirical work was undertaken and analysed.

Empirical chapters

Chapter 5
- Describes and analyses the planning reform agenda at the national level and the attempt to articulate a new ideological ethos to govern planning cultures and planners' identities.

Chapter 6
- Describes and analyses the way in which modernisation has influenced a regulatory planning culture at the local level.

Chapter 7
- Describes and analyses the way in which modernisation has influenced a pro-development planning culture at the local level.

Analysis chapters

Chapter 8
- Develops an integrative analysis of the three empirical chapters (5-7) drawing on analytical categories/ dimensions emerging from the discussion in chapters 2 and 3.

Chapter 9
- Returns to the point of departure for the thesis to address the overarching research question set in chapter 1.
- Discusses the approach adopted, implications of the analysis and suggests directions for further research.

Chapter 2 culture governance and identity regulation in the managerial state

Introduction

Chapter 1 introduced the empirical problematic that the thesis is exploring, arguing that the centrality of culture change to the modernising planning agenda emanated from considerable concern about planners and their ability and willingness to embrace a new ideological ethos. I suggested that the discourse of culture change implies an attempt to manage the identities of planners.

This chapter further elaborates the links between culture change and identity, whilst reviewing relevant literature to assess the possibility of successful culture governance of professional identities in the public sector. Finally, the chapter positions existing understandings of the planner in the context provided by this discussion. In doing so I draw together insights from a range of fields including public administration, the sociology of the professions, politics, policy implementation studies, organisational sociology and cultural and identity theory, as well as planning. This eclectic approach is partly a response to the fecundity of discussion of these issues in recent years, and also their cross-disciplinary nature. As a result, the chapter does not present a traditional literature review focused on one single body of thought, but instead draws together a range of relevant material to answer the question: *how are planners' professional identities constructed in relation to planning cultures and state projects?* The answer to this question forms the basis for the conceptual and analytical framework outlined in chapter 3.

I begin by describing the challenge of managing discretionary spaces within the policy process, and particularly of managing public sector professionals. This provides the context within which it is possible to better situate and understand 'culture change' as a managerial discourse within the state.

Managing the discretionary spaces of the state

The presence of discretionary spaces within the state, and the exercise of agency within them has long been recognised within the study of policy implementation (e.g. Barrett and Fudge, 1981). However, it remains open to question whether the

exercise of discretion is considered a valuable part of the implementation process, or a problem, potentially redirecting the goals of policy (Hill and Hupe, 2002; Meyers and Vorsanger, 2003; Newman, 2004; Hupe and Hill, 2007). In this context Lipsky's (1980) classic account of the role of *street level bureaucrats* in the delivery of public services remains important, focusing attention on the discretionary agency that their roles inevitably afford to front line staff. Studies of the figure of the street level bureaucrat have made a key contribution to understanding the complexity of delivering public services, and the ethical dilemmas faced by public servants (cf. Hoggett, 2006). They have also focused attention on the question of control in the policy process and whether such discretionary spaces can be effectively governed, and the actions of street level workers held accountable. This has highlighted the nature of the state as a *peopled process* (Peck, 2001; Jones, 2008), and the concomitant challenge of managing the motivations of state actors.

In planning, the complexity of policy implementation has been recognised as a key reason for the relative failure of the New Right's agenda (Allmendinger and Thomas, 1998; Allmendinger, 2003), with professional planners understood as a source of resistance to the deregulatory, and market-directed thrust of neoliberal reform (Campbell and Henneberry, 2005). Implementation theory therefore suggests the potential for public sector professionals to resist or redirect policy goals to which they are not committed (Fassauer and Schirmer, 2008; Thomas and Davies, 2005)

Governments have therefore been particularly concerned to control what Clarke and Newman (1997) describe as state-bureau professions: those professional groups, including planners, who found a primary source of employment in the post-war state (cf. Hoggett, 1996; Reade, 1987). Clarke and Newman suggest that the post-war state was founded on a series of settlements (political-economic, social, and organisational), which underpinned the relative stability of the welfare state (cf. Hay, 1996)[2]. The concept of bureau-professionalism is intended to capture the tension between professionalism and bureaucracy that defined the organisational settlement.

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[2] This is not to posit the existence of an unproblematic consensus, but to recognise the relative stability and durability of the principles that defined the role of the state from the early 1950s-early 1970s.

Controlling state bureau-professions

Traditionally, claims to professionalism were founded on the personalisation, in the figure of the professional, of the expertise to tackle complex tasks. As such the autonomy of professionals to control their immediate work setting, and of professions to regulate their members' behaviour has been a central goal of professionalism (Larson, 1977; Friedson, 1994). In contrast Weber's (2006, cf. Hoggett, 1996) ideal-typical bureaucracy stresses the importance of accountability through a clearly ordered hierarchy, and of an impersonal body of rules ensuring clearly defined powers.

Clarke and Newman (1997) therefore suggest that the organisational settlement was a "*field of tensions*" between these different modes of control. The public interest was to be guaranteed by a commitment to bureaucratic neutrality and chains of accountability, and the expert-led pursuit of an enhanced public good embodied in the figure of the professional. Whilst the nature of the co-articulation between bureaucracy and professionalism varied across the post-war state (reflecting the relative power of the interests involved), particular tensions were commonly centred on the nature of professional autonomy and discretion within bureaucratic structures (Clarke and Newman, 1997). For Hoggett (1994) this meant that the post-war state, characterised by this "*uneasy marriage*", was an organisational "*mongrel*".

Within local government, Laffin and Young (1990) suggest such tensions were in part intentional. The professional's 'cosmopolitan' commitment to their vocation was a counterweight to local interests in the determination of policy. They also suggest that the tensions between professionalism and bureaucratic management were often easily resolved, with professions in local government coming to accept bureaucratically structured career paths entailing promotion into managerial positions (cf. Larson, 1977). Johnson (1972) labels such professions "*mediative*", where the power to define the terms of conduct of practice and economic rewards are mediated by a third party (here the state).

Though planning has perhaps not functioned in a particularly bureaucratic manner (Thomas, 1998), there were nonetheless tensions concerning the extent to which bureaucratisation, and the need to provide the personnel required by the new

system, challenged the creative autonomy embodied in the independent planning consultants who had hitherto provided planning expertise (Cherry, 1974; also, Stansfield, 1981). In practice, however, the profession benefited greatly from adaptation to the requirements of the state, coming to accept the career structures that this implied (Thomas, 1998; Laffin and Young, 1990). This included a strong ethos of public service founded on the political neutrality of the professional as an expert advisor to elected decision-makers (Campbell and Marshall, 2000).

The presence of both state and professional modes of control within a "*field of tensions*" suggests the complexity of efforts to regulate professional labour within the state. In keeping with the wider complexity of all street level bureaucracy (cf. Lipsky, 1980; Meyers and Vorsanger, 2003; Hupe and Hill, 2007), this is exacerbated by the difficulty of defining the clients to whom many public services are directed. It has been convincingly argued that it is extremely difficult to identify a single client that public sector planners serve through their work, and that their purpose is rather defined in relation to the creation of broader, collectively consumed, public goods (McLoughlin, 1973; Kitchen, 1991; Campbell and Marshall, 2000; 2001; 2005).

Discretion in decision-making has been a fundamental principle of the English planning system since 1947 (Healey, 1985; Thomas, 1998). This affords planners space to make choices between different clients, thereby potentially shaping policy outcomes independently of political control. The discretion within professional roles to identify with, or bend formal rules in favour of particular clients is at the centre of attempts to control professional labour and render it accountable.

Challenges to bureau-professionalism

The question of how to control professional discretion within the state has therefore been a long-standing tension within public administration (Hoggett, 1996; Cochrane, 2000). The relative stability of the post-war settlements was sustained by the field of tensions between professional expertise, and bureaucratic accountability to political authority. The new public management (NPM), however, represented a sustained challenge to these bureau-professional regimes (Clarke and Newman, 1997). This was intimately related to the political project of the New Right (Clarke and Newman, 1997; Clarke et al, 2000; Clarke, 2004). Under the

Conservative governments of Margaret Thatcher and John Major, the state and its employees were represented as a barrier to the entrepreneurial values required of more effective and efficient government.

In Le Grand's (1997) terms this involved ascribing changed meaning to the motivations of public servants. From being seen as public-spirited altruists or *knights*, they increasingly came to be represented as self-interested *knaves*. Drawing on public choice theoretical understandings of human behaviour, public sector bureaucracies were described as "capturing" control of state agencies to maximise their own power and influence rather than serving the public good, or political authority (Niskanen, 1971; Dunleavy, 1991). Public sector bureaucracies therefore became stigmatized as synonymous with waste, inefficiency and unnecessary red tape (Clarke and Newman, 1997).

This attack was applied equally to public sector professionalism, and coincided with strands of critique emerging from the sociology of the professions. Traditional accounts of the professions had stressed the role of professionalism in functionalist terms as a normative value system, working altruistically in the public interest to provide socially necessary expertise (e.g. Parsons, 1951; Evetts, 2003). In the 1970s, however, such accounts came under attack for uncritically reinforcing the professions' own self-serving justification of their status and privilege (Johnson, 1972; Larson, 1977). Post-functionalist analyses have therefore stressed that professionalism works as a form of occupational control, with professions securing and seeking to defend a *"market shelter"* for the services of their members, and the autonomy to define the standards of their training, practice and conduct (Larson, 1977; MacDonald, 1995; Fournier, 1999).

Larson's (1977, xii) conception of the professional project has been particularly influential in this regard. The concept was her response to the question, *"what do professions actually do to negotiate and maintain their special position?"* It describes the attempt by occupational groups to translate scarce knowledge and cultural resources into securely institutionalised forms of reward. As a result Evetts (2003, 2006) suggests that accounts of professionalism as a normative value system came to be replaced by accounts of professionalism as ideology, or of exclusionary power as the central logic of professionalism (cf. MacDonald, 1995; Murphy, 1990).

Thus, professions are understood to negotiate regulative bargains with the state, which effectively licenses professional control over particular fields of expertise (Larson, 1977; 1990; MacDonald, 1995). As Johnson (1993, 1995) suggests, this has been predicated on a symbiotic relationship between the state and the professions, whose expertise has played a crucial role in the construction of modern forms of rule, and the technologies through which populations are governed.

These critical arguments have been influential in relation to understandings of the planning profession (Campbell and Marshall, 2005). The impacts of post-war planning on British cities and their populations have been seen as evidence of the ideological nature of planning professionalism. Critics have consistently questioned the profession's claims to ownership of a unique body of expertise, or to be capable of defining, let alone practising in, the public interest (e.g. Glass, 1959; Foley, 1960; Hague, 1984; Healey, 1985; Reade, 1987; Low, 1991; Evans, 1993; Evans and Rydin, 1997). Planning professionalism has therefore been described as a form of "*corporatist bargain*" (Reade, 1987), sustaining employment opportunities within the state in return for providing a technocratic and depoliticising legitimation of state intervention in land-use and property markets (ibid; Low, 1991).

This context of dissatisfaction with state bureaucracies and professionalism, gave added power to the New Right's attack on the bureau-professional organisational settlement. Johnson (1993, 1995) suggests the election of the first Thatcher government led to a re-politicisation of the state-professional relationship, and a concerted governmental effort to redefine its terms. As an example he quotes Keith Joseph, a key figure in the development of the New Right project, attributing a litany of negative impacts to planning and questioning the expertise of planners and architects to make decisions about land-use with more authority than the public. This symbolizes a loss of trust in the profession's claims to embody the expertise to act in the public interest (Schon, 1983; Giddens, 1990; Swain and Tait, 2007). As Johnson notes, this represented a point of rupture in the settlement between the state and the planning profession. Whilst, as I suggested in chapter 1 above, the impacts of the New Right on planning have been debated, the legitimacy of planners' traditional core activities in local government was

undoubtedly challenged, and planning's purpose was re-assessed at this time (see chapter 3 below; Thornley, 1993; Campbell and Marshall, 2001).

For Clarke and Newman (1997) managerialism provided the ideological resources through which the New Right sought to transform the state. They suggest that the unravelling of the political-economic and social settlements in the 1980s and 1990s was felt in the increasingly strained public sector and its organisational culture. The emergence of the "managerial state" can therefore be understood as:

> *A cultural formation and a distinctive set of ideologies and practices which form one of the underpinnings of an emergent political settlement* (Clarke and Newman, 1997, ix)

This sought to redirect flows of power within the state in order to control costs and make professionals accountable to new regimes of control amidst a widespread mistrust of their motives, influence on policy and perceived resistance to the government's neoliberal agenda (Hoggett, 1996; Clarke, 2004; Shaw, 2006; Fassauer and Schirmer, 2008).

Culture change as a discourse of managerial control at a distance

As suggested in chapter 1 above, the NPM has therefore been most closely associated with what Pollitt (1993) describes as *"neo-Taylorist"* management strategies. These have been focused on getting 'more for less' through the top-down measurement of performance, centralising control over inputs whilst devolving responsibility to managers to deliver results (Hoggett, 1996). This has been based on a low commitment and low trust understanding of public servants (ibid.). However, the extent of public sector borrowings from private sector managerial thinking has been considerably more pervasive than such a focus allows (cf. Pollit, 1997; Cochrane, 2000). It is in this context that the discourse of 'culture change' has been increasingly central to processes of change in the public sector (Newman, 2001; Shaw, 2006).

Unlike the often authoritarian and confrontational use of performance targets, or imposition of internal markets, culture change has more positive connotations, suggesting an attempt to gain the commitment of workers to processes of change

(Cochrane, 2004). It is therefore instructive to consider the nature of culture change and the types of managerial control it entails.

Alvesson and Sveningsson (2008) suggest that organisational culture was "*discovered*" from the late 1970's onwards in a series of texts by management 'gurus' working within the human relations school of management thought (e.g. Peters and Waterman, 1982; Kanter, 1985). This was founded on critiques of bureaucracy as a form of organisation that stifled the creative capacities of the workforce through the rigid definition of formal roles and rules (du Gay, 1996a, 2000). The dominance of the bureaucratic ethos was associated with unimaginative compliance with rigid, organisational hierarchies, ill-suited to fostering the dynamism required of organisations competing in the new capitalism.

This was based on a particular reading of Max Weber's seminal account of the bureau, emphasising the development of a rationalised "*iron cage*" that led workers to understand only a limited part of an organisation's work (ibid; Weber, 2006). Thus organisational 'excellence' came to be associated with a romantic conception of emancipating employees, freeing their innate creative capacities to identify fully with organisational goals (Stokes and Clegg, 2002). As such, organisational culture was understood, "*to structure the way people think, feel and act in organizations*" (du Gay, 1996a, 151). Culture therefore came to be seen as something an organisation *has*, a variable to be manipulated to regulate the relationship between organisational goals and the attitudes and dispositions of workers (Alvesson and Wilmott, 2002; Stapley, 1996, Newman, 1996).

The turn to organisational culture thus raises questions about how managerial regimes seek to govern employees' identities. Regulation of the relationship between the organisation and the individual has therefore become recognised as a key site of change and contestation (Alvesson and Wilmotts 2002; Maravelias 2003, Bergstrom and Knights 2006; Alvesson and Svenningsson 2008). As du Gay (1996a: 152) suggests:

> *This focus on 'culture' as a means of producing a particular relationship to self amongst members of an enterprise suggests that its deployment as a governmental technique is intimately bound up with questions of identity.*

Within organisations, Alvesson and Wilmott (2002, 7) suggest that attempts to engender a match between employee subjectivity and organisational values and goals can be, *"read as expressions of an increased managerial interest in regulating employees 'insides' – their self-image, their feelings and identifications"*. Drawing on the wider salience of questions of identity within the social sciences (e.g. du Gay et al, 2000), this has led to a proliferation of interest in how identities are produced at work (e.g. Alvesson and Wilmott, 2002; Alvesson et al, 2008; Gleadle et al, 2008).

Within the public sector, the discourse of culture change was initially associated with attempts to engender commitment to managerial methods and new goals amongst managers. This was premised on the pursuit of more entrepreneurial styles of government, devolving power to managers to deliver results (e.g. Osborne and Gaebler, 1993). Managers were offered new roles as transformational leaders, able to inspire staff and shape more responsive services in the interests of customers/ users/ local communities (Keen and Scase, 1998; Cochrane, 2004; Newman, 2001; 2004; 2005). This secured the commitment of many public sector managers, offering a more positive self-image than that of the rule-bound bureaucrat (Pollitt, 1993; Clarke and Newman, 1997; Cochrane, 2004; Newman, 2004).

In this context du Gay (1996; 1996a; 2000) has described public sector managerialism as a project designed to change the identities of public servants. Drawing on the Foucauldian concept of governmentality (Foucault, [1978] 1991), and its subsequent development (e.g. Burchell et al, 1991; Rose and Miller, 1992; Rose, 1999; Dean, 1999), du Gay suggests that the discourse of *"enterprise"* has become increasingly hegemonic in both the private and public sectors. This constitutes a 'regime of truth' in which claims to virtue are assessed by their relation to enterprise and the values it valorizes. He further suggests that the *"culture of enterprise"* affords an *"ontological priority"* to certain personae, particularly that of the entrepreneur, establishing this as the *"dominant type"*. Thus managerialism has been a cultural project designed to foster *"enterprising subjects"*. As such, this represents the extension of organisational control into the realm of culture whereby:

The capacity of these actors to act or make choices is not their intrinsic
property but an effect of their relationship with the state in which they are
both empowered and disciplined (Clarke and Newman, 1997, 29)

This involves the exercise of governance at a distance (cf. Rose and Miller, 1992),
involving the power to manage the *"conduct of conduct"*, and thereby to shape
subjects in line with the governing rationality of enterprise (Foucault, 1991;
Gordon, 1991):

Those at the centre do not relinquish their overall powers by constituting
newly autonomous subjects as long as they retain control over the
environment in which actors act autonomously (du Gay, 2000, 101).

Du Gay is critical of the implications of this discursive 'regime', seeing the rise of
entrepreneurial leaders in the public sector as a threat to underappreciated
bureaucratic values. In particular he suggests managerialism has challenged the
traditional public service ethos (PSE) where individual interests and goals are
subordinated to concern for probity and accountability (Du Gay 2000, 2005,
Hoggett 2006). Others too recognise the pursuit of market-based models of
efficiency as an insidious narrowing of the purpose of public service (e.g. Clarke,
2004; Hoggett, 2005; Needham, 2006).

Thus culture change is a governmental technique concerned with fostering
commitment to change, and constituting actors as autonomous subjects aligned
with a particular cultural or ideological ethos (Dean, 1999). Given the widespread
perception of the NPM as a direct challenge to state bureau-professionalism,
however, the use of the discourse of culture change in relation to the planning
profession raises further questions, and suggests an expansion of the logic of
culture change within the state.

Culture change and culture governance in the differentiated polity

This reflects the recent shift in public administration towards more collaborative
forms of networked governance (Kooiman, 1993; Rhodes, 1997; Pierre and
Peters, 2000; Newman, 2001). The *"governance narrative"* (Rhodes, 2000)
stresses that contemporary states have become increasingly difficult to govern as
they have become more complex. Authority has therefore fragmented within what

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Rhodes (1997) describes as the *"differentiated polity"*. As such governments have become increasingly reliant on networked forms of co-ordination or governance as opposed to hierarchical government, or market-based mechanisms for achieving the goals of public policy (Jessop, 2000).

Governance theory understands the capacity for governmental control in terms of *"resource dependencies"* (e.g. Rhodes, 1993; cf. Newman, 2004). This suggests the importance of ensuring the cooperation and commitment of a range of actors to ensure policy implementation. In this context, culture is seen as a means of steering public action, and managing change within the differentiated polity (Bang, 2004). This principle of *"culture governance"*, suggests governments must foster widespread commitment to change by creating a cultural/ ideological framework within which shared understandings can be framed (Pollitt, 1997; 6, 1998; Bang, 2004).

This has been reflected in New Labour's programme of state modernisation (Bang, 2004; Finlayson, 2003, 2009). Finlayson (2003; 2009), for example, suggests that New Labour's managerial approach to government has focused on fostering new autonomous subject-positions for citizens (c.f. Giddens, 1998; Rose, 1999; Vidler and Clarke; 2005). As Newman (2004; 2005) argues, however, calls for public servants to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the third way approach to governance suggest similar forms of culture governance *within* the state. The proliferation of culture change initiatives under New Labour can be seen as an example of this principle at work.

New Labour's "third way" approach to governing has drawn on elements of governance theory (Newman, 2001; Bevir, 2003; Finlayson, 2003), at times stressing the need for more collaborative forms of policy-making (Larson et al, 2007), and for the support of the public sector workforce in modernising the state. Discourses of partnership working, joined-up government, evidence-based policy-making, and empowerment of local communities have appealed to many public sector workers (Newman, 2001). These promised a shift away from the neoliberalism of the New Right, offering a more positive role for the public sector following its stigmatisation in the 1980s and 1990s (ibid; in planning see e.g. Rydin and Thornley, 2002).

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However, New Labour's courting of the commitment of public sector professionals has been at best uneven and, in significant respects, they have continued to view the state, and public sector workforce, with considerable suspicion (Taylor-Gooby, 2000; Newman, 2001; Jones, 2001; Finlayson, 2003; Hall, 2003; Hoggett et al, 2006; Barton, 2008). As Toynbee and Walker (2001, 218) suggest, "*carping* [about the public sector] *came to Blairite lips more easily than praise*". This is perhaps most clearly exemplified by Tony Blair's claim that he "*bore the scars*" of struggles with public sector workers (quoted by Taylor-Gooby, 2000, 331). Indeed, New Labour has apparently viewed the presence of a policy implementation gap as a symbol of forces of conservatism and wilful resistance to necessary modernisation. As a result the party has remained wedded to central control, including the continued and expanded use of performance targets (e.g. Rawnsley, 2001; Stoker, 2002; Newman, 2001).

Figure 2.1 Models of change

(adapted from Newman, 2001, 34)

Newman (2001) suggests that public sector professionals have been subject to a range of different discourses under New Labour, each of which suggests quite different forms of control, and means of managing the modernisation process. Figure 2.1 provides a model of the different types of change that modernisation has pursued. This might be considered part of a pragmatic, 'what matters is what

works' approach to government, or as a 'belt and braces' approach to guaranteeing policy "*delivery*" (New Labour's version of the language of implementation) (Newman, 2001). Stoker (2002) suggests it has been part of a deliberate strategy of "*governance by lottery*", designed to manage change through disharmony. It also, however, suggests a series of tensions between different types of change. Thus, the discourse of culture change suggests concern for fostering commitment and trust between government and the professions (located somewhere in the top left hand quadrant of the figure), yet this appears to be undermined by a concern for standardisation, central control and targets (the bottom half of the figure), which suggests a more coercive model of change. Empowerment of the professions meanwhile seems to sit uneasily alongside discourses of local empowerment (top right), participation and partnership that suggest a challenge to the traditional authority of professionals. As a result Newman argues that the impacts of modernisation on state bureau-professionals has been uneven and difficult to assess, and the promotion of forms of networked governance has sat uneasily alongside the continued use of market and hierarchy in a complex overlay of different regimes of control.

The expansion of the managerial logic of culture change into a principle of culture governance suggests a concern to expand control by fostering ideological commitment to modernisation through regulation of professional identities. The unevenness with which this has been pursued, however, suggests the need for research to assess how modernisation has been experienced and understood by public servants. In the next section I therefore review the growing literature investigating how this complex change environment has impacted on state bureau-professions, and what this suggests for the possibility of culture change in planning.

Changing constructions of professionalism in the modernising state

Larson (1990), drawing on the work of Foucault (1978; 1982; 1991a), usefully conceptualises professions as institutions that seek to control a particular "field" of expertise. At the centre of this field, authoritative discourse is produced, which, following Foucault, disciplines the practices of actors within it. This allows the question of professional autonomy to be thought as a question of control over the professional field.

Managerialism, conceived as a politically driven attack on professional autonomy, can therefore be conceived as an attempt to colonise professional fields with a new disciplinary logic derived from a market-based rationality (Clarke, 2004; Maton, 2005; Sennett, 2005). Thus, studies have viewed managerialism as driving processes of deskilling and deprofessionalisation of professional labour through the imposition of performance management regimes (Ferlie et al, 1996; Exworthy and Halford, 1999; Jones, 2001; Stronach et al, 2002; Gleeson and Knights, 2006). This has highlighted the narrowing of professional performances to managerially circumscribed forms of accountability (Ball, 2001; Ranson, 2003), raising concerns about the psychic costs on professionals as they seek to retain commitment to their work (Hoggett et al, 2006). The NPM has perhaps had a relatively limited impact on planning in comparison to other local government services (Thomas, 1998; Cullingworth and Nadin, 2002). However, performance targets have been understood to threaten the quality of decision-making by their emphasis on speed (Carmona and Sieh, 2008), and to reduce discretion by centralising control (Tewdwr-Jones and Harris, 1998; Tewdwr-Jones, 1999; 2002).

Overall, managerialism has contributed to the revision of the critical orthodoxy within the sociology of the professions, with professionals increasingly sympathised with as subject to inappropriate forms of control, and conceptions of their motivations. As such, professionalism has been reappraised as a form of occupational control distinct from the dominance of economic rationalities (Friedson, 1994; Campbell and Marshall, 2005), suggesting that professional self-interest and the public interest may not be inherently antagonistic, and restoring the possibility of altruistic motivations to professionals (Evetts, 2003).

However, as Laffin and Young (1990) argue, state bureau-professional projects, including that of planning, have a long history of accommodation to employment within changing organisational settings. As such the deprofessionalisation thesis has proven difficult to establish (Laffin and Entwistle, 2000). Whilst there has been considerable interest in how the public sector professions have adjusted to these changes, the picture that emerges is uneven. There have been significant differences in the extent to which professionals have been subjected to new forms of control, and to which this has been perceived as an attack on their autonomy (Halford and Leonard, 1999; Jones, 2001; Furbey et al, 2001; Dent and

Whitehead, 2001; Stronach et al, 2002; Newman and Nutley, 2003; Dent et al, 2004), amidst a general tendency for the concept of professionalism itself to become disciplined by ideas derived from the managerial legitimation of business values (Fournier, 1999; Evetts, 2003; 2006). Managerialism has therefore led variously to the incorporation of professionals within managerial regimes, the recapture of professional control, or a tense settlement between managerial and professional authority (Exworthy and Halford, 1999; Malin, 2000; Newman and Nutley, 2003; Dent and Barry, 2004).

Towards network professionalism

New Labour's endorsement of the language of network governance has, meanwhile, been conceived as both an opportunity and a further challenge for professions. Discourses of joined-up government have decentred the authority of professional expertise to define and resolve policy problems, and accelerated the breakdown of the traditional departmental approach to policy making in local government (Laffin and Entwistle, 2000; 6, 1998a). Instead there has been an emphasis on forms of deliberative policy-making, working across disciplinary boundaries, with the participation of actors from the public, private and voluntary sectors. However, these discourses may also present new opportunities. Furbey et al (2001) argue that the weak basis of housing professionalism, and a subsequent openness to new discourses and practices may have positioned housing professionals to be empowered as *network professionals*.

In response to the perceived crisis of modernist or rational-technical planning knowledge, a similar body of thought has been influential in planning. The emergence of communicative or collaborative planning theory (CPT) has been based on an acceptance that planners' claims to embody a unique body of knowledge are untenable, based on the ideological defence of professional privilege, and have had a negative effect on the excluded or marginalised voices and knowledges of the planned (Healey, 1997; Sandercock, 1998; Forester, 1999).

As such CPT has effectively decentred the professional expert within planning processes (cf. Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger, 1998), suggesting a role for the planner as a facilitator, drawing together a wide range of different stakeholders

including traditionally marginalised voices (Healey, 1997; Sandercock, 1998; Forester, 1999). CPT therefore emphasises the plurality of interests in contemporary societies, and seeks to re-constitute the 'public interest' through inclusive, deliberative debate (Fainstein, 1999; Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003; Campbell and Marshall, 2002).

This has been the subject of considerable critical scrutiny within planning (e.g. IJURR, 1999; Healey, 2003), including questions about whether it is achievable in practice (Tewdwr-Jones and Thomas, 1998; McGuirk, 2001), or likely to win the support of planning professionals (Campbell and Marshall, 1998; 2000; 2001; Tewdwr-Jones, 2001). Despite these concerns, however, it has become a powerful dimension of attempts to reinvent the ideological ethos of planning. As Imrie (1999) and Sager (2008) note, CPT's focus on a process-led planning suggests points of convergence with a managerial approach to local governance. More particularly, as I shall argue in chapter 5 below, there are strong resonances between this vision of planning practice and New Labour's language of participatory governance. As such 'network professionalism' suggests a means of re-working the state-professional pact in planning and re-affirming the legitimacy of planning professional practice (Imrie, 1999; McClymont, 2006; Swain and Tait, 2007).

Assessing the changing structure of professional fields

The ways in which state bureau-professional 'fields' are constructed in relation to changing regimes of control, has therefore become a particular focus of attention (Malin, 2000; Fournier, 2000; Maton, 2005). This has emphasised that professional fields are flexibly constructed, adjusting to new pressures both internally and externally, through negotiation of the boundaries of professional activity (Fournier, 2000; Malin, 2000; Newman and Nutley, 2003). Professional projects may therefore be capable of adapting to new forms of control whilst retaining or even enhancing their status (Fournier, 2000; Furbey et al, 2001).

In the case of planning, however, autonomy over the professional field has long been heavily mediated (Johnson, 1972). Healey and Underwood (1979) argued that planners' chief claim to legitimacy was based on being able to get things done through the statutory planning system. In recent years, this "can do" approach may

have opened up opportunities in other areas of local government activity (Thomas, 1998), but has remained the basis of planners' professionalism (cf. McClymont, 2006). As Campbell and Marshall (2005) argue, in the context of an increasingly centralised planning polity (Tewdwr-Jones, 2002), the centre of the discursive field of planning therefore resides with policy-makers and the 'policy community' of lobbying interests working at the national level. The profession should therefore be considered one voice, and not always a particularly influential one (Thomas, 1998), within a wider policy network through which authoritative discourse is produced. Laffin and Entwistle (2000; cf. Laffin, 1998) suggest that similar patterns of change have also affected other bureau-professions, leading to an increase in the distance between "professional communities" working at the national level, and the "rank and file" of practitioners.

Concern for the restructuring of control over the professions, has, however, led to a focusing of particular interest on the ways in which bureau-professional identities are constructed (e.g. Halford and Leonard, 1999; Dent and Whitehead, 2001; Dent and Barry, 2001; Stronach et al, 2002; Newman and Nutley, 2003; Beck and Young, 2005; Gleeson and Knights, 2006; Hoggett et al, 2006). These studies have focused attention on what Evetts (2003; 2006) suggests has been a partly under-developed element of the sociology of the professions – the work that professions do to, "*produce the producers*" (Larson, 1977). In relation to the discussion above, it suggests a focus on the autonomy of individual practitioners at a micro-level within the disciplinary matrix of the professional field, where, following Foucault (1982, 1991a) discourse works to 'make up' particular subject positions within which actors come to understand themselves.

Understanding professional identities in the modernising state

Since, in Johnson's (1972, 45) terms, "*a profession is not an occupation but a means of controlling a profession*", the production of appropriate professional identities can be considered one of the central powers that professions' seek to exercise (Friedson, 1994; Halford and Leonard, 1999; Evetts, 2003). This is achieved through various regulatory mechanisms that work to generate commitment to a particular ideological ethos, producing a sense of common purpose, understanding and expertise. These mechanisms include education, training, membership of professional associations and peer networks professional

and socialization in the workplace (Evetts, 2003; on the latter in planning see Thomas, 2004).

Halford and Leonard (1999) suggest that two accounts of the relationship between work and identity have dominated the sociology of the professions and the wider sociology of work (cf. Alvesson and Wilmott, 2002). The first sees work as largely determining of identity. Such accounts emphasise the power of workplace discipline to produce distinctive identities. The second approach, by contrast, has tended to emphasise how actors exercise agency, giving expression to a deeper sense of self through their work. Professional labour has typically been understood in terms derived from the second approach, as a vocational commitment through which professionals are able to express deeply held values. The public service ethos (PSE), resting on the sacrifice of personal interest, contains elements of both, personal commitment to the PSE shaping a willingness to commit to the impersonal logic of *"obligatory action"* through which the public interest is guaranteed (March and Olsen, 1989; Pratchett and Wingfield, 1995; du Gay, 2000; Needham, 2006; Hoggett, 2006).

In reviewing literature on the influence of managerialism on public sector identities, however, Halford and Leonard are wary of accounts that stress the power of new discourses to effectively re-make work identities. In particular, they suggest that du Gay's (1996, 1996a, 2000) account of the hegemonic discourse of *"enterprise"* ascribes an overly deterministic power to the new managerialism and the deployment of *"culture governance"* (cf. Fournier and Grey, 1999). This stems in part from the "thin" conception of the human agent implicit within the governmentality approach du Gay adopts, and its particular concern with the deployment of technologies of government rather than their effects (see chapter 3 below; Rose et al, 2006).

Drawing on wider developments in cultural and identity theory, and particularly the work of Stuart Hall (1996), Halford and Leonard (1999) suggest the need for an account that better recognises the agency of actors in relation to structuring forces. They emphasise the presence of multiple competing discourses or regimes, and the capacity of actors to articulate identification with, or resist certain of these discourses in negotiating their sense of professional self. This suggests a

conception of identity as the negotiated outcome of the interaction between structure and agency.

In similar terms, Stronach et al (2002), suggest that nurses and teachers are involved in an "*uncertain politics*" of professionalism, appealing to the different forms of "warrant" that legitimise their professional identities. Some of these are derived from "*economies of performance*" (top-down or "outside-in" forms of control, e.g. central prescription, performance targets) and some emerge from "*ecologies of practice*" (bottom-up, or inside-out forms of motivation drawing on personal and inter-personal values and commitments). They suggest that professional identities are increasingly fragmented as they are continually re-negotiated between a sense of self that is "true" to professed values, and the realities of practice and the "roles" or subject positions that they must perform in response to these obligations[3]. Different actors therefore understand processes of change in different ways as they negotiate their identities at work, in response to tensions between the different, and often contradictory, demands placed upon them.

Gleeson and Knights (2006) argue that professionals are involved in an ongoing process of mediation between structuring imperatives and their own micro-political agency as they negotiate their professional identities. The discretionary spaces that mark professional practice in the state can therefore be used to mediate and redefine demands for particular kinds of 'performance' in line with personal, professional, or other ethical commitments (cf. Hoggett, 2005; Hoggett et al, 2006). Newman (2004; 2005) further argues that the complex overlay of different regimes within the contemporary state (bureau-professional, managerial, network governance) creates interpretive space within which actors can exercise agency to shape a distinctive identity. This suggests that the discretionary spaces within the state limit the capacity for effective culture governance. As a result, professionals may forge identities rooted in resistance to new discourses or forms of control (Halford and Leonard, 1999; Taylor-Gooby, 2000; Jones 2001; Fleming and Spicer, 2003; Thomas and Davies, 2005), or may embrace the possibilities

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[3] "Role theory" (e.g. Goffman, 1959) has now been largely superseded by the study of identity, where the idea of a stable core of the "self" standing behind various roles has been challenged by anti-essentialist conceptions of identity (see chapter 3 below). However, in relation to the workplace, the idea of roles, as organisationally available subject positions, retains a continued validity (Simpson and Carroll, 2008). Roles are incorporated into identities when actors identify with and internalise them (Castells, 1996, 6-12).

presented by change either wholly or selectively (Furbey et al, 2001; Newman and Nutley, 2003; Newman, 2004).

Culture change as identity regulation

This conception of identity is mirrored by literature on the possibility of securing cultural change within organisations, where a large body of literature insists on the complexity of any effort to remake organisational cultures (Schein, 1992; Shaw, 2006; Alvesson and Svenningsson, 2008). This suggests culture is something an organisation *is*, rather than *has*, a complex web of relational resources through which people make sense of organisational life (McLean and Marshall quoted in Newman, 1996; Stapley, 1996; Abram, 2004). Such accounts draw on a more anthropological understanding of culture (e.g. Geertz, 1973), emphasising the richness of organisational life, including the likely presence of multiple sub-cultures or *"communities of practice"* (Wenger, 1998) that interpret and potentially mediate attempts to govern organisational life.

Schein's (1992) influential account, for example, suggests that organisational culture works on three inter-related levels (cf. Shaw, 2006; Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2008). *Governing assumptions*, are the basic underlying core of an organisation's culture, encompassing taken-for-granted beliefs about the nature of the organisation, and its relation to its external environment. These are the underlying and therefore unspoken beliefs that guide organisational behaviour. *Values* meanwhile operate at a more conscious level, these are the norms that define what principles the organisation espouses. Finally, *artefacts* are visible, symbolic manifestations of the organisation expressed both physically and verbally. In Schein's schema cultural change is difficult to achieve, as it must percolate through from artefacts to values before finally reaching the deeper level of assumptions.

Alvesson and Wilmott (2002) provide a useful overview of this in relation to the production of workplace identities. They suggest that discourses like 'culture change' can be understood as forms of *"identity regulation"*. However, they go on to caution against any assumption that identity-regulating discourses determine the self-identity of workers. Rather they introduce a further metaphor:

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...the employee as identity worker who is enjoined to incorporate the new managerial discourses into narratives of self-identity (ibid, 7).

They propose a conception of occupational identity as the outcome of processes of negotiation (*"identity work"*) between different forms of structuring power (identity regulation) and the wide variety of different resources workers draw on in shaping their sense of self at work (agency). This schema is represented in figure 2.2, providing a means of understanding the complex and ongoing processes through which occupational identities are negotiated. Identity work therefore constitutes a moment of mediation between structure and agency, where workers employ a range of different coping strategies to shape and manage their sense of self at work.

Figure 2.2 Identity regulation, identity work and self-identity

(from Alvesson and Wilmott, 2002)

Coping with identity work

Whilst "identity work" in the state may impact on the implementation of policy through re-interpretation of goals, the negotiation of identity is also an important means by which professionals, and other state employees, cope with the dilemmatic nature of their work (Hoggett et al, 2006; Miller, et al 2006; Abram, 2004). The negotiation of a professional identity is therefore a means of navigating, *"the assaults on the ego which the structure of street level work normally delivers"* (Lipsky, 1980, 152). This requires a "thicker" view of actors as committed and engaged rather than a "thin" conception of rational agents pursuing

their own interests (Hoggett, 2001; 2005; Newman, 2004). The forging of a distinctive self-identity therefore becomes a way of coping with the different demands that are made of professionals, whilst seeking to retain commitment to the values and motivations underlying professional practice (Abram, 2004; Sennett, 2005; Hoggett et al, 2006; Miller et al, 2006).

This negotiation may be more or less possible in any given context. Jessop (2004) for example suggests that actors need to be capable of an ironic rather than cynical detachment from the work of governing, accepting the likelihood of failure whilst continuing to act as though success were possible. Wood (2003) argues, in similar terms, that actors can cultivate a reflexive, "*inner distance*" that allows them to remain committed to normative values, even where these are distant from actual practices. This suggests a capacity to be *in* but not *of* the structures of contemporary states. Hoggett et al (2006; Hoggett, 2006; Miller et al, 2006) however doubt the ability of many public servants to maintain such an ironic detachment, where their commitment to the job means that they inevitably internalise frustrations that emerge between their espoused values, and the values their roles demand of them (cf. Argyris and Schon, 1974). Similarly, Abram (2004), discussing Norwegian economic planners, draws on Hirschman's (1970) classic account of how individuals and organisations cope with decline through exit, voice or loyalty. She suggests that the planners' loyalty to public service led them to internalise many of the contradictions and pressures of the wider political economic context in which they worked.

This suggests the complexity of efforts to govern identities in the workplace, and the limits of the power of culture governance within the state. The complexity of bureau-professional labour provides multiple different resources through which actors can negotiate their sense of self, and cope with the different demands made of them within the complex, discretionary spaces of the state. I now move on to consider, in the light of the previous discussion, how planners' professional identities have been understood.

Regulating and working with planning professional identities

The planner has been an awkward and often under-thought subject within planning theory (Beauregard, 1998), and only rarely the focus of empirical

research. The impacts on planners' professional identities of critical academic questioning, the fragile legitimacy of the planning professional project, and the flux caused by successive waves of reform to planning's role within the state have therefore remained, to some extent, under-researched (Thomas, 1998; Campbell and Marshall, 2001; 2005). This is a potentially significant absence in the context of the complex set of changes affecting planning in England in recent years, and the ambiguous status of the planner as both agent and object of modernisation in particular.

Defining planners' roles in practice: a history of confusion

Over the post-war period the roles planners have occupied within the state and beyond have changed considerably. Changes have occurred in response to interaction between a range of factors, including: the changing role and structure of the state and local government; the changing nature of state intervention in land and property markets; and academic and professional debates about the nature of planning as a task (Eversley, 1973; Healey, 1985; Campbell and Marshall, 2001). These shifts in role perhaps betray the intellectual weakness of the professional project, and, in particular, its susceptibility to control by central government (cf. Brown et al, 2002).

Healey (1991, 14; cf. Thomas, 1999, 16) identifies five principal roles for the planner within local government. These are summarised in figure 2.3 and provide a chronological, if generalised, account of how planners' roles have developed in response to these changing demands. Of these, the *urban development manager* relates most closely to the work that early planning professionals imagined themselves doing. It is a role that planners have been intermittently involved in, for example in relation to New Town Development or implementation (*"making things happen"* as Thomas (1998, 79) describes it), but perhaps much less than was envisaged by the authors of the 1947 Act, written with public sector driven redevelopment in mind (Healey, 1985). For Reade (1987) this type of creative, collaborative work with other professionals, geared towards holistic goals, has figured disproportionately largely in the profession's self-image/ ideology and much less as a part of actual practices. The *public bureaucrat*, however, accords most closely with the core professional tasks of development plan preparation and development control work that have dominated the work experience of the majority

of planners, based on commitment to a public service ethos of impartiality and independence of professional advice.

Role	Influence on British planning
Urban development manager Planning as "the production and management of good urban design and urban development"	"the main role model...until the 1970s". Based on the traditional claims to expertise of the 'parent professions' from which the planning profession emerged, particularly architects.
Public bureaucrat "performing duties defined by politicians"	In practice, very influential from the 1940s onwards.
Policy analyst "the planner is a policy scientist"	Limited influence from the 1970s. Suggesting a more holistic, social and economic role.
Intermediator "deploying interpersonal skills in negotiating and social learning"; planner as implementor	Influential from the late 1970s onwards, particularly so since the emergence of CPT.
Social reformer "committed to changing society"	A persistent strand in planning ideology/ less prevalent in practice in the UK where obligatory action in the public sector has limited such explicitly political/ value driven practice.

Figure 2.3 Planner roles in UK local government

(from Healey, 1991, 14; Thomas, 1999, 16)

At certain points in planning history multiple different conceptions of the planning task, and therefore the planners' role, coincided in practice, even in the same office (Healey, 1991). This was the case in the London Boroughs studied by Healey and Underwood (1979; Underwood, 1980) in the mid-1970s. The experiences this chronicled raised key questions about the ideological nature of the claims professional planners made for their expertise, drawing on the wider legitimacy of social and economic planning, and the radical reform roots of the planning movement. This suggested a gap between these ideals and the actual practices of planners and their capacity to influence the organisational settings in which they worked.

In trying to take on a broader, more holistic role within local government the planners in this study revealed the "role confusion" that has marked planning practice, and the difficulty of defining the limits of planning as a practice (cf. Foley, 1960; Reade, 1987; Brown et al, 2002). The local government reforms of the 1970s had sought to create the conditions for more effective planning (Radcliffe-

Maude and Wood, 1974, cited by Thomas, 1998). However, planners were often confused about how the wider terminology of corporate and community planning related to their own field of expertise (see e.g. Stewart, 1972). Influenced by the work of Friend and Jessop (1969) and North American conceptions of the planner as a *policy analyst* (e.g. Friedmann, 1987), they sought to claim more corporate influence within local government (Thomas, 1998). However, their power to take on the roles they imagined for themselves was often limited. The negotiation of the boundaries of planners' sphere of influence/ field of expertise must therefore be recognised as fluid, and as negotiated through practice in different institutional/ organisational contexts.

Getting closer to the awkward subject of planning thought

The ideological nature of planners' role claims, and the consistent failure to realise the normative promises of planning in practice, has led to a consistent problematisation of planners within planning thought, and policy debate. This has manifested, for example, in a recurring concern that the profession is unable to attract the *"best and brightest"* talent required to successfully plan (e.g. Schuster, 1950; Keeble, 1961; Eversley, 1973; Barker, 2006). Such concerns have been particularly prevalent during moments of systemic change in planning systems, where concerted governmental efforts to remake the performance of planning have typically been accompanied by concern for, and targeting of the planner. Speaking soon after the passing of the 1947 Act, for example, Lewis Silkin, the minister responsible for its passage voiced concern that:

> *We have changed the character of planning: we have changed our whole outlook on planning. Is there not a change due in the type of person who carries out planning functions? What are the right kinds of education, qualifications, experience, that are warranted? Can a plan really be prepared by one person and what sort of person should he [sic] be? A superman some people say –well that is not very helpful.* (Silkin 1949, quoted in Peel, 2008, 268)

The superhero problem has therefore been a recurring motif in debates about the planner (e.g. Glass, 1959). Abram (2004) suggests similar concerns about what Beauregard (2005) describes as the *"exhortative"* body of planning theory that

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constantly demands that planners be better, without enquiring as to how they might cope with this weight of expectation.

This suggests a need for research to get closer to how planners negotiate the relationship between the roles they perform, and the various pressures they face to remake or improve their practices. In this context one of the central achievements of CPT has been to focus attention on the micro-politics of planning practice, the ways in which planning processes are shaped by planners' communicative practices, and the need to learn from attentive listening to planners' "*practice stories*" (e.g. Healey, 1991; 1992; 1997; Beauregard, 1998; Forester, 1999; 2003; undated; Hoch, 1994). Within this literature there has been some focus on how planners shape their sense of identity at work (e.g. Forester, 2003), and a general recognition that planners' roles and sense of self are constructed in the interaction between structure and agency in specific planning episodes (Healey, 1997; Vigar et al, 2000; Forester, 2003; Hillier, 2002). Healey (1997) for example situates planners within a web of relations that both structures their sense of appropriate action, and provides the resources through which they act. This involves an understanding that planners' actions are motivated by a deeper sense of commitment and values than accounts of self-interested professionals allow (Forester, 1999). However, much of this work has been based in the very different institutional contexts of North America (e.g. Howe, 1994; Hoch, 1994; Forester, 1999; cf. Campbell and Marshall, 2001), and its focus has often been on the determinants of how planners *act* in such complex contexts, rather than on the construction and management of identities and values. In addition, much of it remains heavily inflected with normative views of how planners *should* behave. As Beauregard (1998) argues, planning theory needs to be sensitised to the, often implicit, conception of the planner it employs.

Newman (2008), for example, argues that the nature of the creative and competent agent required to succeed in the collaborative, strategic spatial planning advocated by influential theorists like Healey (2005; 2007) remains under-elaborated. Moreover, he recognises that, in this context, the planner risks becoming an object of blame when the failure of such processes is attributed to their personal inability to reflexively grasp the structures within which they act. March's (2007) assessment of Australian planning professionalism provides an example of this type of implicit criticism of the planner. Viewing a version of CPT

as the goal of professional planning, he suggests that the institutional contexts in which planners work promote an inward-looking focus on law, politics, bureaucracy and money – following Habermas these are viewed as "*mediatizing*" factors that inhibit the emergence of a more desirable, outward-looking planning professionalism, and render planners' claims to professionalism ideological. Putting aside the question of whether an unmediatized planning professionalism, unaccountable to law, politics, bureaucracy or money, is desirable, such normative ideals presuppose an agent able to be at once *in* but not *of* the institutional structures within which they operate, requiring an identity that is pre-formed prior to actors insertion into these structures.

Wood's (2003) idea of "*inner distance*" described above suggests that the development of such reflexive capacities may be possible and desirable, and similar calls have become a feature of planning theory (Healey, 1997; 2005; Hillier, 2002). Campbell and Marshall (2001; 2005), for example, drawing on Friedson (2001), suggest that professionalism may be capable of providing a point of external orientation to develop such an ethical disposition amongst planners. However, there can be no assumption that such an orientation is readily available, or should be assumed to be readily attainable. There are likely to be strong limits to the reflexivity of actors in any given context (cf. Hoggett, 2001), particularly if institutions are understood as crucial forms of identity regulation, disciplining not just the possibility of action, but actors very understanding of action (e.g. DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Foucault, 1982). This has been a key dimension of debates between "dark-side" theorists of planning (e.g. Flyvbjerg, 1998) who argue planners' motivations and values may not be as noble as sometimes required by theorists of CPT (see IJURR, 1999, cf. Tewdwr-Jones, 2001).

Recently, approaches influenced by psychology and psychoanalysis have begun to be employed within planning theory. These work with a more explicit and complex conception of the human subject to develop understanding of how practitioners understand and sustain their commitment to professional labour in contexts where they may be unable to fully grasp their own motivations (e.g. Baum, 1994; 1996; Abram, 2004; Gunder and Hillier, 2004; Hoch, 2006). However, and particularly in the context of the heavily institutionalised UK planning polity (Tait, 2002), there has been a recognised absence of empirical accounts of

how planners negotiate their professional identities in practice (Thomas, 1998; Healey, 2005; Campbell and Marshall, 2005; Shaw, 2006).

Identity work: negotiating planner identities in practice

Whilst constituted as subjects within the professional field/ national policy network, planners are also members of multiple different institutions/ communities of practice (cf. Campbell and Henneberry, 2005; Wenger, 1998) that may suggest quite different logics of appropriate action (cf. March and Olsen, 1989). These therefore provide resources through which planners shape their identities. Campbell and Marshall (2000, 298) suggest five primary obligations that shape UK planners actions – individual values; the profession; the employing organisation; elected members; and the public. Kitchen (1991) meanwhile identifies nine potential and actual clients of a planning service – applicants for planning permission; local residents affected by proposals; the public; the business community; interest/ pressure groups; other agencies involved in development; other public service providers; elected members; and central government. This variety of possible clients all potentially impose competing obligations on planners in their work, and suggest possible influences on how planners negotiate and understand their roles and identities. Thus identification with the needs of a particular client in a given context will influence outcomes, but also the planners' sense of self/ subject position in any given planning episode.

These competing obligations may, and frequently do create tensions and ambiguities, suggesting different possible subject positions and forms of action. Negotiation and mediation between these different demands is therefore at the heart of planners' communicative work (Thomas and Healey, 1991; Healey, 1992; Hoch, 1994; Forester, 1999; Campbell and Marshall, 1998; 2000; 2001; Tewdwr-Jones, 2001). Within this *"web of obligations/ relations"* (Campbell and Marshall, 2000; Healey, 1997) planners seek to reconcile their professional identity with the obligations to which they are held accountable. Tewdwr-Jones' (2001) personal experience of planning practice, for example, suggests the complexity of seeking to negotiate a sense of self in relation to political, organisational, personal, and professional conceptions of appropriate behaviour. This suggests the ethical challenge for planners of negotiating and retaining a sense of self in relation to the

complex spaces in which they practice, and the different obligations to which their practice is held accountable.

The roles (and by implication, identities) that planners desire may, however, be blocked by other factors within this complex environment (Underwood, 1980). Indeed, in the context of UK local government, the power of planners to shape their wider environment in line with their particular identity claims is likely to be limited (Healey and Underwood, 1979; Campbell and Marshall, 2001). Moreover, shifting power relations within the state create reciprocal shifts in the obligations to which public-sector planners are held most strongly accountable and also suggest new forms of obligation, e.g. to new forms of partnership governance or corporate control (Campbell and Marshall, 2000).

This highlights the importance for planners of coping with the obligatory nature of roles in the public sector where they must be capable of offering advice to political decision-makers who hold very different views of appropriate action. Public sector planners are, therefore, required to cope with working contexts where their personal motivations and commitments are both remote from practice, and need to be 'backgrounded' in the 'performance' of obligatory action (cf. Forester, 1999; Hillier, 2002). This serves to reinforce a conception of public sector planning as a form of dilemmatic labour, within which professionals seek to negotiate a sense of self in relation to the often contradictory obligations of practice. The capacity to manage the tension between "*espoused values*", and "*values in use*" (Argyris and Schon, 1974) is therefore crucial for planners.

Thomas and Healey's (1991) collection of first-person accounts of negotiating the dilemmas of planning practice is, however, amongst the relatively few to consider such issues in the UK. These suggested that planners may adopt a range of different strategies to cope with this gap, from moving jobs and changing careers, to finding alternative outlets for strongly held values (exit), or accepting this distance and seeking to work within the constraints it imposed (voice and loyalty). Hillier's (2002) view of planners as either "*chameleons*" or "*missionaries*" reflects the possible positions that this latter choice may give rise to. Where chameleons shift position in relation to prevailing obligations, missionaries seek to pursue particular (*espoused*) values. Hillier seeks to show how a reflexive, value driven, or "*missionary*", disposition can be fostered within the complex spaces of public

service. As described above, however, Abram (2004) is amongst the few to explore the psychic cost for planners of dealing with contexts where there is a considerable and unbridgeable distance between the obligations of work and personal commitments, but where loyalties may preclude exit.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to explore how planners' professional identities are constructed in relation to planning cultures and state projects.

In doing so I have explored how bureau-professional identities have become an object of governmental attention in recent years. The chapter has described the complex nature of professional labour within the discretionary spaces of the state, and the attempts of successive governments to exercise greater control over bureau-professionals. This has been motivated by a perception of the ethos of public service, and the professions, as sources of self-interested resistance to necessary reform.

I have therefore placed the discourse of culture change in context as an attempt to expand managerial control into the realm of culture, with a particular concern for regulating identities. Culture is therefore understood here as the framework of values within which actors shape understanding of themselves at work. Culture change in the public sector initially involved the targeting of managers, seeking to foster commitment to reforms by offering new, more positive identities. The use of the discourse in relation to professional planners, however, suggests an expansion of this logic into a concern for culture governance, and a more pervasive attempt to foster commitment to the rationalities, or changing ideological ethos of modernisation under New Labour.

There are, however, limits to the managerial (and political) power to govern workplace cultures and regulate identities from the top-down. Both culture and identity are rather the mediated products of top-down control, and the multiple different resources that actors draw on to shape social life from the bottom-up. In particular, the discretionary agency of professional labour within the complex, dilemmatic spaces of the state potentially affords considerable space for professionals to forge their own identities. Professionals' *"identity work"*, however,

is not simply an instrumental way of asserting compliance with, or resistance to governing rationalities. Rather it must also be understood as a means of coping with the tensions inherent to professional labour, and of retaining a sense of personal values and commitments in relation to shifting regimes of control.

This suggests the need to find conceptual and methodological means to explore the complexity of cultures, but more particularly to assess attempts to govern them; the types of identity regulation that such attempts imply; and the nature of the interpretive "identity work" that this gives rise to. The next chapter therefore moves on to outline how these concepts will be operationalised in order to frame and analyse the empirical work in chapters 5-8.

Chapter 3 conceptualising change in planning cultures and planners' identities

Introduction

In chapter 2 I assessed the prospects for governing cultures and thereby regulating professional identities within the state, tracing this through literature on organisations and into the management of state bureau-professionals. This suggested that the capacity to successfully change professional cultures and identities may be limited if understood as a means of fostering commitment to a new ideological ethos. I then moved on to assess the nature of planners' professional identities and how they are shaped in the public sector.

In this chapter I develop these insights into a conceptual framework that will be used to inform the research design, methodology and subsequent analysis of the empirical work. I do this by developing an approach to culture and identity that draws on both discourse theory and more interpretive approaches to social research. I begin by outlining the overarching philosophical approach directing the thesis, drawing on the discussion in the previous chapter, to further develop the understanding of both culture and identity that this suggests. I then position this understanding in relation to the functioning of the planning policy network, before outlining in more detail how this guides the conceptualisation of the different stages of the empirical work and shapes the research questions the thesis will address. Finally, I draw out three key dimensions from the discussion in chapters 1-3 that will be used to frame the overall analysis of the empirical work.

The cultural construction of planning and planners

The recent upsurge of interest in questions of culture and identity across the social sciences (du Gay et al, 2000; du Gay, 2007) has been founded on several related developments variously described as post-modern, post-structuralist, post-positivist, or post-empiricist (Fischer, 2003; Newman, 2001). These have involved a series of theoretical and epistemological challenges to traditional paradigms of social knowledge (Flyvbjerg, 2001). Such approaches have, in recent years, been influential within planning theory and policy studies, and can be understood as a turn towards cultural modes of analysis (e.g. Yanow, 1996, 2000; Sandercock,

1998; Forester, 1999; Fischer, 2003; Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003; Healey, 2007). Thus culture has become increasingly prominent as both an object of analytical attention, and method of social enquiry.

Rather than enter into the complex philosophical discussions and debates that have emerged around these developments, I instead seek to place my work within the broad, though extremely variegated, framework that these challenges suggest. In so doing I will develop a set of what Bourdieu (1990) terms *"thinking tools"* that will inform the empirical dimensions of the work. This again draws on literature from a range of related fields and from more than one theoretical tradition. This reflects the widespread use of cultural approaches in recent years, and their consideration of questions of identity. These have emerged from developments in social and cultural theory to influence a wide variety of different disciplines, including the sociology of work and the professions, organisation and management studies and public administration and policy studies. Such a hybrid conceptual framework is fairly familiar to planning theory, as a sub-field within the social sciences that has defined itself by an open approach to borrowings from across disciplinary boundaries (Mandelbaum, 1996; Healey, 1997). The borrowings gathered here serve as a point of orientation for considering the empirical problematic, and assessing the modernisation of planning through the re-making of planning cultures and planners' identities.

Central to the "cultural turn" in social research has been a challenge to the epistemological foundations of social science. Positivist traditions have been the primary target of this challenge (Yanow, 2000; Howarth, 2000), with their claims that it is possible to "discover" objective truths about the social world criticised. In their place a wide variety of different claims have been made about the social construction of reality - how the meaning people assign to the social world shapes understanding and knowledge of it (Gergen, 1999; Fischer, 2003; Hacking, 1999). Social constructionist/ constructivist approaches therefore emphasise the crucial role of ideas, ideologies and rationalities, and human interpretation in framing ways of seeing the world. In this context culture is understood as the framework through which all knowledge is framed, and also therefore through which knowledge and understanding is contested. A central element of this has been a growth in concern for how subjects are "made up" in relation to these cultural formations. This has entailed a fundamental challenge to the essentialist idea of a

stable and unchanging core of the self, replacing it with a conception of identity as a socially constructed interaction between the self and the social worlds she inhabits (e.g. Calhoun, 1994; Hall, 1996, Johnson et al, 2004; Butler, 2005), and as such as fluid and changing over the course of life (Bauman, 2004).

Closely related to social constructionist approaches has been a pervasive emphasis on the role of processes of communication and meaning making. As a result, discourse has become a central element of social analysis, understood as a crucial method for interrogating the social construction of reality, and as a result the "making up" of subjects.

Discourse, power, and interpretative agency in identity formation

Understanding discourse and discursive power

Discourse can therefore be understood as the framework through which ideas are produced and struggled over in political and social life, and through which subjects come to understand themselves (Foucault, 1982; 1991a; Howarth, 2000; Howarth and Torfing, 2005). Particularly important in this regard have been post-structuralist approaches to discourse. This term, like social constructionism, is somewhat elusive, denoting a loosely connected set of challenges to structuralism - the view that the world is determined by underlying forces (for further discussion see e.g. Howarth, 2000). Post-structuralist approaches to discourse have sought to extend understanding of the concept beyond the term's linguistic origins (Howarth, 2000). Foucault's development of a theory of discourse, and its relationship to power, has been particularly influential in this regard. Foucault (1978, 1982, 1991a) argued that objects of knowledge only become meaningful within systems of representation or "discursive regimes" where truth is constructed by the inter-relation between power and knowledge (to describe which he coined the neologism "power-knowledge") (McNay, 1994; Hall, 2001). Within such systems, power is conceived of not simply in controlling terms as the "power over", but as productive, a "power to", that both structures and enables particular knowledges, social relations and subject positions (Fairclough, 1992). As such power is dispersed, a force that is immanent in the micro-practices of everyday interaction, rather than something that is held and exercised from above.

The nature of the concept of discourse has been extensively debated. Foucault himself appears to have used the term as both a synonym for all social practices, and in a more limited, semiotic sense as influenced by and influencing material practices (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Hall, 2001; Bevir, 1999; Howarth, 2000). For some, such as Howarth (2000; also Howarth and Torfing, 2005), discourse theory has been gradually refined towards a "third phase" based on the work of Laclau and Mouffe (1985) who claim an expanded conception of the term that encompasses all social practices. For others, however, discourse remains a more limited metaphor for social practices that continue to be shaped by extra-discursive, material realities (Grossberg, 1996), or simply a privileged lens through which to assess the social and political world (Harvey, 1996).

For present purposes discourses are understood as systems of representation that seek to stabilise particular regimes of power-knowledge. An extra-discursive reality is acknowledged, but one that can only be interpreted and understood through discourse (Hall, 2001). Furthermore, certain spheres of social and political life are understood as particularly discursive, where the power of systems of representation is particularly salient – policy and political life can be understood in such terms.

"Making up" subjects: discourse as identity regulation

As discussed in the previous chapter, the power of discourse to constitute subjects was central to Foucault's work (1978; 1982), and has been a key feature of a wide range of different studies drawing on discourse theory (e.g. Laclau, 1996; Norval, 2000). A central part of the power of discourses is understood as the capacity to "make up" particular subject positions through which actors come to relate to themselves and others. This provides a means of linking macro-level changes in governing rationalities and ideologies with the subjects that such authorities seek to "make up" (Rose and Miller, 1992; du Gay, 1996; Dean, 1999). As Dean (1999) suggests, a central element of discursive *"regimes of practices"* are the forms of identity they seek to inculcate amongst the governed (and, by extension also, those who govern). It is therefore central to any governmental project that it targets the subjectivities of actors, something that they seek to achieve through particular programmes, utilising specific technologies of rule (Dean, 1999; Rose and Miller, 1992). Authorities therefore seek to govern by exercising control at a distance,

"*conducting conduct*" (Foucault, 1991a) by setting the terms through which actors come to understand themselves as autonomous individuals (Rose and Miller, 1992). This power is both disciplinary, something we are subjected to, but also enabling, empowering certain actions and personae (Foucault, 1982).

However, as the previous chapter suggested, a purely discursive conception of the subject has been criticised for suggesting an overly determined, top-down process of identity formation (e.g. Hall, 1996; Hacking, 2002). This stems in part from the conception of the human subject at the root of such an approach. As Rose (1996, 1999) suggests, the idea of theorising agency or resistance is rendered extraneous to a governmentality approach as it presupposes an agent able to stand outside of the regimes of truth that are in fact their very condition of existence. The subject therefore becomes "*the human material on which history writes*" (Rose, 1996, 142). This suggests a very thin conception of the agent, not concerned with understanding any deeper motivation, intention or sense of self (cf. Rose and Miller, 1992, 177; Hall, 1996; Hoggett et al, 2006a). Moreover, it is a product of an analytical lens that is concerned more with how authorities have sought to govern, than with the effects of those efforts on those they have targeted (Dean, 1999; Rose et al, 2006).

To fully understand processes of identity formation it is instead necessary to recognise the interpretive agency of actors. Following Hall (1996) this can be understood as the agency to articulate identifications with the multiple different discourses that "*summon*" them, and therefore to narrate a sense of self from the wide variety of different subject positions to which they are called (cf. Laclau, 1996; Butler, 2005). This suggests a "thicker" conception of the human subject, as an agent capable of (albeit limited) reflexive understanding and action (e.g. Hoggett, 2001). Figure 2.2 above, taken from Alvesson and Wilmott (2002) provides a useful model of this conception of identity formation. The conception of the subject suggested in this schema provides scope for the top-down regulation of identities, but also reflects the limits to such forms of governance. It asserts the scope for interpretive agency to deflect, resist or re-articulate governing discourses, and to shape a sense of the self from the variety of different discursive and material resources available. Within such a conception, identity is understood as the negotiated outcome of forms of identity work, and as such as the fragmented and shifting relation of the self to different loci of power.

Having considered the nature of discourse and power, and their relationship to identity regulation I now move on to conceptualise how such processes work in the planning policy process.

Producing planners: cultural re-production in the planning policy network

Modes of cultural analysis, including those informed by discourse theory, view public policy as a series of intersecting fields that are socially constructed, with problems and solutions framed by particular discourses, narratives, and ideologies (Newman, 2001; Schon and Rein, 1994; Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003; Yanow, 1996). Successful narratives become part of the taken for granted "common sense" of actors working within policy networks. However, such common sense is not established naturally (Newman, 2001; cf. Gramsci, 1998). Rather it is the product of ongoing political struggle, and the power relations that shape particular regimes of power-knowledge and the "truth" that they produce (cf. Foucault, 1978; 1980; Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). The construction of subject positions for actors within the policy process is a key stake and outcome of such struggle, and a potentially powerful technology of governmental power.

Within planning theory social constructionism has become widely accepted (e.g. Forester 1989; Schon and Rein, 1994; Healey, 1997; Sandercock, 1998). Discursive approaches have also become an established method for critically interrogating the planning policy process (e.g. Vigar et al, 2000; Richardson, 2002; Rydin, 2003). As a result of the adoption of such approaches, the social construction of planners' identities has become a part of some planning research (e.g. Forester, 1999, 2003; undated; Hoch, 1994; Campbell and Marshall, 2001; Gunder and Hillier, 2004). However, as suggested in the previous chapter, and by Beauregard (1998), it has more often been an implicit rather than an explicit focus of attention (e.g. Healey, 1997; Vigar et al, 2000). In particular, little empirical attention has been devoted to the ways in which planners' professional identities are "made up" within the complex institutional ensemble of the planning policy network in the highly centralised setting of the UK planning system.

In the previous chapter I described the structure of the planning policy network, and the role of the planning profession within it, and suggested that both have become increasingly stratified as power has been centralised in recent years. The national level therefore functions as the centre of the discursive field of planning, where discourse is effectively "authored". The profession, represented by the planning professional community, is one actor within the policy community at the national level (cf. Laffin, 1998; Thomas, 1998). In order to understand the nature of the culture change required of planning, and the rationalities or ideologies framing these changes, it is therefore necessary to analyse the discourses of modernisation at the national level, the ways in which they have sought to re-frame the culture of planning, and both implicitly and explicitly, to regulate the identity of the local authority planner.

The planning policy network can, therefore, be considered the "field" through which professional planners in the public sector are governed, and their identities regulated (cf. Larson, 1990). Thus alongside the formal or hard institutional structures of the planning polity (Tewdwr-Jones, 2002), it is possible to recognise the existence of a soft-institutional, or discursive polity that seeks to govern culture within the policy network (Hansen and Sorensen, 2005; Griggs, 2005). This discursive polity is constructed of an ensemble of soft-institutions – discursively constructed sets of norms and values that govern the common-sense understanding of day-to-day interaction within the state (ibid; Vigar et al, 2000; Hajer, 2003). These are both constructed and contested by the ongoing flow of discursive politics (Hajer, 1995; 2003; Vigar et al, 2000).

Despite this, however, an analysis of the national level discourses of planning reform would fail to understand the complex processes by which these discourses effect, or fail to effect change at the local level in planning cultures and planners identities. The discourse of culture change recognises the potential agency of various actors in the implementation process, and the complexity of successfully "conducting their conduct" (Foucault, 1991). Given the complexity of the "institutional ensemble" of the state (Jessop, 1990), attempts to successfully change cultures within it are likely to be considerably more complex than in the context of single organisations (from where the discourse originates and it is also recognised that attempts to achieve committed "buy in" are likely to encounter multiple possible sources of resistance). It is therefore reasonable to suggest, as

one civil servant repeatedly insisted in interview that, *"the theatre of culture change is the local"*[4].

Indeed, whilst a strong narrative of centralisation is present in recent accounts of the English planning system, there is also a recognition that the system continues to produce an albeit dwindling range of locally distinctive *"planning styles"* (Brindley et al, 1996). These are products of uneven geographical development, and the particular socio-economic, political and institutional histories of different parts of the country, manifesting in differences in local governance and planning cultures (Healey et al, 1988; Allmendinger, 1996). This suggests the presence of *"room for manoeuvre"*, or interpretive space at the local level (Tait, 2002; Vigar et al, 2000). Thus, there can be no automatic assumption that centrally framed discourses will not be mediated when refracted through local concerns, and interpreted within particular communities of practice. Indeed, studies have clearly demonstrated this in the formal operation of the planning system (Tewdwr-Jones, 2002; Tait, 2002), and in relation to particular policies or types of planning (Vigar et al, 2000; Murdoch and Abram, 2002). However, less attention has been focused on the discursive polity and the capacity for effective culture governance, and attendant identity regulation, within planning (though the implications of some studies of policy implementation suggest that this may be limited, cf. Allmendinger, 2003; Campbell and Henneberry, 2005).

Local authority planners are understood, however, to work within a complex field of intersecting obligations, accountable to different forms of authority (Campbell and Marshall, 1998; 2000; 2001; Campbell and Henneberry, 2005). As such, they are likely to be positioned between a range of different discourses, implying different types of identity regulation. Planners' 'identity work' is therefore likely to involve coping with a range of competing demands, and seeking to manage their own sense of self in relation to the competing logics of appropriate action that these obligations suggest (cf. March and Olsen, 1989). New discourses at the national level, and in particular the discourse of culture change, imply the problematisation of existing planning cultures (or *"regimes of practice"*). Culture change as a discourse can therefore be understood as an attempt to alter the ways in which planners identify with the competing obligations they face, and to re-

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[4] The details of interviews conducted in the course of the research will be introduced in chapter 4 below.

shape power relations within the field of local planning to produce commitments to new ways of thinking about the purpose of planning.

This conceptual framework, emphasising how the policy network works to govern cultures and identities, but also the complexity of any such effort, forms the basis for the empirical work that follows. In particular, it underlies the research design adopted in the thesis (see chapter 4 below), providing the rationale for investigating both the discourses of modernisation at the national level, and the extent to which these discourses have been successful in engineering a new ideological ethos for planning, and new identities for local authority planners.

It is important to note that this is not intended to represent an overly simplistic account of central-local relations in the English state, or an equation of the national level as crudely structuring, and the local as the level of agency. Rather, as the idea of culture governance suggests, the state is viewed as an institutional ensemble (Jessop, 1990), traversed by multiple policy networks where power is both productive and multi-directional (Rhodes, 1997; Cochrane, 2004).

I now go on to consider how this overarching framework translates into the two distinct stages of analysis with which the thesis is concerned, offering a more detailed conceptualisation of each of these stages, and relating them to the research questions. These two stages are:

- the reframing of planning's cultures and planners' identities through discourses of modernisation at the national level.
- the ways in which these new discourses have been interpreted within and influenced local planning cultures, and the types of identity work this has involved planners in as they negotiate their professional identities.

Contesting the modernisation of planning: re-framing planning cultures and planners' identities

To understand the nature of the culture change and identity regulation implied by planning reform, and the rationalities or ideologies framing these changes, it is necessary to analyse the discourses of modernisation at the national level. As such it is crucial to critically examine the politics of modernisation (cf. Finlayson,

2003; Marquand, 2004). The purpose of this stage of analysis is to assess the discursive construction of modernisation at the national level, viewing planning reform as a site of contestation over the purpose of planning, the outcomes of which may imply quite different planning cultures and subject positions for planners. As such it is useful to further elaborate the nature of the discursive politics involved in framing the modernisation of planning.

Traditionally, policy-making and implementation have been portrayed as products of politics, and not as political sites in their own right (Hajer, 2003). Such technocratic or depoliticising understandings were a particular feature of the professional policy regimes that dominated much British policy making in the post-war period (Rhodes, 1997), helping to sustain the apolitical identity of policy professionals, including planners (Laffin and Young, 1990; Hague, 1984; Healey, 1985). Although the relationship between policy and politics is now acknowledged to be considerably more complex than such a conceptualisation allows, the actual politics of policy-making are still often downplayed by actors. This is, in part, a reflection of the fact that the informal *politics* of policy take place very close to the formal, party *Politics* from which it is important for certain actors to retain a distance (lobby groups, but particularly civil servants and professions must be able to work with governments of all political stripes). It also reflects the fact that governments are often anxious to defuse the politics of policy, and to present policy change as an objective response to a particular issue rather than as politically constructed and therefore contestable (Finlayson, 2003; Fischer, 2003). In the course of my research this became clear early on. Interviews with actors in the planning policy and professional communities at the national level were all marked by a certain awkwardness when the word 'politics' was explicitly used, as a result I came to avoid the term and to instead speak about 'tensions' and 'agendas', a language with which those I spoke seemed more comfortable. Thus the politics of change in policy networks is often somewhat obscure. However, periods of substantial change in any given field of policy must be understood as politically constructed, and contested.

As Newman (2001; 2004; 2005) convincingly argues, for example, changes in government lead to shifts in discourse that open up new opportunity structures for policy actors and close down others. They create a new "regime of truth" by validating certain kinds of knowledge that must be appealed to and new subject

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positions through which actors must relate to their work. This is the basis of the uncertain power of the "*discursive polity*" to govern through culture, shaping attention and producing the performance of particular subjectivities. The power to disrupt or problematise the common-sense assumptions that structure day-to-day politics within policy networks, and through which actors relate to their work, can therefore be understood as a key capacity of government. It can also be seen as a key goal of lobby groups working within policy communities around government, including professional communities. Indeed, one of the implications of any such disruption is that the state-professional pact is drawn into question as new priorities and roles are produced.

Periods of systemic change to a policy process therefore disrupt the often implicit and taken-for-granted politics, and ideational "frames" or rationalities through which particular policy networks conduct their practices. These are therefore opened to scrutiny and can become radically contested (Hansen and Sorensen, 2005). In this way the "*argumentative field*" of policy is brought into focus as a political arena (Fischer, 2003). Such periods of flux can be understood as moments of "*displacement*" where established discursive settlements, or institutionalised understandings, become incapable of fixing meaning (Griggs, 2005). As a result existing settlements come to be problematised, the discursive field becomes a site of contestation, and the nexus of power-knowledge that has governed action within it is reshaped. The discursive elements of such processes of change are thus particularly significant, providing a stake over which the reshaping of institutions is contested. The sometimes elusive politics of policy change can therefore be productively analysed through discourse, and attempts to secure new "framings" of policy issues (Schon and Rein, 1994; Laws and Rein, 2003).

Discourse coalitions and the reframing of policy

Thus different policy actors (individual, or more regularly collective) working in and around government, seek to construct "*discourse coalitions*" as a means of stabilising the way in which issues are seen (Hajer, 1995; 2003; Griggs, 2005). Such coalitions attempt to establish the hegemony of a particular "way of seeing" in order to structure practices within a given field (ibid.). Griggs (2005; following Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; also Laclau, 1996) suggests that discourse coalitions

work through the construction of shared, collective identities - particular frames that are able to bind actors together, suppressing the differences between them, and constructing common points of identification. Hajer (1995) suggests that this is achieved through the production of "*storylines*", simplified narratives that shape argumentation, whilst Griggs (2005) suggests that "*empty signifiers*" also perform this task. These are nodal points, or key symbols, within discourses that help to secure and sustain hegemony by the very fact that they lack any positive content, and are therefore capable of being understood in different ways by different actors. They thus act as a mechanism to manage differences, and bring different interests together (Laclau, 1996; Norval, 2000).

The aim of discourse coalitions is to articulate a set of simplified references that work to forge particular understandings, becoming a part of the "common sense" of actors. Successful discourse coalitions create a framework of shared understanding through which the ambiguities and antagonisms of policy can be managed, and change can be governed. By analysing the processes of contestation behind the modernisation of planning in these terms, it becomes possible to open up a more critical assessment of the nature of the change implied by planning reform.

When existing frames stop functioning, or are disrupted, and are therefore unable to fix the meanings required to govern a particular field, opportunities emerge for new framings to be articulated. Within the "*differentiated polity*" of the UK (Rhodes, 1997) this creates possibilities for actors working in policy communities around the government. New Labour's drive to "*modernise*" public services can be seen as a particularly concerted governmental effort to reshape the state, and as such to have created moments of discursive disruption and contestation across each sphere where modernisation has been attempted (Newman, 2001; Finlayson, 2003). The government's policy-making style has often been inclusive, seeking to secure the cooperation of a range of key actors within policy networks to ensure implementation (Larsen et al, 2006, Newman, 2001). This has presented opportunities for lobby groups to influence policy (except apparently where issues have been viewed as either ideological or economic imperatives) (Larsen et al, 2006).

Before going on to frame the research questions directed to the national level of the work it is useful to briefly consider the discourse coalitions that governed the planning policy network when New Labour was elected in 1997. This provides a sense of the key antagonisms that planning seeks to manage, and the role of the profession in this task.

Discourse coalitions in the planning policy network

During the 1990s, the planning policy network came to be uncertainly governed by a "sustainable development" discourse that can be understood as an attempt to manage key tensions between environmental and developmental discourse coalitions within the planning policy community (Vigar et al, 2000; Murdoch and Abram, 2002; Healey, 2007).

This followed the 1980s when Conservative governments had radically challenged the legitimacy of state intervention in land-use and sought to promote a strong, developmental discourse (Murdoch and Abram, 2002). This was most infamously represented by then Secretary of State for the Environment Michael Heseltine's (1979, 27) assertion, *"that thousands of jobs every night are locked away in the filing trays of planning departments"*. This statement remains a potent symbol within the planning community and was regularly referred to in interviews at all levels; a powerful shorthand for a particular, hostile way of thinking about planning, and a period of recent history when planning was under threat. Within this discourse, the subject positions available to planners are reduced to facilitating, and managing the externalities generated by the market (cf. Klosterman, 2003), a significant narrowing of planners' traditional claims to a holistic role coordinating physical, social and economic development (Reade, 1987).

Conservative attempts to bring about a more pro-development culture within planning were, however, frustrated. In part this was due to resistance to development in the heartlands of their electoral support, the shire counties of England (Allmendinger and Thomas, 1998). This led to the emergence of an environmental discourse coalition, bringing together an unlikely alliance between environmental lobby groups and anti-development interests to argue for planning's role in protecting valued environments (Murdoch and Abram, 2002). The planning profession meanwhile remained committed to a broader conception of planning's

purpose as a form of public interest intervention in land-use (Allmendinger, 2003; Campbell and Henneberry, 2005).

Murdoch and Abram (2002) suggest that, over time, this led to the emergence of a new "sustainable development" rationality for planning, replacing the controversial developmental discourse promoted by Government in the 1980s. Sustainable development emerged as a discourse in British politics in the late 1980s and 1990s, and was essentially a means of managing the tensions between environmentalism, economic development and ostensibly also social concerns. As such it has been adopted as a means of managing the tensions in the planning policy process. In this way it functions as an empty signifier that promises a means of recognising and resolving the complexity of competing demands for land-use (Gunder 2006). For the planning profession, meanwhile, the 'discovery' of the environment, and sustainable development provided a means of re-asserting an holistic role and a public interest justification for intervention in land-use, mediating between competing economic, environmental and social claims (cf. Reade, 1987; Murdoch and Abram, 2002; Taylor, 2003).

Overall, however, although the more radical deregulatory ambitions of the New Right were frustrated, the resultant renegotiation of the state-professional pact still produced considerable change in the roles of planners, restricting practice to a narrow concern for the regulation of land-use. The legitimacy of planning professionalism therefore survived, in part, as a political expedient, on the basis of the statutory planning system's capacity, through the sustainable development rationality, to manage the high profile political conflicts generated by development.

Modernisation: reframing planning cultures, regulating planners' identities

Planning reform, and particularly the discourse of culture change, must therefore be assessed as an attempt to re-orientate the system and the tense settlement between environmental and developmental discourse coalitions that emerged in the 1990s, including the cultures and identities that sustained these ways of thinking. Actors working at the national level have therefore been involved in the discursive politics of seeking to shape the new ideological ethos that will govern planning, a politics whose purpose is to achieve closure around a particular framing, or to secure the (always contingent) hegemony of a certain understanding

of planning (cf. Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). The struggle to establish and institutionalise new framings is therefore crucial to establishing the types of culture change and identity regulation implied by modernisation. As a result, the professional community is increasingly heavily involved in discursive politics at the national level as it seeks to secure the planning professional project (cf. Laffin and Entwistle, 2000).

The "metaphors of renaissance" introduced in chapter 1, and the condensed storyline that they allude to, is an example of this kind of discursive politics. If the storyline becomes accepted by actors as representative of the processes of change introduced by New Labour, it will play a part in securing a new discursive settlement (cf. Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Clarke and Newman, 1997). This level of analysis is therefore concerned with the ways in which the modernisation of planning has been narrated within the planning policy community, and how the politics of modernisation have been played out. It uses the conceptual tools outlined above to assess the key discourse coalitions that have influenced the modernisation agenda, the role they have played in framing the discourses of modernisation and culture change. It seeks to assess how these discourses have sought to problematise planning practice, the subject positions that their "framings" have implied for local authority planners, and the types of governmental techniques they require in order to achieve the change in practices that they advocate. The framing of governing discourses within the planning policy network is therefore understood as a crucial form of culture governance and identity regulation for all actors, but particularly professionals, within the field.

As a result two research questions are addressed to this, the national level stage of the thesis:

- How has the modernisation agenda sought to change the culture of planning and the identities of planners in local government?
- To what extent does this reflect a distinctively New Labour agenda or ideological ethos?

However, following this, in order to fully assess whether modernisation has succeeded in delivering a culture change, and new identities for planners it is crucial to go on to assess the impacts of the discourses of planning reform at the

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local level. It is in these *"theatres of culture change"*, that planners engage with new discourses and practices, and in processes of "identity work", negotiating their professional identities in relation to the obligations of practice.

Assessing culture change and identity work at the local level

Above I argued that, to be effective, discourses of change at the national level must be capable of disciplining/ governing cultures (discourse and practice) across the planning policy network/ field. To this extent policy discourse becomes authoritative once it has been internalised within the institutions of a policy network, and become a part of the "common sense" of day-to-day action within that network (cf. Vigar et al, 2000; Healey, 2007; Newman, 2001; Hansen and Sorensen, 2005). This entails exercise of the uncertain powers of *"culture governance"* to produce change in the discursive polity (Bang, 2004). Whilst periods of systemic change nationally can disrupt existing settlements within a policy field, their capacity to control how such change is interpreted in particular local contexts is, more limited.

As I argued in chapter 2 this is clearly the case in relation to professional networks and the governance of the discursive field in which professionals practice. Change is therefore a more complex process than is often acknowledged (Clarke and Newman, 1997). In organisation/ management studies it is widely acknowledged that culture change processes, where they seek to generate commitment to change, are likely to be slow and to meet resistances from those who identify with existing or alternative workplace cultures or subcultures (Alvesson and Svenigsson, 2008; Shaw, 2006). The long acknowledged presence of discretionary spaces within the implementation process adds further to such complexity (e.g. Lipsky, 1980). The planning literature suggests that local cultures continue to exercise some discretion in relation to the interpretation of national policy and discourse (Brindley et al, 1996; Tait, 2002). This suggests a power to refract the national level agenda through a particular local cultural lens, developed within the communities of practice that constitute the institutions of local governance, of which planning policy is one part.

Periods of change within the planning policy network at the national level can therefore be expected to cause some disruption to local level governance cultures

as they adjust to new rationalities and practices. However, whether that dislocation is capable of generating cultural change in working practices and identities, or of directing that change is less certain. Indeed, the extent to which change in any particular policy network is likely to disrupt the day-to-day flow of politics in any particular local culture is dependent on a number of possible factors, including the local political salience of that policy area, and whether the direction of change matches other key local dynamics. It is therefore important to understand the articulation of processes of change in planning alongside the wider trajectory of change in any particular locality (Campbell, 2003; Healey, 2004). Institutional path-dependence is likely to have considerable bearing on the capacity of new discourses to either disrupt established patterns of practice, or to successfully embed new ones (Hansen and Sorensen, 2005).

In addition, planning as a local government service, particular planning teams, and individual planners have considerably varying levels of power to bring about change in local governance cultures (cf. Healey, 2007). As Healey and Underwood (1979) suggested it is necessary to be cautious in attributing to planning and planners power to shape change in line with their worldview. Indeed, as I will suggest in chapter 5, one of the key aims of the modernisation agenda has been to move planning "centre stage" and therefore to increase its power as a service within the corporate structures of local government (e.g. Hylton, 2008; cf. Tewdwr-Jones, 2004), an agenda which betrays concern that planners may lack the authority to take on the new subject positions implied by modernisation.

Planners at the local level, as members of the planning policy/ professional network, are subject to discursive change within it, which suggests new subject positions, and therefore possible identities for them. They are also, however, members of more immediate, locally embedded communities of practice, and organisational and governance networks that may produce quite different discourses. The nature of planning professionalism in local government is based on giving expert, impartial advice to local decision-makers, defined increasingly by what is acceptable, or in conformity with the national level policy framework. Planners are therefore limited in their power to perform planning in the way they would choose. Instead their action is largely obligatory – shaped by obligations to the different forms of authority to which they are held accountable, including national level policy and local political priorities (Campbell and Marshall, 2000; cf.

March and Olsen, 1989; Gunder and Hillier, 2004; Campbell and Henneberry, 2005). The planners' role within local governance is therefore shaped by the interaction between these local and national level discourses. It is within this complex "field of obligations" to different sources of authority that policy planners, for example, seek to negotiate a local, collective planning identity (performed through the plan) that meets the different obligations to which they are held accountable (cf. Campbell and Marshall, 2000).

Tensions between these different obligations can, and frequently do, create dilemmas that planners must seek to manage. Following, Healey (1997) this field of obligations is traversed by the relational webs in which actors in governance processes are embedded. Local obligations (to elected members, the public, or colleagues) may pressure planners to resist, re-interpret or refuse the subject positions suggested by change in the national policy network. Similarly, the local level networks in which they are embedded may not allow planners to take on the new roles and identities suggested by change in their professional networks, or by developments at the national level. Planners' truth claims may not therefore be recognised, and the roles and identities that they seek to play may be blocked.

Planners' professional identities are therefore forged in the relationship between the obligations that shape their action (values in use), and their own commitments to and understanding of planning (espoused values). They are therefore involved in a complex and ongoing negotiation of their professional identities, shifting between the obligations of practice and their own identification with certain values to frame a conception of themselves at work. This can be seen to create considerable tensions for local authority planners torn between different obligations - either to be in "conformity" with national level policy guidance, or to be responsive to local people, politicians or organisational demands (Vigar et al, 2000). Planners are therefore not simply involved in mediating between different demands, but as they do so are also engaged in negotiating particular identities for themselves; identities that they in turn need to be able to justify as "professional" (Fournier, 1999; Stronach et al, 2002).

This negotiation is the basis of the "identity work" planners engage in. Change in the planning policy network entails a concerted period of identity work for professional planners as they seek to renegotiate their roles and practices within

local governance cultures. However, it is also important to note that some aspects of the modernisation agenda have occurred at a considerable distance from the day-to-day work of planners, and that processes of change to their working lives driven by other, often more immediate, factors are likely to have proven at least equally influential in shaping practitioners understanding of their work. Indeed, given the extent of change within the local state under New Labour's local government modernisation agenda (Cochrane, 2004), the complexity of the "change environment" in which planners have sought to negotiate their professional identities is striking. The difficulty many local authority planners had in keeping abreast of developments at the national or even regional level where they did not directly impinge on their working lives was a feature of many of the interviews I conducted. In many cases this was seen as a cause for concern that had intensified within the "*fast policy regime*" New Labour has developed (Peck, 2001).

This local level of the empirical work therefore sheds light on two interrelated levels of analysis:

- At the level of the local planning culture it assesses the extent to which discourses of modernisation have produced the performance of new local planning identities, and opened up opportunities for the articulation of new planning roles within local governance cultures.
- In relation to planners' professional identities it investigates the processes of identity work that planners have engaged in as they have negotiated the identity regulating discourses of modernisation.

As a result a further two research questions are addressed to the local stage of the thesis:

- How have local planning cultures interpreted the imperatives of modernisation?
- To what extent have planners taken on new identities in line with the ideological ethos of spatial planning?

Key dimensions of analysis

Following from the above, and the discussion in chapters 1 and 2, it is possible to further identify three key conceptual dimensions that will be used to inform the overall analysis of these two stages of empirical work in chapter 8, drawing together the insights from the national and two local level chapters:

- The first draws on the idea of modernisation as an attempt to articulate a *new ideological ethos* for planning, to consider the extent to which spatial planning has succeeded in articulating new rationalities capable of governing the planning policy network, and how these were interpreted by planners at the local level.

- Following from this, the second section discusses the *powers of culture governance and identity regulation* within the planning policy network, and the reasons for the success or failure of attempts to bring about culture change.

- Finally, I consider the nature of the *identity work* that planners have been drawn into as they attempt to come to terms with the implications of modernisation, considering the lived experience of change and its implications for the production of new, empowered planner identities and a new planning practice.

Conclusions

This chapter has developed the conceptual framework through which the empirical dimensions of the thesis will be considered in chapters 5-7 below. I have positioned the thesis within a social constructionist approach to social research, drawing on modes of cultural analysis that emphasise the role of discourse and interpretation in shaping planning cultures and planners' identities.

Within this framework policy discourse, produced at the centre of the planning policy network, frames planning cultures in line with a governing ideological ethos. These framings also "make up" particular subject positions for planners, seeking to regulate their identities in accordance with this ethos. Modernisation and culture change are understood as moments of disruption to existing discursive settlements, opening up space within which new framings can be contested, and new forms of culture governance and identity regulation shaped. This therefore

entails a period of intensive identity work for planners in local authorities as they seek to adjust to a new regime of practices, managing change to planning's role within local governance cultures, and seeking to negotiate their professional identities in relation to this new ideological ethos.

I now move on to describe how this conceptual framing informed the research design, and methodology through which the empirical problematic was investigated.

Chapter 4: Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

This chapter describes how the background to the research problematic, and conceptual framework outlined in the previous two chapters were used to inform the research design and methodology adopted in the thesis. One strand of criticism of work adopting a discursive approach to social research has been that methods are often not fully explained (Howarth, 2000; Lees, 2004; Howarth and Torfing, 2005,). Similar criticisms have also been made of methodological silences within planning research (Harris, 2007). Such silences may be because method is carried implicitly in certain practical skills, for example ways of reading or seeing. Equally, however, they may reinforce ways of viewing social research, and the social researcher, as the holder of a store of exclusive expertise (Robson, 2002; Johnson et al, 2004). One of the aims of this chapter is therefore to provide a full and honest account of the research process, and appraisal of the methods employed. In so doing it seeks to leave open some of the uncertainties that discussions of methodology often seek to tidy away. It therefore accepts that the research process, and its settings are not entirely within the control of the researcher (Rose, 1997). The chapter begins by describing how key elements of the conceptual framework guided the overarching philosophical approach to research practice. I then describe the research design as a particular product of the empirical problematic that the thesis is investigating. The methods used in the empirical work, and the rationale for their selection, are then explained.

Overall orientation

The approach to the concepts of culture and identity outlined above provide the basis for the overall methodological approach adopted in the thesis. In the previous chapter both of these concepts were described within a post-structuralist and constructivist understanding of the social. Such approaches are often positioned in relation to a rejection of positivist and objectivist traditions of social science that insist on the possibility of an objective research process uncovering 'true' knowledge. In its place they insist on a theory of knowledge as a contingent product of social relations, and the play of power (Yanow, 2000; Flyvbjerg, 2001; May, 2001; Fischer, 2003; Johnson et al, 2004). This suggests that we do not

objectively discover knowledge that is somehow 'out there', external to ourselves. Rather our understandings are always shaped by the involvement and particular ways of seeing that the researcher brings to any project (Yanow, 2000; Johnson et al, 2004). Such a view therefore sees interpretation as central to the construction of all knowledge (Yanow, 2000; Howarth, 2005; Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, 2006).

Contrary to criticisms sometimes made about such an approach from empiricist or realist positions, this does not lead to a relativistic denial of the possibility of making value judgements about the quality of knowledge produced through research (Johnson et al, 2004; Fischer, 2003; Yanow, 2000; Howarth, 2005). Instead it is possible to assess whether an account offers a good 'fit' with prevailing understandings. It is also possible to rigorously test the internal coherence of any account, and its external validity in relation to multiple other sources of information. Importantly, however, it insists that researchers seek to recognise the inevitable biases implied by the position from which particular research problematics are approached. Whilst a perfectly reflexive self-understanding may be an impossible goal (Rose, 1997; Hoggett, 2001), the attempt to situate ourselves, and the knowledge we produce is a valuable corrective to approaches that assume an objective viewing position. As part of what I earlier labelled a broader 'cultural turn' towards discursive and interpretive methodologies in policy analysis (e.g. Yanow, 2000; Fischer, 2003; Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003), such understandings of the nature of knowledge have become increasingly central to planning theory and research in recent years (e.g. Healey, 1997; Sandercock, 1998; Forester, 1999).

The production of social knowledge therefore comes to be seen as an interactive process between the researcher and the social world. This suggests that rather than correcting work for bias, and cleaving to the possibility of a value-neutral discovery of knowledge, researchers should instead seek to understand the ways in which their own ways of knowing, and those of the participants in research, are always situated and partial (Yanow, 2000; Johnson et al, 2004). This extends from the framing of the research project, and continues throughout the research process into the writing itself (ibid.). Such an approach has clear implications for research design, and methods, and for the role of the researcher in relation to

research practice. Below I outline how these principles guided and were reflected in the research process.

A qualitative approach

An understanding of culture and identity as complex and contested social constructions suggested the adoption within the study of qualitative research methods. These are particularly suited to in-depth exploration of changing discourses, the reconstruction of cultures and identities and for accessing other forms of 'situated knowledge' (Campbell, 2003; Howarth, 2005; Johnson et al, 2004). Interpretive/ discursive approaches to social research also typically involve a combination of methods. This allows a particular problematic to be explored from a number of different perspectives and through a range of different methodological lenses. It serves as a method for verifying or triangulating between different sources of data, and therefore of ensuring a rigorous approach to research and the production of knowledge (Howarth, 2005; de Vaus, 2001; May, 2001). Finally, it provides a fuller and thicker description of the issues, and allows consideration of a range of possible interpretations (Yanow, 2000; Johnson et al, 2004; Howarth, 2005).

Within the conceptual framework, planners' identities were seen as formed through planning cultures that their own actions either reproduce or try to change. Below I shall explain the ways in which this influenced the research design and the details of the particular methods adopted at different stages of the research. In terms of overarching methodological choices, however, it suggested the need for a combination of qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews, documentary analysis and some participant observation, to explore the re-framing of the discourses that structure planning cultures, and the interpretive work planners do to make sense of these changes and themselves.

The research process and conceptual framework: an iterative approach

This conceptual approach, and understanding of knowledge and the research process was arrived at, at least in part, in an iterative fashion. The project started out with a conception of culture as ideologically structured, and a view of the

planner as more directly subject to these structuring imperatives. However, the process of meeting with planners, particularly at the local level, suggested a level of lived experience, and interpretive activity that this framework struggled to adequately capture. As a result the more interpretive conception of identities as lived experiences, emanating from locally embedded cultures, was introduced. This is not intended to reinstall an essentialist conception of identity, or to privilege the accounts planners gave as more than situated understandings of their own experience (indeed few of the planners I met would, I suspect, make any such claim). However, it seeks to recognise the complexity of those identities and that experience. Furthermore, following Forester (1989,1999, 2003, undated), it suggests that planning theory, particularly in the UK where planners' voices have only rarely been heard in the literature, can learn from a greater attentiveness to those lived experiences and what they reveal about processes of change in planning (Tewdwr-Jones, 1999; Campbell and Marshall, 2005; Healey, 2005).

Scoping interviews, conducted with planners in local authority practice, were particularly important influences in arriving at this conceptualisation. They revealed the extent to which the interview process provided planners with an opportunity for reflection on their practices. This suggested a capacity for reflexive understanding of the "situatedness" of their knowledge and perspectives (Rose, 1997). Comments such as, "...but I would say that, it's a planner's perspective", suggested a level of understanding of the partiality that their position imposes on planners' understandings, and the limits to any objective knowledge of the contexts in which they work. Meanwhile, the apologetic, "sorry, I sound like a government spokesperson now!", suggested a reflexive capacity on the part of one professional to understand the ways in which certain discourses speak through her, even as she attempted to distance herself from them.

This is not to claim a mandate to restore a privileged conception of professional expertise, or an uncritical approach to planners' self-understandings. Rather it is to understand that these were social actors negotiating a complex field of practice that they viewed from particular, partial locations (Forester, 1999; Yanow, 2000). These, and other similar examples, suggested an awareness of, and a willingness to engage with the partiality that this imposes on their perspectives. It was this that suggested the need for a more interpretive understanding of 'identity work' (albeit not one that posits any capacity for actors to fully 'know' themselves). This

suggests the iterative nature of the research process, and the way in which the particular contexts and settings in which the work was conducted influenced the broader framing of the research. It suggested that interviews, as a research method, are far from neutral in their influence upon work that seeks to explore actors' subjective understandings of their experiences and values.

Situating the researcher

Far from being an 'ideal speech' situation where I was able to access pure or objective knowledge, then, interviews presented an opportunity to explore particular subjective interpretations and to invite those I spoke with to 'perform' their understanding of events and their sense of self in relation to them (cf. Howarth, 2005; Arksey and Knight, 1999). This required the development of a degree of trust between researcher and researched, as I asked interviewees to reveal something of the back-story behind the 'obligatory' performance of their professional duties. This was not always successful and some of those I spoke to were reluctant to move beyond an official account. The majority, however, warmed to what they described as an unusual opportunity to reflect on a period of rapid and often confusing change. In every case the result was an articulation of a particular relation to the wider discursive re-framing of planning practices.

My own capacity to generate an atmosphere in which such reflection was possible was, however, a particular challenge within the research process (this was related to the process of gaining access to the research setting that I describe in more detail below). Yanow (1996, 2000) suggests that interpretive policy research is a process of familiarising the researcher with the field of investigation, whereby it is necessary to get close enough to understand the way in which a given policy community is constituted, but not so close as to lose the capacity for critical reflection. Such ideas of closeness and distance between researcher and researched have also been an important theme in feminist scholarship that has sought to break down traditional barriers, whilst recognising both the impossibility and perhaps undesirability of a total identification between the two (Rose, 1997).

Having never worked in planning before, but with a planning qualification and an institutional attachment to a university that was widely recognised by local authorities, I was able to present myself to some extent as an 'insider'. However,

the unfamiliarity of the settings, and my awareness of the limits to what I was party to within them, meant that I was also often acutely aware of being in a foreign environment. In order to reflect on the research process, I maintained a series of notes on each interview, a kind of research diary, seeking to record the particular atmosphere that accompanied each meeting and any particular impressions on how the relationship I established might have affected the interview process (cf. Yanow, 2000). This attempt to foster a reflexive stance towards the work as it developed was a key element of the overall development of the research strategy. These observations illustrate the understanding of the research process that guided the work and its evolution. I now move on to describe the way in which the empirical research problematic informed the framing of the research design.

A two-stage research design

Chapter 3 suggested that the nature of the empirical problematic that the thesis is investigating implied the need for a two-stage research design, encompassing work at both the national and local levels.

This recognises that a central dimension of social research, and particularly investigation of both governmental activity and identity formation, must be an attempt to move between macro and micro levels of analysis, to simultaneously understand structuring dynamics and the possibilities for agency (Flyvbjerg, 2001). This has also been recognised as a central dimension of research in planning (Forester, 1989; Mandelbaum, 1996; Healey, 1997). The approach adopted in the thesis does not claim to resolve the intractable sociological tension between structure and agency, rather it represents a practical response to the dynamics of the empirical problematic under scrutiny. As described above, power is understood in the thesis as discursively enacted and productive of subject positions from which identities are negotiated. Episodes of identity work are therefore seen as moments when actors perform complex mediations between structure and agency. The aim of the research design was therefore to bring together an analysis of key discourses and the ideological ethos they sought to inculcate, and the interpretive work through which they produced different cultural and identity effects at the local level.

Due to their different aims each of these stages required different research methods to explore the questions set. Thus, within the overall approach described above, each was treated as a distinct stage in the research, contributing to a fuller understanding of the overall problematic. Below I outline the methods adopted at each of these stages, and then describe how these were applied in the research process.

National level approach and methods

To understand the nature of the culture change (and attendant identity regulation) implied by modernisation it is therefore necessary to analyse how the reform agenda has sought to construct the need for change, and the change required. This requires an analysis of the production of discourses of reform at the national level. In so doing this stage of analysis allows space to consider the extent to which the modernisation agenda has been driven by particular governmental rationalities emanating from the political ideology of New Labour. This stage therefore drew on an understanding of planning's culture as framed by particular ideological discourses articulated at the national level, and filtered through the planning policy network.

The modernisation of planning was therefore conceptualised as a period not just of systemic flux, but also of discursive flux, when, as civil servants suggested in interview, "*the balls were in the air*". The key aims of this stage of the empirical work were to assess the nature of the change implied by "modernisation" and the *particular rationalities and ideologies that underpinned these*. In particular it sought to understand the discursive strategies through which modernisation was articulated and framed. In addition it sought to assess the implications of the kind of change this suggested for the purpose and practice of planning, and for planning cultures and planners' identities in local authorities. In this respect this stage of the work sought to uncover the ways in which the modernising planning agenda was discursively constructed.

This aim was met with particular difficulties in seeking to reconstruct processes from the recent past that were (and remain) very much in a state of evolution. In particular, political sensibilities (understood in both party political and wider senses of the term) presented barriers, and suggested biases within available sources of

information, including actors' accounts. In addition many of the discussions framing the modernisation agenda and the culture change dimensions thereof were conducted under 'Chatham House rules' (where nothing leaves the room in order to encourage free discussion of particular issues).

Paradoxically, however, despite these potential biases and barriers, a truly remarkable quantity of information was also available. This is partly a product of the scope of the changes introduced by the government, particularly since 2001. In addition to legislation and its accompanying guidance, a large number of reviews, and policy consultations have contributed to the proliferation of documentary evidence salient to such an investigation. It is also a product of changes in availability of information brought about by the internet. Repositories of documentation on the websites of various organisations within the planning policy community provided a potentially huge corpus of relevant information. This therefore raised a range of issues that this stage of the research had to navigate.

As a result, and in keeping with the overall qualitative approach, two key methods were employed at this stage of the research. Extensive documentary analysis was coupled with semi-structured interviews with actors within the policy community, and particularly within the professional community. This mix of methods was intended to allow as full as possible an exploration of the discourses of reform. It was also intended to allow some access to the story behind the framing of these discourses, and the ways in which they were understood and contested by different actors within the policy community. The combination of methods also allowed some triangulation or verification to occur between the interviews and documentary analysis (Arksey and Knight, 1999; May, 2001; Howarth, 2005). Thus I was able to test interpretations emerging from my documentary analysis against the understandings of actors, whilst assessing the extent to which their accounts of events and interests were backed up by the available documentary evidence. Below I provide some further information about the rationale for selecting each of these methods, and the way in which the research was conducted.

National level methods - Documentary Analysis

Documentary analysis is a key resource for all forms of discourse analysis (Hajer, 2005; Hansen and Sorensen, 2005), providing a means of reconstructing how

particular moments were understood, and how key concepts were articulated. The documentary analysis undertaken at this stage in the research had two chief purposes. It was partly explorative: seeking to understand the key dimensions of the research problematic, and to inform the interviewing strategy. In addition, and more substantively, it sought to analyse the discursive construction of the modernisation agenda. Given the availability of large quantities of potentially relevant documentation, and its continued production throughout the research process, it was impractical to consider working towards a comprehensive corpus containing all available sources. It was therefore necessary to establish a strategy for selection and analysis of key documents (cf. Howarth, 2005).

To provide a basis for this, an initial, exploratory analysis of the planning press was conducted. The aim of this was to understand the central issues and moments in the modernisation process, and to identify key organisations and individuals involved in the planning policy and professional communities. This therefore represented a preliminary mapping of the policy community (Yanow, 2000), assisted by existing academic literature (e.g. Vigar et al, 2000; Murdoch and Abram, 2002).

Planning magazine is a weekly journal that provides news and some comment on planning issues, and acts as one of the RTPI's chief media for communicating with its members. An analysis was conducted of every issue of the magazine published between July, 2003 and July, 2005. This period was chosen to coincide with several major landmarks in the modernisation process, including: the passing of the 2004 Act (HMSO, 2004); the publication of key governmental policy guidance on the new system (ODPM, 2004b; 2005); the Egan Review of Skills (ODPM 2004); and the Barker Review of Housing Supply (Barker, 2004). And in the RTPI's (e.g. 2003) own reforms (the Education Commission reported its findings in 2003). The analysis reviewed all articles that reported news or provided commentary upon:

- the modernisation of planning;
- the culture change agenda;
- internal reforms to the profession;
- the changing roles and expectations of planning and the planner.

This provided an overview of the field, and the key issues and discourses circulating within the planning community in relation to the broad processes of change that the thesis sought to investigate.

Following this a corpus of key documents was selected. These were chosen to represent a sample of the different interests and discourses identified as central to the reform agenda. Four key moments in the reform process were identified to focus the gathering of sources, these were:

- The Green paper 'Planning: towards a fundamental change' published in 2001 (DTLR, 2001).
- The consultation on the drafting of PPS1 in 2004 (ODPM, 2003b)
- The Egan Review of Skills in 2004 (ODPM, 2004)
- The Barker Review of Land-use planning in 2006 (Barker, 2006)

Where available, documents relating to these four moments were collected from the following organisations that were considered representative of key interests in the planning policy community: Government (principally the department responsible for planning); RTPI; Planning Officers Society (POS); Friends of the Earth; Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE); Home Builders Federation (HBF); Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS); Confederation of British Industry (CBI); Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA); Local Government Association (LGA).

These were supplemented by:

- Minutes and memoranda of evidence from Select Committee Hearings into the Green Paper in 2001-2 (HMSO, 2002), and on Planning, Productivity and Competitiveness in 2003-4 (HMSO, 2004a).
- Various ministerial speeches and statements.
- A number of reports produced before the Green paper that interviewees suggested were influential in shaping modernisation (e.g. McKinsey, 1998; LGA, 2000; RTPI, 2001; TCPA, 1999).
- A selection of guidance documents produced on making the new planning system work. This included emerging research projects (see CLG, 2008; RTPI, 2007) and practice guides (POS, 2005; PAS, undated).

- In addition, further documents were collected on the concurrent reforms to the profession and the changing role of its representative bodies, the RTPI and POS.

This basic corpus was supplemented by certain further documents that were either recommended in interviews, or emerged during the research process. These were all read to ascertain how the following had been constructed:

- Change: the need for it, its trajectory, narratives describing it.
- The government's intentions for the new planning system.
- The discourse coalitions that emerged within the policy community to narrate the change required.
- The nature of the new planning practice and of the culture change required of planning.
- The nature of the new planner required by the new planning (including change within the profession).

National level methods - Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are considered a good way of exploring how particular issues are constructed, and how actors reconstruct or narrate events (Arksey and Knight, 1999). They provide important insight into actors' experiences and values (May, 2001). Howarth (2005) suggests that semi-structured interviews are an important method for approaches that seek 'thick' descriptions of events and processes. Interviews at the national level were focussed on understanding how actors within the policy community constructed the modernisation agenda. In particular they sought to explore:

- how different organisations/ actors narrated the planning reform agenda
- the drivers of reform
- the aims and purpose of the new planning
- the case for change and the change required
- the implications for local authority planners

The aim was to identify the key discourses of reform, and how actors sought to position themselves and their organisations in relation to these. Rather than a list

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of interview questions, a schedule of topics was prepared with discussion, prompted by me, working loosely around this guide (cf. Arksey and Knight, 1999; May, 2001).

Interviews were arranged through a process of 'snowballing' whereby initial contacts were asked to name other potentially useful sources (Arksey and Knight, 1999). The intention in proceeding in this way was to further 'map' the policy community, and to speak to those considered central to framing and developing the agenda (Yanow, 2000). This strategy was not entirely successful as gaining access to certain key individuals proved impossible (see chapter 9 below for a discussion of the limitations of the study). In total eleven interviews were conducted. These encompassed meetings with civil servants, and representatives of key organisations within the policy and professional communities. Meetings lasted from one to two and a half hours, were conducted both in person and by telephone, and, where possible, were recorded and later fully transcribed.

Having described the methods used at the national level, I now move on to describe the approach taken to the local level stage of the research.

Local level approach and methods

Choosing planners

As suggested above, a key focus of 'modernisation' has been on changing local authority practice. Thus, although 'culture change', and the profession's own processes of reinvention are both wider agendas, local authority planning practice remains a key location through which to understand the reconstitution of planning cultures, and the remaking of the planner. Indeed, as I argued above, local authority planners, as state bureau-professionals, have been both the object and agent of continued efforts to modernise the state (Newman, 2001). For these reasons, the effects of the modernisation agenda on local authority planners are the central concern and problematic with which the work is concerned.

Another key decision at the local level, however, was to focus the research on the work and experiences of policy planners, as opposed to the development control or management (DC) side of planning practice. The two 'types' of planner (as they were often described to me by planners in interview) can be seen as undertaking

the two, traditional core functions of local authority planning practice, and by extension of professional planning practice throughout most of the post-war period (Thomas, 1998). A division between the working cultures of 'policy' (plan-writing, strategic) and DC (assessing of planning applications, implementation) planners has long been noted in academic analysis (e.g. Keeble, 1961; McLaughlin 1973a). Common to such accounts has been a certain antipathy towards the DC or implementation function (Tewdwr-Jones, 1999). This grew as DC work expanded over the post-war period from being perceived as a minor part of the planning process into the dominant claim on resources within planning departments. Indeed, as Thomas (1998) suggests the majority of local authority planners (and therefore of the profession as a whole) have tended to be employed in DC related work. Despite this, however, many professionals have long viewed such work as a routine, administrative task that has distracted attention from the 'real' work of producing plans (Keeble, 1961; Cherry, 1974).

The division between policy and DC planners has been the subject of further scrutiny in recent years (Tewdwr-Jones, 1999; McClymont 2006). This reflects concern that the gap between policy and DC may have increased, exacerbated by the increasingly common division of strategic policy from front line service delivery (or implementation) in local government. Indeed, it is now common for planning policy functions to sit in different directorates from the implementation side of professional activity, implying clear organisational and often physical separation between the two. Furthermore, Allmendinger (2006) suggests that the modernisation agenda has targeted different reforms at these different forms of planning practice, and, in particular, has problematised the regulatory function.

As I shall argue in the next chapter, a binary distinction between the regulatory and the proactive has been central to the discourses of planning reform. However, such a distinction can be equally as saliently applied between between regulatory and more proactive local planning cultures, as it is to these different professional activities or functions. Moreover, at the time that the fieldwork was being conducted policy planners were involved in the production of the new style spatial strategies introduced by the 2004 Act. Indeed, the plan making system was in many respects the central focus of the 2004 reforms (Allmendinger, 2006; chapter 5 below). Policy planners were therefore directly engaged in negotiating the new culture and practices that the planning reform agenda sought to enable. Thus,

whilst only a minority of local authority planners are engaged in policy work, they have played a vital role as interpreters of the new planning and the change implied by the modernisation of planning. The research thus chose to focus particularly on the experiences, and identities of local authority policy planners.

On the newly re-branded, 'development management' side of planning, meanwhile, it may take some time for the implications of these changes to become apparent. My interviews suggested that many authorities and 'development managers' remain unclear as to the full impacts of changes that have not yet fed through the system to the point of implementation. These issues will be further touched upon in the concluding chapter below as they raise issues for future investigation, and may well shed further light on the planning system introduced by the 2004 Act, and its identity regulating impacts.

Locating the planners in context - an embedded case study approach

Having chosen to focus on policy planners it was also necessary to adopt a strategy for selecting who to speak to, and where. There were several possible options for this stage of the research. Amongst the approaches considered was a random sampling of policy planners, or a focus on planners at a particular career stage. Ultimately, however, it was decided that a case study approach was best suited to the needs of the research. In keeping with the overall approach suggested above, exploration of cultures and identities requires a qualitative approach. Case studies have been widely used in research that seeks to access in-depth understandings (Flyvbjerg, 2001). They have also been described as particularly appropriate for research using discursive and interpretive methods (Howarth, 2005; Yanow, 1996; 2000).

Furthermore, a case study approach recognises the scope for local level variation in planning that has, as described above, been a salient feature of the system in the UK. Indeed, case study methods have been described as a useful means of assessing the locally embedded, and distinctive processes and outcomes of planning (Brindley et al, 1996), and as offering the promise of a 'thick description' of dynamics of change to professional roles and cultures (Healey and Underwood, 1979; Underwood, 1980). Such recommendations stem from recognition that planning is a heavily 'situated' practice (Campbell and Marshall 1999; Campbell

2003). If we take this insight seriously then methods, such as the case study, that allow a full exploration of context are vital.

Despite this, however, a lack of in-depth case studies of planning practice and the ethics of professional practice has been recognised within the British-based literature (Campbell and Marshall, 2005; Healey 2005). In turn, this has been described as a barrier to understanding processes of culture change in planning (Shaw, 2006). Thus a case study approach was considered an appropriate means of tackling the particular problematic under question (de Vaus, 2001), and of fully exploring the idea that "the theatre of culture change is the local".

Most importantly a case study approach made it possible to explore the complex inter-relations between local planning cultures, planners' roles and sense of identity. As I shall describe in the next chapter, a central goal of the modernisation agenda in planning has been to re-articulate the relationship between planning and its context within local governance (e.g. Allmendinger et al, 2006). This suggests the importance of positioning planners' conceptions of change within the wider frame of changing local government cultures (cf. Cochrane, 2004). This stage of the research therefore retained a dual focus. First of all, to assess processes of local level change in planning's role and in local planning cultures. These were recognised in the conceptual framework as key contexts through which local planning identities are contested, constructed and performed. They are also therefore a source of identity regulation, and, in part, the outcome of the processes of identity work through which planners negotiate their own professional identities. The second focus was then on those processes of identity work that planners were engaged in as they sought to respond to changing discourses and practices.

The case study method is particularly suited to this dual focus as it allows the possibility of exploring "embedded cases", where sub-cases can be contained within an overall case study design (Yin, 2003). Local planning cultures can therefore be seen as cases, with the planners working within them being viewed as sub, or embedded-cases. Thus, it is possible to explore the complex inter-relationship between locally constituted planning cultures, and the kinds of identity work that planners are engaged in as they seek to interpret and make sense of their changing roles within them. A case study approach is therefore a valuable

means of exploring the extent to which planners in particular locations develop a shared set of narratives and frames through which to understand their roles, and the extent to which this 'fits' with wider governance and organisational discourses (Alvesson and Wilmott, 2002; Hansen and Sorensen, 2005).

Selecting the cases

Due to the qualitative nature of the overall approach, the research does not aim to provide generalisable results, or to present a scientifically selected sample in the positivist tradition of social science. Nevertheless, in selecting case study authorities several decisions were significant.

First of all, it was decided to adopt case studies of local authority practice within what I will label 'ordinary spaces' in the South East of England. This term is not used to suggest that the study areas were somehow typical or representative planning cultures. Indeed, in addition to recognition of variability in local planning cultures, the novelty of the new planning system, the fluidity of the modernisation agenda, and the unevenness of progress on LDF's ensured that it would have been almost impossible to identify such authorities. Rather, they were chosen in preference to areas subject to particularly significant governmental interventions in the institutions of spatial governance. Such 'extra-ordinary spaces', including for example the growth areas designated under the Sustainable Communities plan (ODPM, 2003a), have been labelled as 'fuzzy' or 'soft spaces' and have been described as the cutting edge of emerging planning practices (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2009). As I shall describe in the next chapter, however, a key emphasis within the modernisation agenda has been on revitalising planning within what have been represented as the residualised spaces of local authority practice. This suggested that these 'ordinary spaces' were a particular object of reform, where the success or failure of the culture change agenda in local government planning would be largely decided. For similar reasons the South East of England was chosen as the regional framing of the research. As a region the South East has been particularly central to New Labour's economic policy (Allen et al, 1998; Allen and Cochrane, 2007), and the discourses of modernisation have been driven by particular conceptions of the role of planning in relation to the economy. The success or failure of culture change within local authorities in the South East was

therefore considered a significant test for the emergence of a new planning, and a new planner.

A second key decision was to use two cases. This reflected a balance between the need for depth of engagement and a desire to explore more than one context. By pursuing two cases it was possible for the study to explore the extent to which two nominally very different planning cultures had responded to the modernisation agenda, and the effects this had on the nature of the identity work facing planners in these contrasting situations. Cases were therefore selected that appeared to show a high level of variation (Flyvbjerg, 2001, 79). The cases selected therefore offered contrasting political, organisational and planning cultures. This decision was assisted by the 'scoping stage' where pilot interviews were conducted in five local authorities (including the two subsequently taken up as case studies). One of the aims of this stage was to gain insight into the cases that would best represent this 'maximum variability'.

Accessing case studies

The scoping stage of the research was also valuable as a tool for negotiating access to potential case studies. This proved to be a far from straightforward process. The desire to conduct in-depth research was met with a wary response in several different authorities when initially approached, with two declining even to take part in a scoping interview. Scoping interviews were therefore used as a means of building contacts whilst testing the key themes of the research. In several cases these initial contacts continued to act as 'gatekeepers', with subsequent requests to speak with other members of the team turned down. However, this did ultimately prove a useful strategy for finding a 'way in' to the research setting.

At the scoping stage one contact was identified in each local authority, with initial email contact being followed where necessary by subsequent telephone calls to request a meeting. This proved easier in authorities where a pre-existing link could be exploited, either personal or through the university (alumni were particularly responsive to requests). Scoping stage participants were then asked to approach managers and request permission to circulate a further email to others working in their team. At this point several such requests were turned down.

In the two authorities that became the case studies, however, access was granted and an email was circulated to all members of the team on my behalf. This prompted responses from all of those I eventually spoke with, but in both cases was framed as a voluntary activity. As a result in both authorities there were planners who I did not interview, though where possible I did ask interviewees to encourage others to speak with me (the possible influence of this on the research is discussed on pp. 269-270 below).

Similar difficulties in accessing the spaces of local government planning practice have been noted elsewhere (Abram, 2001). This difficulty therefore seemed to represent something potentially significant in its own right. This is suggested by the response below from the head of one policy team to one of my scoping stage participants who had enquired about the possibility of my using the authority as a case study:

> *Whilst happy to help students to a limited extent we have to give priority to delivering the service. In their present state I can't imagine dc wanting to give any time to this nor, with our current work programme can this be considered a priority for you. Sorry not to be more helpful.*

The pressurised nature of the new system and the demands it has made on resources seemed to be acting as a significant barrier to access. This suggested a significant feature of the experience of change in recent years.

The process of negotiating access was also marked by a sense that the credentials of my research were being 'rated'. On one level this involved an understandable questioning of my qualifications and intentions. Perhaps more important, however, seemed to be a desire to find out if my research was sponsored by government, and whether it had a 'practical' or instrumental value. It was clear in some cases that a PhD research project with rather explorative pre-occupations was not considered a priority. Albeit in anecdotal fashion, these observations raise potentially significant questions about the capacity to undertake sustained case study work on local planning cultures. This is perhaps a subject for further research in its own right.

These difficulties led to the revision of an initial plan to supplement in-depth interviews with participant observation of internal staff meetings in the case study locations. This request proved difficult to accommodate even once access was well established in the two case studies, with several apparent opportunities for observation failing to materialise. This seemed to stem from a wariness of 'being researched', and in particular from the fear of breaching the (commercial) confidentiality and trust embodied in meetings with other agencies, developers, service departments and politicians. Thus interviews were supplemented only with more limited observation of public events.

Local level methods – interviews with planners

In keeping with the overall approach, a mix of methods was adopted to assess local planning cultures and planners' identities in the case studies. This allowed some verification of particular statements through triangulation (cf. Yin, 2003; Hansen and Sorensen, 2005; Yanow, 2000). Semi-structured interviews were selected as the key method of investigation. As suggested above these are considered a good method for exploring issues in-depth (Arksey and Knights 1999), and particularly for approaches that stress the importance of subjectivity and which seek 'thick' descriptions (Howarth, 2005).

The purpose of interviews with policy planners was, however, different from those conducted at the national level. I have already discussed how central these interviews were to the overall conceptual framing of the thesis, and how this reflected a desire to explore what John Forester (1999, undated) calls 'practice stories', and their capacity to illuminate the ways in which planners' negotiate their sense of identity at work. These interviews aimed to understand how planners interpret their roles and sense of self at work in relation to both local and national level discourses. The interviews sought to explore the lived experience of being both modernised and modernising, whether this had presented opportunities for a positive rearticulation of their professional identities, or had been met with frustrations or resistances to change. Once again an interview schedule was drawn up, and planners, prompted by my interventions, were encouraged to talk around the issues that this raised. In particular the interviews sought to explore:

- Planners' personal background, career history and understanding of their motivations and commitment to planning.

- Their understanding of the key relations through which their identities were constructed, and how they have changed in recent years (e.g. with DC colleagues, other colleagues, the public, key stakeholders, central government etc.).

- Their understanding of the new agenda and its effects on their practices and understandings of planning.

- The change that this implied and whether they were succeeding in making it happen.

- The extent to which they had been able to perform the identity that they wished through their current role, or the chief barriers that prevented this from happening.

As noted above, a central aim of these interviews was to invite planners to go beyond, or 'behind' the official performance or storyline available. Planners were asked to describe how they understood their relationship to the officially 'performed' local planning identity, the national level modernisation agenda, and the relationship between these. As such the potential distortions of the interview situation were accepted, and, in particular, the capacity for discrepancy between 'values in use' and 'espoused values' (Argyris and Schon, 1974). One of the aims of the analysis was therefore to explore these distortions as expressions of particular identities, in the belief that:

> ...rather than being discarded or discounted they may themselves constitute important windows into actors' understandings and interpretations of events. (Howarth, 2005, 339)

In this way planners' 'practice stories' were privileged as an expression of their identities. Interviews were understood as a means of accessing how planners felt changing discourses had worked to reconstitute their sense of professional 'self', and its relation to local and national planning cultures.

Local level methods – verification techniques

Interviews with policy planners were supplemented by further interviews with other officials including: representatives from DC; the corporate executive of the two councils (including chief executives and service heads); officials responsible for producing the community strategy; and politicians. The aim of these additional interviews was to ascertain if the stories told by planners were widely shared within the local authority, particularly in relation to the role of planning locally and its capacity to shape the attention of other services which has been a central claim of the modernisation agenda (cf. Hansen and Sorensen (2005) on this kind of verification). They also helped to build a fuller picture of the key local and organisational discourses shaping the context within which planning worked.

All of these interviews were recorded and later fully transcribed. In total twelve interviews were conducted in each case, nine of which were with planners, seven of whom were working on new style spatial strategies. Since both case studies were also part of the initial scoping stage of the research, and subsequent follow up interviews were also conducted, I was able to keep in contact with developments over a period of a year and a half.

In addition, further information was gathered from some observation of public consultation events in both locations, and the formal "examination" of a new style development plan document in one case. These provided further insight into the publicly performed 'planning identity' that interviews sought to get 'behind'. To provide a 'thicker' sense of the local political and organisational cultures within which planning was embedded, and of the role that planning played in relation to that culture, additional analysis of local documentation was conducted. This included: local press reports; emerging policy documents; public consultation reports; council minutes; and wider corporate documents, particularly related to community strategy preparation.

Research Ethics

The project was granted full ethical approval by the University's research ethics committee. As part of this I ensured that all participants gave their approval to participate, and understood the intentions behind the work and how the interview material would be used. In addition, however, particular ethical questions were

raised by the overall approach to the research project, and the relationship of trust between researcher and researched required to access the 'back-stage' story.

I have already suggested that these relationships led to a shift in the conceptual framing of the thesis, and a commitment to explore the lived experience of modernisation. In order to protect the anonymity of participants, no names are used when quoting from interviews. Moreover, local level participants have been sent a copy of the relevant case study chapter and given the opportunity to offer corrections, or to request changes to the account presented (though at the point of submission of the thesis no comments had been received). I therefore hope that the material they shared has been treated sensitively in accordance with the trust and good faith shown by participants.

Analysis

Within the wider approach to research outlined above, analysis is considered an ongoing part of any research project, starting from the choice of a particular research problematic, and requiring reflection on research practice (e.g. through the maintenance of notes on each interview). This extends into the writing of the thesis that is considered a further stage of analysis where new insights may emerge (Yanow, 2000; Johnson et al, 2004). Within the two-stage research design adopted in the thesis, ongoing analysis was particularly important, with insights from the national level informing the subsequent work at the local level.

Given the documentary nature of much of the work, analysis involved cultivating a particular practice of critical reading, or of interpreting actors' interpretations of events (cf. Morley and Hsing-Chen, 1996; Johnson et al, 2004). In Yanow's (2000) terms this involves a process of reading and re-reading, familiarisation and de-familiarisation, through which it becomes possible to critically interrogate texts and their meanings.

Such analysis of qualitative data must therefore be accepted as a fluid interpretive practice (ibid.). However, several different techniques were helpful in structuring this process. Transcription of the interviews was particularly important as a process that at once re-familiarised me with the content of interviews, but also translated them into a different context, thereby suggesting further insights and

challenging my recollections (cf. Arksey and Knights, 1999). The software programme NVIVO was also used to code and identify key threads within the transcripts and other key documents. In addition, writing of conference papers, and for journal articles, was used to develop the analysis of the national level in particular (e.g. Inch, 2009).

Conclusions

Having provided a full explanation of the methods adopted in the research, the rationale for their selection and the nature of the research process it is now possible to move on to the empirical sections of the thesis. The next three chapters therefore describe the key parts of the empirical work. Chapter 5 describes the national level, the framing of the modernisation agenda, ways in which culture change has been constructed and the way in which this has sought to rethink the identity of planning, and the subject positions of planners. Chapter 6 then shifts attention to the local level, describing the effects of the new planning on planners identities in an authority marked by a regulatory and highly politicised, growth resistant planning culture. Chapter 7 then describes the effects of these changes on a planning culture marked by a more positive, pro-growth culture. In chapter 8 these three dimensions are brought together to consider the broader implications of the modernisation agenda for culture change and identity regulation in English planning. Finally chapter 9 presents some conclusions and considers the strengths and limitations of the research.

Chapter 5 The modernising planning agenda: constructing the image of a "modern" planning practice and the "modern" planner

Introduction

This chapter begins the empirical elements of the thesis. It does this by describing the modernising planning agenda at the national level, and the ways it has addressed itself, both explicit and implicit, to the cultures of planning and identities of planners. As outlined above, the cultural level is considered a central element of the modernisation agenda, reflecting a move towards modes of culture governance as an increasingly significant governmental technique for bringing about change in the state and its modes of operation. The chapter therefore explores the modernisation agenda, and how the discourses shaping reform have sought to reframe the planning system and in so doing to engender a 'new ideological ethos', summoning planners to new ways of understanding themselves and their work. As described above, the national level is considered the centre of the discursive field of planning, and, although the policy process is a complex and diffuse set of networks, the English planning system is also marked by the strong centralisation of power and control. This suggests the need to assess the re-framing of planning at this level in order to fully understand the inter-relationships between planning reform and identity regulation. In so doing the chapter aims to answer the two research questions set for this stage of the work (see p.71 above):

- *How has the modernisation agenda sought to change the culture of planning and, by extension, the identities of planners in local government?*
- *To what extent does this reflect a distinctively New Labour agenda, or ideological ethos?*

In part the answer to the second of these questions has already been suggested in chapter 2, where I linked the discourse of modernisation to the idea of 'culture governance', and to particular ways of managing the state that have been prevalent during New Labour's period in government. It is still important, however, to assess the ways in which changes in planning have reflected particular governmental concerns. The idea that culture has become an increasingly important mode of governing under New Labour does not imply any clear link to

how change has occurred in planning. Furthermore, it does not provide any guidance as to the ideological ethos or rationalities that have driven the modernising planning agenda.

This chapter draws on the documentary analysis and interviews described in the Methodology above, and also on existing academic accounts of these changes and the way they have understood "modernisation". In this way academic narrations are seen as part of the ongoing interpretive politics of the planning community, rather than as a separate realm of 'objective' commentary. This is another key dimension of an interpretive approach to social research (Bevir and Rhodes, 2003; cf. Cochrane, 2004) that must be considered significant within academic work on public policy where there is scope, albeit perhaps weak in British planning (Thomas, 1998; 2004a), for academics to contribute to policy and practice.[5].

I begin the chapter by describing how the modernisation agenda in planning unfolded, stressing the particular interpretations that framed governmental action, and the discourse coalitions that sought to influence the agenda. This provides the basis for a critical analysis of the discursive politics of modernisation. Finally, I draw this together to suggest an overall reading, focusing on the tensions, contradictions and ambivalences within the modernisation agenda. This suggests that modernisation has struggled to articulate a new ideological ethos in the singular, and that it has instead embedded a number of different agendas into the reformed planning system. Each of these appears to suggest quite different conceptions of planning cultures, and subject positions for local authority planners. This, I argue, opens up potentially significant interpretive spaces for planning at the local level, but also creates a complex and confusing *"field of tensions"*.

The development of the modernising planning agenda

Whilst in opposition Labour had played with the anti-planning rhetoric of the New Right, suggesting a continued perception that the system acted as a brake on economic development (Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones, 2000). This can be understood to reflect both relative continuities between the New Right and New

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[5] The chapter also draws heavily in places on my own material published elsewhere as Inch (2009), this is not referenced except where I wish to draw attention to a wider argument that is more fully developed there.

Labour, but also the more deep-seated ambivalences of the old left to environmental concerns and forms of regulation that might inhibit job growth (ibid). Once in government, however, there was little initial indication of either a particular desire to reform the workings of the planning system, or of any clear idea as to how this might be done. Indeed, the Blair government took longer than any previous Labour administration to address reform of the planning system (Ward, 2004), perhaps reflecting the presence of other priorities and the unglamorous nature of planning as an area of government policy.

A ministerial statement published in 1998, entitled "Modernising Planning" reinforced the impression that the party lacked a clear agenda for planning (DETR, 1998). Whilst there was some vague consideration given to the introduction of more 'modern', fiscal mechanisms, the main focus in the statement was on the need to consolidate and build upon a system that was presented as fundamentally sound. As Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones (2000, 1395) suggest, the statement "sealed the government's inheritance of the New Right's planning legacy", endorsing the plan-led system introduced in 1991, and responding to certain emergent issues (e.g. European planning) but revealing little more than an "ambivalent (though sceptical) view of planning" (ibid, 1396).

A progress report published in April of the following year was more critical of the existing system, describing it as complex and mystifying (DETR, 1999). The report called for a more proactive planning system, better aligned with the government's recently laid out principles of "modern" government (Cabinet Office, 1999). Whilst recognising the complex trade offs inherent to many planning decisions, it asserted that planning services could be improved by a greater focus on operational efficiency, more participation and transparency, and partnership with key implementation agencies. The government's concern with planning's impact on economic growth was also suggested by an attempt to re-articulate "sustainable development", arguing for a stronger emphasis on the economic dimension of the term. This suggested unease at the strength of the environmental interpretation that had become established in the 1990s. Overall, however, ambition was limited to creating a more efficient service for users, providing greater certainty for business and communities. The focus of change was on improving the mechanics of the planning system by managerial means, promoting

greater speed and quality but with a presumption in favour of the former (Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones, 2000).

In relation to Finlayson's (2003, see chapter 1 above) analysis of modernisation as a discourse of change, the 'modernisation' of planning during Labour's first term can therefore be interpreted as largely rhetorical and ideological. The term linked the Government's agenda for planning with wider processes of change across the state, but without laying out any clear agenda, or sense of how the system would be positioned in relation to the more substantive reforms that were being introduced in local government (Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones, 2000). There was little indication that planning was thought of at all in relation to key government drives on issues such as social exclusion (ibid). In as far as the 'modernisation' of planning had any concrete referents at this time they related to the pursuit of 'light touch' regulation (see e.g. Cabinet Office, 1999), reflecting an essentially neoliberal concern about planning's impacts on economic competitiveness.

Given the nature of these earlier policy statements, and prior to the announcement in the 2001 election manifesto of a commitment to legislate on full planning reform, it was widely anticipated that piece-meal reform was the most likely governmental response for the planning system. As an RTPI think tank (2001) report noted, this represented a more likely means of increasing the speed of the system than substantive change that would require a period of adjustment. The shift towards the "*fundamental change*" hailed in the 2001 Green Paper therefore came as a surprise to many (Upton, 2006), particularly since the manifesto commitment implied that speeding up the system was the primary goal of reform (Labour Party, 2001). This fitted, however, within a broader second term drive to reform public services as a symbol of New Labour's modernising credentials (ibid; Hall, 2003; Finlayson, 2003).

The appointment of Lord Falconer as minister, with a strong mandate to modernise planning, was a symbol of the strength of the government's desire to act on planning, and the priority the task was to be afforded. Indeed, Falconer's strong personal relationship with Tony Blair gave the impression of a heavyweight appointment, and of ministerial concern about the impacts of planning at the highest level within government.

"Towards a fundamental change": problematising planning

The announcement of the intention to legislate on full planning reform led to a substantial shift in governmental rhetoric about the planning system. If the statement in 1998 had appeared to propose modernisation as part of an ideological or rhetorical strategy with little concrete sense of the change that this implied, from 2001 onwards the term's use came to be primarily as a strategy of problematisation. Modernisation became a symbol of the change that was required to make the planning system fit for the 21st century. This implied not just gradual change to make the system "fit for purpose", but a more fundamental challenge to the purpose of planning itself (cf. Vigar et al, 2000, 7-10). In turn this meant that the previous, somewhat reluctant, representation of the existing system as a basically sound and adaptable inheritance from 1947 was radically problematised. Ministers now suggested that the Green Paper would represent a "clean slate" approach (Blackman, 2001), and claimed a consensus on the need to deal with the "quagmire" of the existing planning system (Dewar and Winkley, 2001).

The Green Paper was published in December 2001, six months after Labour's re-election and Falconer's appointment, and with little substantive input from lobby groups (MacDonald, 2001). The overall tone of the paper and its proposals reflected a notable strengthening of the government's critique, presenting the existing system as fundamentally broken. This was achieved through a narrative describing a system no longer capable of meeting the needs of its users, and that was overly negative and change resistant. In keeping with the government's wider modernisation agenda (e.g. Cabinet Office, 1999) the two principal audiences addressed in the paper were the 'community', whose right to be involved in planning decisions was stressed but for whom the existing system was described as remote and inaccessible; and 'business', whose need for a faster, more flexible and efficient system was contrasted with the sclerosis of the current arrangements. The existing system was therefore described as overly complex, slow and unpredictable, unable to effectively engage communities, and insufficiently customer focused. It was also recognised that it suffered from resource and skills shortages amongst both professional planners, and local politicians (DTLR, 2001; ODPM, 2002).

The Green Paper argued that a reformed planning system would be capable of positively shaping development rather than negatively restricting it, and would contribute to economic competitiveness, urban renaissance and sustainable development through the delivery of the right land in the right place at the right time. Change it was therefore claimed was vital and would allow the planning system to meet the needs of its users, ridding the system of its bureaucratic over-complexity, and the time delays that had a negative impact on economic competitiveness:

> *We believe in good planning... A system that underpins our desire to improve productivity by being capable of reaching a proper balance between our desire for economic development and for thriving communities. A system that is clear and comprehensible, that comes to robust decisions in sensible time frames.* (DTLR 2001, para. 1.8)

In this way the Green Paper constructed a discourse that naturalised and made necessary "fundamental change", claiming a consensus for the analysis of a broken system, a vision of the change required, and presenting the government's proposals as the means to achieve this transformation. Figure 5.1 provides a view of the way that this change was constructed within the Green Paper.

The Old Planning	Mechanisms of change	The New Planning
Slow and inefficient for business/ barrier to competitiveness	Faster, more flexible processes	Good for business/ customer focused, faster, more flexible
Remote and inaccessible to communities/ local government	More community involvement/ Joining up with Community Strategies	Good for communities ("*engaging not just consulting*")/ Strategic tool of local governance Set out a positive vision for the future
Mired in over-complex regulation/ bureaucratic/ stifling change	Shorter, more flexible strategies/ Shift from DC to development management	Dynamic/ accommodates and delivers sustainable change/ government's agenda for land-use

Figure 5.1 The Green Paper and the construction of new and old planning

The construction of change through binary oppositions is a common rhetorical practice, and one that is often present in policy discourse that seeks to persuade through the construction of highly normative prescriptions (Clarke and Newman, 1997; Newman, 2004). This often requires, however, the elision or suppression of contradictory or conflicting elements. It is therefore notable that, in the transition from 1999's Modernising Planning to the Green Paper, recognition of the tensions between different demands on the planning system became less explicit. Most notable was the refusal to accept any necessary tension between seeking to speed the system up to meet business needs, and seeking to improve public participation.

This seems to reflect a distinctive element of New Labour's wider approach – the claim to a "third way" that is able to resolve traditional antagonisms between, for example, "...enterprise *and* the attack on poverty and discrimination" (Blair, 1998, 1, emphasis in original). This has allowed the party to claim a pragmatic, "what matters is what works" approach to government, but has also served clear ideological purposes, obviating or obfuscating the need to make uncomfortable choices or to accept the presence of political antagonisms (cf. Mouffe, 1998; Fairclough, 2000; Newman, 2001). Whilst at other moments Labour did recognise these tensions in planning, Lord Falconer appeared particularly reluctant to do so, denying that this was an issue in his evidence to the Select Committee inquiry into the Green Paper (Falconer, 2002). Thus, through narration of the requirement for "fundamental change", the Green Paper sought to simplify and smooth over the complexity of the task of reforming planning, and to bring together the different voices within the planning policy community behind a discourse of change.

The subsequent consultation period nonetheless produced a lobbying battle to redefine the principles governing the system, yielding some 15, 500 responses (DTLR, 2002). The DTLR sought to present this response as supportive of the government's agenda, however questions were raised about the analysis the government presented, and whether this reflected the tone of the responses received (HMSO, 2002). Indeed, initial responses to the proposals were far from universally positive.

Environmental and social NGOs expressed strong misgivings about the government's motives. For the environmental groups these were seen to have derived chiefly from business concerns about the speed of decision-making. In addition, however, they questioned the government's analysis and problematisation of the existing system. According to Hugh Ellis (2001) of Friends of the Earth, the Green Paper proposed the wrong answers to the wrong questions, whilst for David Lock (2001) of the TCPA they represented the overselling of a highly problematic set of measures. Though complex and frustrating, they argued that the local plan system was increasingly understood by local communities. In similar terms, certain development interests expressed misgivings about the uncertainty reform may bring (e.g. Redrow, 2001). Whilst these voices accepted that the system was far from perfect, they argued that significant issues could be addressed without the need for *"fundamental change"*. They therefore maintained a discourse, in keeping with the government's earlier line, stressing the basic soundness of the existing system, and calling for more modest adjustment to address particular issues (for the environmental lobby this was largely about the accessibility of the system to local people, for developer interests speed and certainty were central).

Despite such doubts being raised, however, it was apparent that the government's resolve to reform planning was strong. Indeed, the commitment to reform had been further underlined by Falconer's promise to drive through legislation in just one parliamentary session. Civil servants described his arrival as signalling a determined effort to *"throw the balls in the air"*. This *"clean slate"* approach, based on a strategy of problematising the existing planning system therefore represented a determined effort to dislocate the discursive settlement that had emerged around the plan-led system in the 1990s. In this context, attempts to challenge the central thrust of the government's analysis proved largely ineffective. Though the emphasis on the *"broken system"* in the Green Paper was later moderated (e.g. ODPM, 2002; 2003), the commitment to *"wide-ranging, comprehensive changes"* remained (ODPM, 2002, para. 4).

Moreover, opposition to reform was rendered more difficult by the presence of widely acknowledged frustrations with the plan-led system, and strong pressure for change from influential lobbies. Interviews with members of the planning professional community suggested that this was understood in relation to two key

discourse coalitions. I now therefore move on to introduce these, and the different ways in which they sought to problematise and modernise planning.

The "Treasury agenda" as a driver of reform

The influence of what can be labelled the "Treasury agenda", and the concerted lobbying of business groups like the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) was widely identified in interviews as a particularly significant driver of the government's commitment to planning reform. As I shall explain below, it remains unclear exactly how much influence the Treasury exerted over the modernisation agenda as evidence remains anecdotal and patchy. In addition, the construction of the Treasury as a hostile "other" was central to the development of an alternative, "spatial planning discourse coalition" which most of those I interviewed were committed to. This suggests that their constructions of change may have been subject to bias, though such bias is itself an important object of analysis (cf. Griggs, 2005). Moreover, it also seems clear that the Treasury and CBI formed a discourse coalition that was influential in pushing for reform and has played a central role in the politics of modernising planning.

This is broadly consistent with the Treasury's wider role in the setting of domestic policy which, with Gordon Brown as Chancellor between 1997 and 2007, had become perhaps more powerful than at any other time in history (Larsen et al, 2006). Within New Labour the drive to promote economic competitiveness and to support business has been an often over-riding concern (Hay, 1999; Finlayson, 2003), and has been particularly central to the Treasury's agenda across government. The Exchequer's interest in planning was significantly reinforced during Labour's first term in government by reports that identified land-use regulation as an impediment to national economic productivity (McKinsey, 1998), and the development of industrial clusters (DTI, 1998). These were the highest profile of a range of reports critical of the planning system's impacts on the economy that were published at this time, all of which emanated from outside the department responsible for planning (the then Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR)). This suggests the relative weakness of the department as a defender of its own 'turf' (Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones, 2000). Research conducted for the DETR (1998a) that refuted some of these claims was, it seems, relatively powerless to dissuade planning's critics.

John Prescott's decision in 1999 to refuse permission for the Wellcome Trust to develop a business park and centre to research the human genome was reported to have exacerbated these tensions (Blackman, 2001a). The centre, which was seen as paradigmatic of the knowledge based economic growth the government was keen to foster, was refused permission because of its impact on the Cambridge green belt. The refusal further strengthened the conviction that planning was acting as a barrier to economic development (ibid.). A high profile campaign by the CBI and its director-general Digby Jones that sought to highlight the costs of the planning system to business added further momentum (CBI, 2001).

As a result, the Treasury was reported to have begun a review of the planning system in early 2001 that, though it later became a joint review, was instigated without the initial knowledge or support of the DETR (and later Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR)) (Blackman, 2001a). The announcement by Chancellor Gordon Brown, in the 2001 pre-budget report, that a planning green paper was imminent was therefore understood by many of those I interviewed to symbolise the extent of Treasury oversight over the planning reform agenda. The central driver of the Treasury's concern for planning reform can be further grasped from the positioning of the announcement amongst a package of proposals designed to "*meet the productivity challenge*", with reform intended to "*improve the flexibility, speed and responsiveness of the land-use planning system*" (HM Treasury, 2001, 31). The CBI's lobbying efforts were meanwhile widely described as a further significant influence on Government thinking, an impression underlined by the tendency for ministers to announce their intentions to reform planning in speeches to the Confederation (Blackman, 2001a; Brown, 2005; Blair, 2006).

The CBI's (2001) chief concerns were essentially related to the speed, and, what they saw as the sometime erratic quality of decision-making within the system. These were imputed to be having serious impacts on economic productivity through delays, and uncertainty caused by the irrational decisions made by local authorities that did not understand or prioritise the needs of business. Their proposed solutions mainly concerned improving the voice of business within planning decision-making, imposing a stricter managerial regime on local

authorities from the centre to reduce delays and inconsistencies in the system, and minimising the capricious role of local politics and consultation procedures which were equated with the hi-jacking of (business) rationality by vested local interests.

Falconer's understanding was widely understood to have derived from this view of planning as a constraint on economic development, however, the Green Paper, whilst clearly responsive to these issues, also contained proposals that pointed to the presence of other concerns. Commitment to enhance public participation, for example, suggested the presence of other voices and interests within and around New Labour. Indeed, influential voices within the planning profession's representative institutions clearly saw "modernisation" as an opportunity, and shared in the government's assertion that the 1991 system was largely "*discredited*" (Goodstadt, 2002). This was based on a wider analysis that had been developed within planning's policy and professional communities. I now move on to assess this, and the emergence of the "spatial planning agenda" as a discourse coalition for change within planning based on a quite different problematisation of existing practice.

The emergence of the Spatial Planning agenda

This discourse coalition emerged from frustration within influential parts of the policy and professional communities at the negativity of the plan-led system introduced in the 1990s, and the extent to which planning had come to be defined as a regulatory process, with any wider sense of purpose "captured" by narrow concerns related to conflict between development and environment/ conservation lobbies. The system was therefore being managed in an increasingly legalistic and bureaucratic way. Plans were felt to have become overly detailed rulebooks for development control that were slow and expensive to produce, contributing significantly to the failure to ensure up-to-date documents were in place across the country. It is possible to identify several important principles of problematisation of the existing system that were woven together within these concerns:

- *The regulatory rut*: as a result of the settlements produced in the 1990s, planning had become a quasi-legalistic, and overly bureaucratic form of

environmental regulation rather than a strategic means of shaping the future of places.

- *Residualisation:* consigned to a regulatory rut and overly focused on development control, planning had become increasingly residualised within local government. As such the system was seen as an impediment to dynamic change rather than a tool for delivering it. As a result planning was increasingly relegated as a local government function, and unable to effectively engage with actors beyond cumbersome statutory processes.

- *By-passing:* a further implication of the above, and the increasing centralisation and fragmentation of the state, was that the planning system had come to be bypassed by other means of more effectively delivering change, such as competitive funding streams for delivering regeneration (Thornley, 1993).

These problems had all been further exacerbated by the effects of *centralisation* of control over planning and attendant limitations on local discretion, and by what Tewdwr-Jones and Harris (1998) describe as the *commodification* of planning, driven by the imposition of centrally determined performance targets. These increasingly defined the culture and performance of local government planning, driving out discretion and concern for quality in development and replacing it with a 'tick box' mentality driven by concern for speed (Tewdwr-Jones, 1999; 2003). These processes were also related to the *"drabbing down"* of the profession's image (RTPI, 2003), and a struggle to attract new entrants (Tewdwr-Jones, 1999, 2004a).

Several reports gave expression to these frustrations within the planning community. *Your Place and Mine* by the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) (1999), for example, argued for *"positive planning"*, moving away from the negative, regulatory practice that had come to define the plan-led system. It argued that this could be achieved by defining the pursuit of sustainable development as a statutory purpose for planning. It further argued for a new professionalism to replace traditional roles with a commitment to working with stakeholders across boundaries, and to effective engagement with local people in the production of positive visions for change.

This was broadly similar to the analysis and proposals presented in the Local Government Association (2000) report *Reforming Local Planning*. This was recognised by civil servants as particularly influential in shaping the reform agenda and was the product of a working group including key figures in the professional and policy communities, chaired by future Deputy Mayor of London, Nicky Gavron. The report produced a clear diagnosis of the problem with existing practices, describing a system that had become sclerotic and was not capable of fulfilling planning's potential to provide the flexible, strategic vision required by modern local government:

> *The planning system has served us well for more than fifty years. However, it was created in the post-war period of reconstruction for a very different economic, social and environmental agenda. What was originally seen as a positive process...has gradually withdrawn from the front line to be perceived as a regulatory activity* (LGA 2000: 5)

It presented a model of a positive planning system producing a more flexible and streamlined hierarchy of strategies. This would make planning central to corporate decision-making in local authorities, delivering a faster and more visionary process, but also an holistic and integrative tool to promote sustainable development in partnership with key stakeholders in government, economy and civil society. For influential figures within the policy and professional communities there was therefore a clearly felt need for change.

Within the RTPI (e.g. 2001, 2001a), meanwhile, recognition of the need for planning to renew itself had, by this time, led to an internal movement to re-shape the profession. This was spearheaded by the launch of the "New Vision" in 2001 as introduced in chapter 1. This was based on a similar analysis to that of the reports described above, seeking to reaffirm "core values" underlying professional practice, but to reinterpret these in line with the perceived challenges of a changed world. Central to this was a desire to broaden the horizons of the profession, and in so doing to articulate a more strategic role for planning. This needed to take the profession beyond the statutory planning system and promote a wider understanding of planning's potential contribution to society. The "new vision"

therefore sought to rebuild a pointedly "value-driven" and "action-oriented" planning around four core ideas:

- *Spatial*: going beyond land-use plans to be concerned at the spatial impacts of a wider range of policies and sectors.

- *Sustainable*: a mechanism for integrating the elements of sustainable development, but also for mediating between the competing demands made by these elements over different timescales.

- *Integrated*: involving new types of collaboration beyond the traditional boundaries of the profession, as a mechanism for joining up policy and bringing together a range of different skills and disciplines.

- *Inclusive*: capable of creating opportunities for all to participate in deliberative processes, particularly those traditionally excluded.

This new approach came to be known as "spatial planning". The profession's influence, and the "*planning voice*", has generally been considered weak within government (Thomas, 1998). However, with the "*balls in the air*", the fact that the spatial planning discourse coalition positively embraced change provided the Government with legitimacy for the principle of modernisation. Thus, with the support of an influential coalition within the policy community, including amongst civil servants, spatial planning was in a position to influence the reform agenda.

The term spatial planning drew on developments in wider European planning thought, though in its use in the UK it remained a somewhat ambiguous term. Whilst there is no agreed definition of the concept or account of its emergence, it can be best understood as an attempt to define the change required of planning. In this sense, however, it was well suited to the task of constructing a discourse coalition, able to act as an empty signifier around which a range of different interests could come together. The shift from land-use to spatial planning therefore became a shorthand for a broadening of planning's purpose, with the idea of a "*spatial planning approach*" coming to symbolise the "*culture change*" that the profession and other advocates sought for planning (Goodstadt, 2003). The spatial planning agenda was therefore understood by its advocates as a chance to restate some of the positive, progressive purposes of planning which had been gradually drained from the system through bureaucratic proceduralism, and New Right imposed residualisation. In particular it was an attempt to re-invent planning as a

flexible tool for strategic place shaping, able to proactively deliver sustainable development by working collaboratively with local communities, and in partnership with a wide variety of different stakeholders (Tewdwr-Jones, 2004; POS, 2005).

Several of those I interviewed at the national level expressed strong personal identification with the spatial planning agenda. This was driven by an understanding, developed through experiences of corporate and community planning in the 1970s, of planning's potential to play a broad, creative role. For them the plan-led system of the 1990s, whilst welcome respite from the neoliberal attacks of the 1980s, had created a frustratingly narrow planning practice. They were therefore ready to embrace the principle of change, and also recognised elements of New Labour discourse that suggested progressive opportunities for planning:

> *This I don't know, sort of openness that certainly the early years of the Blair government gave rise to. And [the planning profession] certainly saw that the climate was right for doing thinking in a way that really wouldn't have been possible under, even Major I guess...[6]*

The government's discursive commitments to a consensual version of community, participatory democracy, partnership, evidence-based policy making, and pragmatic delivery all fitted with long-standing impulses within planning thought (e.g. Rydin and Thornley, 2002). This sense of a 'fit' between New Labour's progressive language of governance (Newman 2001), and central tenets of the profession's self understanding had therefore generated considerable hope but also frustration at the government's failure to recognise planning as a tool to achieve this wider agenda (e.g. MacDonald, 2001a). As noted above, for example, the early Modernising Planning reports did not envisage a role for planning in the Government's drive to address social exclusion. This suggested a narrower conception of planning within government than that held by many within the professional community, and the presence of significant barriers to planning taking on the wider role in social and environmental policy that they felt to be a key part of the planning tradition (e.g. RTPI, 2001). In this context, there was a sense that

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[6] Where quotations are unattributed in this chapter they are taken from interviews with members of the planning policy and professional communities.

the reform agenda presented in the Green Paper did not go far enough (RTPI, 2002).

The "Treasury Agenda" and the spatial planning discourse coalition

The identity of the spatial planning discourse coalition was further secured through its opposition to the Treasury agenda. Advocates of spatial planning described the Treasury's default attitude towards the planning system as unchanged since the 1980s, and therefore as shaped by a neoliberal conception of planning as a regulatory burden. As a result, it was presented as an ideological threat to the role of planning:

> And the Treasury doesn't understand. The Treasury starts from a very thin economic model which is based upon the idea of market failure of course. We should only intervene if there is market failure. Well it's very hard to talk about what market failure actually constitutes in the real world which is planning.

The idea of an understanding based in theory and not in the *"real world"* was reinforced by the strikingly negative language used in interviews to describe civil servants in the Treasury as, for example: *"hyperactive children"*, *"attack hounds"*, or, more often, *"pointy heads"* with double firsts from Cambridge University but *"no common sense"*. Treasury officials were caricatured as naively beholden to a narrow economic rationality that viewed planning as an intrinsically problematic and anachronistic form of intervention in market forces. Those in dialogue with the Treasury maintain that, over time, officials did come to a better understanding of planning, and the broader imperatives of sustainable development. Others point out that the Treasury under New Labour has sought to pursue key governmental objectives, such as social inclusion, that take the department beyond the neoliberalism of the 1980s. Nonetheless, however, they also described a paradigm clash between competing rationalities or cultures that remained, to some extent, mutually incomprehensible.

The creation of a coherent spatial planning coalition therefore involved the construction of an antagonistic 'other' that threatened the spatial planning identity (cf. Griggs, 2005). The spatial planning agenda has therefore been experienced,

and portrayed, as a rear-guard effort to defend planning against the threat posed by bullying from the Treasury (e.g. Upton, 2006; Ellis, 2007). This imagery echoes a long-standing, embattled professional self-image (e.g. Davies, 1972). More pertinently, however, it also invokes the spectre of *"jobs in filing cabinets"*, narrating the neoliberal attack on planning since the 1980s, with the power of deregulatory arguments putting planning on the back foot (e.g. Delafons, 2002). This allowed spatial planning to claim a role as the defender/ rescuer/ saviour of planning from the Treasury/ CBI and their assault on the system. As such the discourse coalition sought to bring together a range of different groups interested in asserting a broader purpose for planning in opposition to the narrowness of both the Treasury's critique, and the 'regulatory rut'. In this sense, "sustainable development" retained a key role as an empty signifier within the spatial planning discourse. The essential ambiguity of the term drawing together voices without requiring substantive agreement between the different interests of the profession and various environmental and social NGOs. The discourse of sustainable development therefore provided an important nodal point, seeking to tie the coalition together and manage potential tensions within it.

Importantly, both spatial planning and sustainable development provided narratives that could neutralise the threat from the critical Treasury/ business discourse. Advocates consistently maintained that the change implied by the switch to spatial planning would create a more flexible planning system. Planning could therefore play a vital role in creating the conditions for sustainable economic growth, meeting business needs for efficient decision-making whilst also achieving a range of other goals (see e.g. RTPI, 2002; 2003b; CPRE, 2003; Friends of the Earth, 2002; 2003).

The spatial planning discourse coalition therefore emerged as a response to frustrations with planning's role and status, and a desire to restate a broader practice with a stronger sense of purpose. However, it also provided a means of defending planning against attack from the Treasury agenda. Whilst spatial planning as a discourse was based on a somewhat different problematisation of existing practices from that which had primarily motivated the government, the fact that it presented a coherent narrative of change created opportunities to influence the emerging agenda.

A modernised planning system?

As a result the principle of spatial planning was taken forward in the package of reforms introduced in and around the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (HMSO, 2004). Indeed, given that the CBI critique of planning was generally focused on the speed and efficiency of decision-making, the fact that the legislative changes proposed by the government focused largely on plan-making suggests that the spatial planning discourse coalition was successful in placing its concerns on the reform agenda (Allmendinger 2006). This was seen, in part, as an attempt by the DTLR, and later the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) to defend its patch against Treasury intrusion (Tewdwr-Jones, 2007).

The Act, taking forward and developing the proposals in the Green Paper, set out new forms of spatial strategy. These were intended to create a faster and more flexible system of plan-making, able to provide strategic vision without becoming mired in the regulatory detail of the local plans they replaced. Key principles of public participation, collaborative cross-sectoral partnership and positive, evidence-based policy-making were enshrined within the new system (Nadin, 2006). Core strategies would give spatial expression to emerging Community Strategies, thus joining planning policy more effectively with the wider corporate priorities of local authorities (ODPM, 2003). Spatial planning was placed at the heart of the government's key statement of planning policy, planning policy statement (PPS) 1, as an approach that explicitly sought to go beyond the narrower concerns of regulatory land-use planning (ODPM, 2005). Appendix 1 provides an outline of the new development plans system.

The new system therefore presented a vision with which many within the policy and professional communities identified. It was interpreted as restating a broader role for planning, suggesting alignment between New Labour's progressive language of local democratic renewal and community governance, and long-standing goals of positive planning (see e.g. Morphet, 2007). This led commentators to view the emergence of spatial planning as an opportunity for real change to long-standing frustrations with the performance of planning:

These reforms are the first changes to planning that are genuinely positive;
they place planning at the heart of bringing about more successful places
(Tewdwr-Jones, 2004, 562)

As Newman (2001; 2004) notes, such identifications have appeared in various policy fields where actors have understood New Labour's agenda to offer progressive opportunities, reconnecting public services to the needs of local communities. As she further notes, however, this has often been a selective identification that has overlooked other emphases within the complex and contradictory policy environment New Labour has overseen.

Within planning the presence of both the Treasury view of planning and the spatial planning agenda was always likely to produce something of an *"uncomfortable synthesis"* (Lloyd and Peel, 2002, 114). This task was made more manageable for the government by the presence of a range of shared dissatisfactions with the previous system. However, it was less clear that the new system would be able to achieve what the government claimed, or would secure a new settlement able to govern the tensions within the policy network that continued to revolve around the antagonism between developmental and environmental discourses. To developers, for example, the definition of "sustainable development" as a statutory purpose for planning was a symbol of government concessions to environmental interests (e.g. Blackman, 2002), whilst for environmental groups the government's chief motivation in reforming planning lay in a desire to create a more business and development friendly system (e.g. Ellis, 2002). The government and profession's claims that spatial planning could succeed in mediating these tensions therefore became key (cf. Peel and Lloyd, 2007).

Although there was a relatively coherent consensus that, *"[p]lanning is too often seen as part of the problem, not part of the solution"* (ODPM, 2003, 12), there were also quite different views of both what the problem was and how it ought to be tackled. The government's attempts to sell the new system as a solution to the problems identified by both the Treasury and the spatial planning lobby led them to downplay many of the tensions that the planning system was being asked to manage and resolve. This can be equated to ideological tensions within New Labour between a neoliberal commitment to market competitiveness, and a set of broader policy concerns (cf. Hall, 2003; Wilks-Heeg, 2009; Finlayson, 2009),

coupled with the particular contradictions inherent to the planning system (Inch, 2009).

The new system was therefore hailed by ministers as capable of achieving a wide range of often seemingly contradictory goals[7]. The shift to a spatial planning approach was held to be key to this, enabling a more "positive" planning practice to emerge. However, as an empty signifier, this more positive planning was both a key stake over which the modernisation agenda continues to be contested, and a means of managing and defusing the tensions between competing conceptions of planning's purpose. As Allmendinger (2006, 142) notes, *"...the evidence base for much of the analyses of spatial planning is limited and driven by normative positions: spatial planning is government objective...as well as professional aim...Spatial planning is a panacea for the problems of the past and the goal for the future."*

Interpreting spatial planning: tensions, contradictions and ambivalences

From the discussion above it is possible to delineate at least three different interpretations of 'spatial planning'. As the discussion will go on to indicate, these are not mutually incompatible, however at times it is also clear that they point in different directions. It is also clear that these different directions have significant implications for the nature and purpose of 'positive' planning cultures:

1. Spatial planning as expression of the shift towards network governance

> The closeness of the articulation between spatial planning and new forms of network governance has been recognised if not fully elaborated (Allmendinger, 2006), as has its co-articulation with other forms of governance thinking such as the 'new localism' (Morphet, 2004; Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones, 2009). As described in chapter 2 above, New Labour has also embraced the principles of 'network governance', and therefore the rhetoric of the new localism, as, to some extent, central to the modernisation of the state (Newman, 2001; cf. Bevir, 2003; Cochrane, 2004) –this has been most clearly represented by the discursive

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[7] The addition of sustainability appraisal, driven by European directives, and concern for delivering a range of policy objectives through the planning system added further to this congested agenda.

commitment to principles of participation and empowerment of local communities, partnership working across and beyond the public sector, and integration and joining up between different sectoral policy agendas. As I suggested in chapter 2 above, the appeal of these new principles of governance has been apparent for some time in planning, and a central part of influential academic advocacy of more deliberative or collaborative approaches (e.g. Healey, 1997; Vigar et al, 2000; cf. Doak and Parker, 2005). The influence of "*the governance narrative*" (Rhodes, 2000) on the principles behind the remaking of both the professional project and the planning system is marked, as illustrated in figure 5.2.

Model of Network Governance (from Newman, 2001)	Government's view of Spatial Planning (from Nadin, 2006)	RTPI's New Vision for planning (from RTPI, 2001a)
Public participation/ Remaking civil society.	Inclusive and effective community engagement.	Integrative.
		Inclusive.
Joined up government (integration).	Collaboration, integration and joining up.	Spatial.
Partnership working/ collaboration with actors in economy and civil society.	Positive, evidence-based.	Sustainable.
	Timely delivery.	

Figure 5.2 Spatial Planning and the New Vision as Network Governance

The profession, and the spatial planning lobby have seen the shift from government to governance as an opportunity to renew planning (particularly in relation to the opportunities presented by the wider local government modernisation agenda (LGMA) (Allmendinger et al, 2006; RTPI, 2001)). This has been based on an interpretation of spatial planning's role within emergent forms of governance as coordinative or integrative, "joining up" the spatial implications of sectoral policy decisions to shape places in line with local communities visions for the future (RTPI, 2007). The possibility for a renewal of the state-professional pact based on these principles has been attractive to advocates of spatial planning.

It is important, however, to note the need for caution in embracing the principles of governance. As Newman (2001) argues governance theory is often based more on normative exhortation than empirical analysis. It is also important to recognise the potentially significant tensions between the different goals of network governance. For example, the principle of fostering partnership, and the commitments required to develop effective working relationships, may well work against the encouragement of genuinely open forms of participation in policy-making (ibid.). In planning, for example, environmental groups have continued to criticise the level of commitment to participation within the new system (e.g. Ellis, 2003; 2007a).

The extent to which such a change relies on an implicit assumption that deliberative processes (or "front-loading" of public participation as it has come to be known in planning) can produce a consensus over policy choices is also questionable. Others point to considerable tensions within the LGMA and the barriers that these pose to "joined up" government or democratic renewal (e.g. Cowell and Martin, 2003; Wilks-Heeg, 2009). In particular, it is important to note that New Labour's agenda in government, and the modernising planning agenda, have consistently pointed towards a quite different interpretation of the task of government and of the new planning.

2. Spatial planning as a "delivery vehicle"

Whilst the government has apparently endorsed spatial planning as network governance, suspicions have persisted that this has been based on a narrower view of what that means than the shift towards integrative spatial governance advocated by the spatial planning discourse coalition. The extent to which 'positive' planning means a more business and developer-friendly attitude has, for example, been a recurring concern throughout the reform process. This has often played out as discursive struggle to fix the meaning of sustainable development, with government consistently asserting the need to emphasise the value of the economic dimensions of the term (e.g. Prescott, 2003, Cooper, 2005; 2006). For those within the spatial planning coalition, identifying with a more holistic, environmental or

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social interpretation of the term, this has fostered recurring fears of bias towards an economic development agenda (and the continued presence of the Treasury agenda) (cf. Cowell and Owens, 2006). This suggests the discursive struggle to establish control over the possible meanings of both spatial planning and sustainable development.

The profession has also expressed concerns that the regime of targets used to evaluate performance in planning betrays a governmental preoccupation with planning's capacity to 'deliver' policy and decisions quickly and efficiently in the interests of economic development (e.g. RTPI, 2003a). The continued adherence to a strict set of performance targets has been criticised for centralising control and standardising performance in apparent contradiction to the empowering rhetoric of spatial planning as deliberative governance. In addition to performance targets, the government has continued to push for a more delivery orientated planning in relation to housing numbers. The continued reliance on a cascade of centrally determined housing numbers, and the intensification of pressure to ensure delivery of these housing figures following the Treasury commissioned Barker Review of Housing in 2004, has prompted concern that government is more interested in meeting numerical projections than in the principles of network governance and sustainable development.

The tension between New Labour's commitment to fostering new forms of collaborative governance and their concern to drive continuous performance improvements, efficiency gains and delivery of pre-determined outputs has been noted across the public sector. Newman (2001) argues that the latter represents the continued presence of, and reliance on traditional top-down government, and 'neo-Taylorist' managerial regimes. Chapman (2007) identifies such styles of government with the use of a mechanical language to describe policy and implementation. He argues that this betrays a particular, technocratic way of viewing the policy process. The tendency to view the planning system as a "delivery vehicle" for the government's goals can therefore be seen as a significant symbol of this narrower interpretation of spatial planning (e.g. McNulty, 2003. This was also a feature of several interviews).

3. Spatial planning as renewal of the planning professional project

This interpretation recognises that spatial planning has become the key organising principle for the profession's attempt to re-invigorate planning. In addition to the New Vision and as introduced in chapter 1, this has encompassed wholesale review and reform of professional training and accreditation (see RTPI, 2003), and reform to the internal architecture of the RTPI. Through these changes the profession has sought to assert a more forward-looking role, both within local government but also through its increasingly significant private sector membership. This has involved an attempt to re-articulate the planning professional project in line with the model of network governance. This implies a model of network professionalism that explicitly challenges traditional conceptions of professional knowledge, accepting that planners have no particular claim to monopoly over their field of expertise (cf. Grant, 1999; McClymont, 2006). It calls into question traditional boundaries both between professions, and between professionals and clients, accepting a more fluid basis for professional labour (whilst also, awkwardly, endeavouring to claim a continued role for those same professional boundaries). By adopting spatial planning the professional community has asserted the need for a more dynamic planning practice, moving beyond the "regulatory rut" of the statutory system to reshape the state-professional settlement. These reforms have been strongly led by the professional community at the national level, and the rank and file of members have, at times, expressed reservations (e.g. Latham, 2003; Robins, 2004).

Using Peel and Lloyd's (2007) description of the new planning as *neo-traditional planning* it is possible to see spatial planning as a re-articulation of elements of the planning profession's traditional ideology and self-image. Interviews in local authorities, and findings from other research projects suggest that part of the animating appeal of the concept of spatial planning lies in its resonance with a long-held planning identity (e.g. Morhpet, 2007; RTPI, 2007). By invoking previous attempts to re-engineer planning's role in local government, however, the concept of neo-traditional planning raises important question marks over how the tensions inherent to planning professionalism and practice can be managed (Peel and Lloyd, 2007). It

also raises questions as to whether the type of role that the professional project has identified with, as a "ringmaster" in local government (Goodstadt, 2003), is available.

As described in chapter 2 above, previous local government reorganisations have seen planners lay claim to a more central role, beyond the operation of the statutory planning system, however, this has not always proven possible (e.g. Underwood, 1980). In this way the idea of neo-traditional planning raises a long history of "role confusion" (Reade, 1987). The local government modernisation agenda under New Labour has, at times, promised to place spatial governance at its heart (as in the Lyons' Inquiry's (2007) concept of local government as "place shaping"), however, the planning profession's role in this, although recognised, has never been as central as advocates of spatial planning have wished. Equally, claims to be driving the "joining up" of government have become common to many different groups of local government professionals and managers (e.g. Cowell and Martin, 2003; Newman, 2004).

The re-articulation of planning as an holistic process capable of mediating between different sets of values in order to realise the public interest (RTPI, 2001a), also invokes the long standing professional claim to be able to mediate between different claims to shape an holistic conception of the public good (cf. Glass, 1959; Reade, 1987). Whether, spatial planning and spatial planners are any more capable of managing the tensions raised by development, and resolving the 'social antagonisms' they generate (cf. Hoggett, 2006), than in the past remains highly questionable. Leading figures in the professional community suggest that this requires "self-confidence", or a certain "chutzpah" to realise the promise of spatial planning. Such appeals to a charismatic professional authority invoke the "superhero" dilemma, and presuppose a level of agency that, as the next two chapters will go on to explore, it is not clear many planners can readily exercise.

Figure 5.3 returns to the model of governance change introduced in chapter 2 above, to map the implications of these different interpretations of spatial planning. By so doing it becomes possible to discern the different directions in which they

seek to change planning, and therefore some of the tensions that the concept of spatial planning is being asked to manage. It also illustrates that the types of change asked of planning imply quite different forms of governance, and means of managing change.

Figure 5.3 Interpreting spatial planning

Differentiation/
Decentralisation. Public
sector as partners with
government in achieving
change

Professional
empowered culture

Local empowered
culture

Spatial planning as
renewal of the planning
professional project.

Spatial planning discourse
coalition/ spatial planning
as network governance.

Continuity, order

Innovation, change

Treasury agenda discourse
coalition/ spatial planning
as a delivery vehicle.

Culture of central
control

Target culture

Centralisation/ vertical
integration. public sector as
delivery vehicle for
government

The profession's promotion of spatial planning as a principle for the renewal of the professional project, for example, implies advocacy of professional self-governance (positioned in the top left hand quadrant of the figure). The articulation of this alongside the principles of new forms of local governance and public participation presents certain tensions, however. These are positioned in the top right hand corner of the chart, and suggest the breaking down of professional boundaries and strengthening of non-expert voices. This draws into focus the long-standing tension between professional expertise in planning and its accountability to local people and pressure groups. It suggests this tension has been internalised within the renewal of the planning professional report under the rubric of spatial planning. This is well illustrated by the RTPI's claim in the New Vision that planning is "value driven". This is clearly understood as both a "value mediating" role, e.g. able to act as an "honest broker" between different competing interests, but also as promoting particular values e.g. sustainability and social inclusion (see RTPI, 2001). This faultline between professional empowerment and

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forms of participatory democracy has, at times, proven difficult to manage within the spatial planning discourse coalition, where environmental groups commitment to participatory planning has led to tensions with the profession (see e.g. Ellis, 2007). Allmendinger (2006), meanwhile, has argued that spatial planning has been more a project of professional than of local community empowerment.

The government meanwhile has simultaneously endorsed rhetoric from each of the four quadrants, pointing towards quite different conceptions of planning's purpose and role, and different strategies for managing change. Thus, whilst discourses of professional empowerment and partnership working with stakeholders do not always sit comfortably alongside the rhetoric of local community empowerment, each of these is further challenged by the continued reliance on centrally determined targets and housing numbers. This range of different approaches to managing change, and to delivering policy has been a central feature of New Labour's approach to governing (Newman, 2001; Allmendinger, 2006). In planning, however, it has further embedded certain unresolved ambiguities into the reformed system, including tensions between:

- The speed of plan and decision-making, levels of public involvement and quality of decision-making.
- The desire for a more flexible and visionary process, and the regulatory complexity of planning's powers to shape change.
- Central control over key decisions areas, and local and/ or professional empowerment to deliver the visions set by local communities.
- Economic development as the primary goal of the system, and a broader sustainability focus.

The continued presence of these tensions between different conceptions of planning's purpose mean that it has been difficult to discern the implications and prospects for planning's somewhat confusing 'modernisation'.

Understanding the modernisation of planning

The "institutional fix" offered by the 2004 system (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2007) has seemed fragile, particularly in the face of the continued presence of the Treasury agenda. The 2004 reforms addressed themselves primarily to concerns

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about plan-making, viewing decision-making as a functional corollary of more efficient strategy production. The central driver of the reform agenda, however, was business concern at the speed and responsiveness of decision-making. The failure to significantly quieten these voices of discontent has produced an ongoing pressure for further reform. In this sense the Treasury agenda, and the neoliberal conception of planning, seems to contain considerable power to disrupt and problematise, drawing to mind Foucault's description of liberalism as, "...*not a dream which clashes with reality and fails to insert itself there. It constitutes –and this is the reason both for its polymorphic character and for its recurrences –an instrument for the criticism of reality*" (quoted in Gordon, 1991, 18).

The period since the passing of the 2004 Act has, therefore, been marked by attempts to define and manage emerging practice in spatial planning (see RTPI, 2007; CLG, 2008). In addition, however, a range of issues have emerged that have placed planning perhaps higher on the political agenda than at any other time in the last forty years (MacDonald, 2007). Most notably, this has concerned the question of housing supply. Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones (2000) suggested that the extent of New Labour's electoral success amongst formerly Conservative voters in the Shire counties in 1997 made housing a potentially difficult issue for the party to address. By 2002-3, it was clear that a shortage of new housing in the South East was of major political importance, and was imputed to be having negative effects on economic competitiveness. The planning system was therefore once again implicated as both a constraint to the supply of land required to meet the housing crisis, but also as the potential solution to the housing crisis through a large-scale house-building programme promoted by the ODPM under the rubric of "sustainable communities" (ODPM, 2003a). The capacity of the Communities Plan as it became known to provide a convincing solution to the housing question and to criticisms of planning was, however, limited[8].

The Treasury's appointment of economist Kate Barker to lead two reviews, initially into housing supply and later into planning itself (the title of which significantly did not adopt the language of 'spatial planning' but the more traditional, land-use planning), were interpreted as symbols that the Treasury agenda remained a

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[8] The term "sustainable communities" continues to be used as a governmental aspiration for planning. However, it has been treated with some suspicion by the wider planning community who objected to its use in the title of draft PPS1 (cf. Cowell and Owens, 2006).

threat to the emergence of spatial planning (Barker, 2004; 2006). These reviews led to further pressure for planning to take greater account of market signals in decision-making, leading to revision of planning policy guidance on housing (CLG, 2006). The changes were a determined effort to drive through the delivery of higher housing figures, which was argued to be both an economic and social justice imperative, portraying resistance to house-building as a form of selfish NIMBY-ism (e.g. Cooper, 2005a). In practice, however, it was widely feared that the changes represented a further strengthening of centrally mandated housing figures and an overly narrow focus on market dynamics of supply and demand that failed to account for the complex politics of planning for housing.

As a result of these, and other ongoing tensions the subsequent rolling out of the new planning system has been experienced as an unstable and shifting process, appearing to sway backwards and forwards at different moments. This has made visible various fractures within the government, between as well as within departments, and also within the discourse coalitions in the policy community. The RTPI's Secretary-General Robert Upton (2006, 111) for example, writing after the announcement of the Barker Review of Land-use Planning, suggested that:

> *The last time I wrote an editorial for this journal (6.2 for those interested), I started off by saying "From a British or at least an English perspective there is a temptation to be relentlessly upbeat about the state of planning at present".*

> *Optimism like that usually gets its come-uppance quite soon. And sure enough I find myself back in the bunker trying to mobilise forces, or at least marshal arguments and evidence, to deal with the latest assault on the planning system in England...*

This passage suggests a pervasive sense of dynamic conflict around the modernisation of planning (notice the military metaphors). In order to illustrate this point further figure 5.4 provides a summary of key moments in the modernisation process, how they were presented by the government, and interpreted within the spatial planning discourse coalition. This helps to create a picture of the way in which planning has been cast as both an impediment to, and a potential agent of necessary modernisation. It also provides an impression of the struggle to fix the

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meaning of practice within the new system. As described in chapters 1 and 2 above, this treatment of public policy (and particularly of public servants) as both objects requiring modernisation, but also modernising agents has been a confusing feature of New Labour's agenda across government (Newman, 2001; Finlayson, 2009).

Moment in the modernisation process	Government's presentation	Interpretation within spatial planning discourse coalition
The Green Paper, 2001	A "fundamental change", an urgent programme designed to modernise a system that was broken.	An opportunity to reshape planning, but also a threat in the shape of the Treasury agenda
Sustainable Communities Plan announced, 2003 / Egan Review, 2004 / Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, 2004 / Publication of PPS1, 2005	Planning's central role in resolving housing crisis recognized/ return of large scale planning. Endorsing of spatial planning approach/ Sustainable development named as purpose for planning	Moments of optimism where the metaphors of renaissance appeared to promise change (e.g. Upton, 2005). However, doubts about the government's managerial approach to change as represented by the Egan Review.
Barker Review of Housing Supply, 2004 (and subsequent publication of new PPS3)	Treasury commissioned investigation of how to turn around housing supply, recognizes planning as not sensitive enough to market forces	Continued presence of the Treasury agenda/ fears for weakening of planning, but also tension between those who recognize housing shortages and endorse greater market sensitivity, and those who do not.
Barker Review of Land-use Planning, 2006-7	Treasury commissioned investigation of how land-use planning impacts on economic development. Ultimately endorses planning's wider role in pursuit of sustainable development	Continued presence of the Treasury agenda/ fears for weakening of planning and lack of recognition of spatial planning. Relief that Kate Barker drew back from such a position.

Figure 5.4 Selected key moments in the modernisation of planning 2001-2007

In relation to the broader argument being developed in the thesis, this suggests that, at different moments, the government has endorsed quite different conceptions of planning's purpose. As such it means that they have also endorsed quite different approaches to regulating the work and identities of professional planners. The chapter now therefore moves on to consider the culture change agenda as a mechanism for managing tensions within the policy network, and seeking to fix the meaning of spatial planning in practice. In so doing I explore how different conceptions of a positive planning culture in turn imply different forms of identity regulation, and different subject positions for planners.

Culture governance: managing 'modern' planning cultures and 'making up' planners

Ambiguities within the New Labour government, and the contested nature of the politics around planning policy have then created a new system marked by considerable tensions, contradictions and uncertainties. Such ambiguities are a common feature of many areas of policy (Fischer, 2003), including planning (e.g. Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones, 2000; Vigar et al, 2000). However, New Labour's approach to planning reform has, at times, failed to acknowledge that they may pose implementation problems, or that the endorsing of quite different methods of managing change might create a climate of uncertainty that is counter-productive to achieving stated goals. The modernisation process has therefore been marked by attempts to naturalise the conflict that underlies these uncertainties. However, despite a concerted effort to "throw the balls in the air" and to dislocate the settlement that emerged in the 1990s, New Labour has struggled to fix a new set of discourses capable of managing the tensions that planning generates.

In this context the unresolved contradictions and ambiguities of planning are filtering through the system to be played out by the rank and file of planners at the street-level. Lipsky's (1980, 41; Hoggett, 2005, 172) assertion that, "a typical mechanism for legislative conflict resolution is to pass on intractable conflicts for resolution (or continued irresolution) at the administrative level" therefore becomes particularly crucial. It is in this context that calls for planners to embrace the need for culture change have been understood as important. As I suggested in chapter 1, culture change, as a trope does similar rhetorical work to modernisation. As a

"discourse of change" this involves the need to narrate an existing problem, a desirable solution, and the means through which change can be achieved. Furthermore, like modernisation, the idea of culture change is often used in a way that obscures the political work that the term does, something that its managerial roots further exacerbate. However, it must be understood as a technology for governing the discursive polity, and a particular means of trying to engineer ideological change. As such, culture change is concerned with identity definition and regulation, attempting to manage change in identities, and, to articulate new subject positions for actors in the policy process.

Calls for culture change have come from across the planning community, suggesting a strong consensus on its importance (e.g. Friends of the Earth, 2002; HBF, 2002; CBI, 2002; RTPI 2003a). This has been based on a shared set of concerns related to resource shortages, and the capacity to attract new entrants into a profession whose image had become overly negative and regulatory. The government took up these calls in the wake of the Green Paper, announcing in the follow-up policy statement *Sustainable communities: delivering through planning* that culture change was central to the modernisation agenda:

> *We have set out a considerable agenda of change to the structure and process of planning. But to reap the benefits of those changes, we also need to promote a change in the culture of planning. We want to see a system that plans positively for sustainable development and which is at the forefront of creating better quality, more inclusive and sustainable places in which people can live and work.* (ODPM, 2002, para. 67)

As described in chapter 1 the culture change agenda has involved several different combinations of key strands with a continuous focus on providing purpose and focus, improving skills and attitudes and tackling the profession's image problems (e.g. Ash, 2002; ODPM, 2002, ODPM, 2004).

To achieve this, the government has injected additional resources into planning through Planning Delivery Grant (and later Housing and Planning Delivery Grant), providing funding to establish the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) to assist local authorities, and providing bursaries for study on post-graduate planning courses. They have also sought, for example through the 2006 Local Government White

Paper, to emphasise the importance of integrating planning with corporate policy-making and sustainable community strategies in particular (CLG, 2006a). However, they have also consistently failed to respond to other proposals, for example that the role of chief planning officer be given statutory protection within local authorities (e.g. NPF, 2008).

In concrete terms, however, the culture change agenda has been difficult to isolate from the wider programme of modernisation. Significantly it was described by civil servants as the change required of all those engaged with planning to make the adjustment to spatial planning. As such it was recognised that government had limited power to deliver culture change, relying instead on a host of other agencies and organisations within the sector. This suggests the presence of recognised limits to the government's capacity to govern culture within the planning policy network. As a result, perhaps one of the central achievements of the culture change agenda was that it brought actors from across the sector together to discuss the change required of planning. This included four work-streams set up by the ODPM to consider:

- Vision, Image, Purpose and Outcomes
- Education, Training and Morale
- Mainstreaming Planning in Central and Local Government
- Customer Service, Empowering People and Engaging Communities

These work-streams were each made up of a cross-section of actors from across the policy and professional communities. More recently this has been taken up in the work of the National Planning Forum that has claimed a particular legitimacy to work on culture change through its ability to speak on behalf of what it identifies as the five main sectors involved in planning: government and its agencies, local government, business, the voluntary/ third sector and the professions (NPF, 2008).

The idea of culture change has, then, been used as a means to bring different interests together and to create a basis for shared action and understanding. In this way the discourse of culture change has acted as another key empty signifier, attaining a set of largely positive connotations, and a measure of consensus on the need for change. Given widespread consensus that the culture of planning had become excessively negative, it was possible to present a shared interest in a

more positive and proactive planning culture, more "fit for purpose". In this way points of convergence between different problematisations of planning have been used as the basis for attempts to manage change. However, given the tensions in the modernisation agenda described above, there are also quite different conceptions of the culture change required to modernise planning. Thus beneath this professed consensus it is possible to identify a range of different understandings of the type of culture change required; the way in which such change should be managed; the forms of identity regulation it implies; and the subject positions available for planners.

Business and development lobbies, for example, whilst accepting that local authority planning departments require more resources, have argued that such resources be tied to producing faster decisions, and a more development orientated culture. This is to be achieved through a strengthening of the performance target regime, and promotion of better understanding of business needs amongst planners. Thus a *negative* planning culture is understood as a system that does not prioritise economic development (see e.g. HBF, 2002; CBI, 2001; 2002). This is broadly similar to the neoliberal conception of planning, and the "*jobs in filing cabinets*" narrative. The role of planning within this discourse is as a corrective to market failure (Low, 1991; Klosterman, 2003). The subject positions available to planners are therefore focused on a narrow set of concerns related to impacts on business and the economy. Change is to be achieved through managerial techniques that emphasise standardisation, efficiency and economy, minimising the space for discretion or political "interference" in decision-making.

For environmental groups, however, culture change would require greater sensitivity to local communities and a stronger emphasis on the environmental implications of new development. Planning would become a crucial forum for deliberation over the sustainable development of places. The problem with the culture of the existing system was that it had become overly caught up in legal details that were inaccessible to local people. This suggests a very different subject position for the planner as a facilitator of local participation, shaping a collaborative vision for the future. Planners would be held accountable by local democratic pressure, and would identify with the goal of shaping sustainable futures.

For the profession, meanwhile, "*spatial planning is an expression of the shift in culture that we need...*" (Goodstadt, 2003, 24). This requires, "*creative thinking about space and place*" (RTPI, 2003), suggesting the empowerment of the planner as a, "*ringmaster – bringing people, activity, resources and development together with a vision for the benefit of communities*" (Goodstadt, 2003, 24). This ambitious agenda implies the empowerment of planning as a central element of networked local governance, capable of mediating between different values (e.g. development and environment) to deliver sustainable development.

There are, of course, a range of different versions of these basic perspectives and points of overlap as well as difference between them. The above is not intended as a definitive statement, rather it serves to illustrate some of the basic tensions facing any attempt to create a shared understanding of culture change. Figure 5.5 illustrates this, showing how different conceptions of a positive planning system and its purpose suggest quite different forms of culture governance and identity regulation.

Professional empowered culture Governed by professional networks, discretion and commitment. LA planner as creative, value driven e.g. "creative thinking about space and place"	Differentiation/ Decentralisation. Public sector as partners with government in achieving change	**Local empowered culture** Governed by collaborative local processes (participation and partnership) LA planner as facilitator.
Continuity, order ←———————————————————→ Innovation, change		
Culture of central control Governed by central policy statements and regulated by GOs. LA planner as "upward looking animal" delivering central priorities.	Centralisation/ vertical integration. public sector as delivery vehicle for government	**Target culture** Governed by performance targets LA planner as 'homo-economicus', focused on maximising output

Figure 5.5 Competing conceptions of culture change and identity regulation

The government, meanwhile, in keeping with its wider approach to the modernisation of public services, has endorsed a range of different approaches to managing change in the culture of planning. On the one hand they have pushed to

empower planning - endorsing a spatial planning approach, and sustainable development as a statutory purpose for planning, whilst proclaiming a planning renaissance and professional empowerment (e.g. Andrews 2006, 2006a). On the other hand they have clearly continued to see planning as a problem, and to view performance targets as the best way of controlling the profession and managing change. This range of different approaches has been a central feature of the experience of modernisation as a somewhat unstable and shifting process. The profession, for example, has claimed that the continued reliance on low-commitment, high output performance targets works directly against the kind of culture change required to realise the promise of spatial planning (e.g. RTPI, 2003a; Upton, 2008). This points towards fractures within the agenda, and tensions that key discourses, and particularly that of "spatial planning", are being asked to manage. It also suggests, however, the struggle to create a coherent ideological ethos for a new planning.

Mechanisms of culture governance in the planning policy network

I have suggested that tensions within the national level framing of modernisation are likely to be passed down through the system to the *"theatres of culture change"* at the local level. However, it is also necessary to recognise the presence of various technologies of culture governance through which the planning policy network has sought to stabilise local interpretations of the new planning system. In a heavily centralised planning system such as that found in the UK such mechanisms are particularly important (cf. Tait, 2002; Tewdwr-Jones, 2002). Interviews at both the national and local level suggested that this has worked through a number of different media, including:

- The production of formal government policy guidance, practice guidelines and direct written communication with authorities.
- The publication of consultation drafts of policy documents: allowing comment and feedback, and providing an important guide to emerging government thinking, and to possible future policy.
- *Planning* magazine: as a publication that reaches all RTPI members, *Planning* remains a key forum. The ODPM, for example, publicised the Culture Change agenda through a supplement to the magazine (ODPM,

2004). It also remains probably the chief means through which the RTPI communicates with its members.

- Government Offices have been a crucial means of enforcing conformity to national level policy in local planning, and for overseeing day-to-day practices (cf. Tewdwr-Jones, 2002).

- Training events: the RTPI runs a series of training events every year on emerging areas of concern/ change, and increasingly other providers, including Universities have begun to enter this potentially lucrative market (see Upton, 2008). Other events such as the RTPI annual's convention, or Planning Summer School are also significant if perhaps less wide-reaching.

- Other organisations such as the Planning Officer's Society nationally and regionally, and regional branches of the RTPI provide a forum for discussion and debate.

During periods of systemic change these network technologies become particularly crucial means of stabilising new discourses. The years after the passing of the 2004 Act saw a proliferation and intensification of their use. This included, for example, the setting up of the Planning Advisory Service (PAS, undated) with a mission heavily inflected with the language of managerialism to:

> Help [planners] in providing faster, fairer, more efficient and better quality services. PAS supports local planning authorities throughout England to improve their performance and move towards excellence.

With the further development of the internet in recent years however, there has been a remarkable increase in the volume and availability of guidance published by government and other organisations that can, following one civil servant, be collectively considered "agents of culture change". As I shall explore further in the case studies below, this has led to many planners at the local level feeling quite overwhelmed, "I've overdosed on CPD to be honest" as one suggested to me.

The transition to the new planning system was therefore managed by the structures of existing and reinforced policy networks. Large quantities of literature were produced to help communicate the change required and how to go about the production of new style 'spatial strategies' (see e.g. PAS, undated; POS, 2005; RTPI, 2007; PINS, 2007). Emerging research has also been significant in this

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regard, mapping the performance of spatial planning and seeking to promote particular interpretations (see e.g. RTPI, 2007; CLG, 2008). For those practitioners I spoke with, a series of seminars held by the Government Office for the South East (GOSE) were particularly significant during the early transition to the new system. They had provided a key forum for exploring and understanding the change required and the purpose of the new system, and a valuable opportunity to share ideas and concerns.

Over time this led to a particular emphasis on the integrative functions of spatial planning (e.g. RTPI, 2007). As I shall describe below, this had become widely accepted in practice, though practitioners often remained somewhat sceptical about the term spatial planning itself. This scepticism had been heightened by a sense that there were mixed messages emanating from different organisations, e.g. the government emphasising "delivery", the profession "integration"; or POS advocating an incremental view of change, whilst PAS argued the need for wholesale transformation of practices.

This suggests the importance of the policy network in governing the interpretation of emerging practices. It is therefore possible to view the mechanisms of culture governance in the planning policy network as means through which culture change is being managed. However, it is equally important to recognise the limits of the network's power to determine the interpretation of change, and the likely presence of contradictory messages between the various agencies involved. As such it is necessary to recognise the space that modernisation has potentially opened up for local level interpretive agency.

Conclusions: a new ideological ethos for planning?

Finally then, in returning to the research questions with which the chapter began:

- *How has the modernisation agenda sought to change the culture of planning and, by extension, the identities of planners in local government?*
- *To what extent does this reflect a distinctively New Labour agenda, or ideological ethos?*

It is necessary to question whether the tensions and ambivalences within the modernisation agenda are capable of being managed within the new system. The agenda has been complex, and has pointed in multiple different directions. This means that it is difficult to discern any one ideological ethos governing the new planning - rather I have argued 'spatial planning' is being asked to perform multiple different tasks that each imply somewhat different changes for planning cultures and planners themselves. This reflects both long-standing tensions within planning, and the particular ideological orientation of a New Labour government whose own tensions, and hybrid approach to governing, have been brought to bear on the modernisation of planning. I have further begun to argue that the result is likely to be that these tensions are passed down to the local level, where they may open up interpretive spaces within local planning cultures that suggest possibilities for planners to identify with quite different conceptions of spatial planning. However, this is also likely to have imposed a burden on planners as they seek to understand their roles, and manage these tensions in practice. In the next two chapters I therefore turn to the local level to explore how the change implied by modernisation has been understood in two "theatres of culture change" where the success or failure of spatial planning will be determined.

In so doing, however, it is important to register a further important element of the culture change agenda. Advocates of the spatial planning agenda have understood modernisation in positive terms as offering new and progressive opportunities for planning. As a result, many of those I interviewed would have sympathised with Shaw (2006: 17) when he suggests that:

> As part of the Government's planning reform agenda spatial planning is being offered a central role in coordinating and enabling the delivery of sustainable communities...It is clearly up to planners to grasp the opportunity being afforded them, to do things differently from the recent past and demonstrate how they make a positive contribution.

Such a message places particular onus on planners in local authorities to embrace change. This has drawn exhortations for them to commit to the new agenda, amidst concern that many practitioners are resistant to change and stuck in the conservative comfort of the 'regulatory rut' (e.g. Tewdwr-Jones, 2004; Allmendinger, 2006; Morphet, 2007; Richards, 2007). This betrays frustration

within the policy and professional communities at the perceived failure of the rank and file of planners to make planning work. It also expresses concern that, without clear evidence of "delivery", the Government's ambivalent attitude itself poses a threat to spatial planning. In the next two chapters it is the experience of planners in trying to make the new planning work that I explore, investigating how they have negotiated the identity regulating discourses of modernisation and spatial planning. However, by reading the national level modernisation of planning as an agenda marked by multiple tensions and contradictions I open up a rather different view of the culture change message from the more straightforward one suggested by Shaw; a reading that perhaps seeks a more sympathetic account of how local authority planners come to make sense of their professional selves in the face of considerable uncertainties.

Chapter 6 Negotiating professional identities in a regulatory planning culture

Introduction

The previous chapter described the modernising planning agenda at the national level. In so doing it suggested that modernisation has been presented primarily as a strategy of problematisation, generating the momentum to displace existing settlements in the planning policy network. Within this context "culture change" has been seen as a crucial means of establishing new understandings of planning's purpose, and communicating these from the national to the local level, where they act not only to shape new practices but also as a significant form of identity regulation. At the centre of my argument, however, was a reading of the modernisation agenda that stressed the tensions within the *"new ideological ethos"* of spatial planning. I suggested that the New Labour government and the planning policy community have apparently struggled to articulate a new hegemonic settlement capable of stabilising tensions in the network, and providing a stable basis for governing. These tensions suggest quite different purposes for planning, and therefore quite different planning cultures and subject positions for planners in local authorities. As a result the modernisation agenda has potentially opened up considerable interpretive space for local planning cultures, requiring planners to engage in a concerted period of 'identity work' to make sense of their working lives.

In the next two chapters I therefore shift attention to the local level, the *"theatre of culture change"*. In so doing I aim to investigate how this period of change has been interpreted and understood within two apparently very different planning cultures. I explore the extent to which "modernisation" has led to change in these cultures, and, particularly, to the identities of planners as they have sought to adjust to the identity regulating implications of both a new planning system and proclaimed new ethos. I therefore aim to address the two research questions addressed to the local level (see p.75 above):

- How have local planning cultures interpreted the imperatives of modernisation?

- To what extent have planners taken on new identities in line with the ideological ethos of spatial planning?

In this chapter I will describe the first of the two case studies, chosen to represent a regulatory planning style where local politics and planning have been engaged in considerable conflict over development. Here the political, organisational and planning cultures all implied possible resistances to key elements in the government's modernisation agenda. As a result this case might be considered a likely site of contestation over the meaning of modernisation and of new practices and identities for planning and planners. In this it can also be considered as, to some extent, representative of a wider planning culture in the greater South East of England that has been of crucial importance in shaping government thinking about planning. One national level respondent described this as the "*hidden economic geography of Gordon Brown*", with the economic priority afforded to the competitiveness of the South East's economy effectively shaping government policy. Others, such as the TCPA (2001, 2002), meanwhile, have consistently decried the problems caused by "*nimby*" planning authorities in the South East through their resistance to development[9]. As such, areas where development has become a heated political issue have been central to shaping wider thinking about planning policy (Brindley et al, 1996; Vigar et al, 2000; Murdoch and Abram, 2002). I begin by briefly introducing the area and its local governance culture, before describing planning's role within it and, in particular, the role of planning policy. I then move on to describe the planning policy team, before outlining how the transition to the new planning system has been experienced within the authority, and team. Finally I assess the nature of the identity work that the planners have been engaged in as they have sought to adjust their practices.

Local Governance Culture and Political Identity in Wokingham

Wokingham Borough lies adjacent to the fast growing town of Reading in the County of Berkshire, in the affluent South East of England. It is located within the M4 corridor and the much vaunted "western crescent" of high-tech and knowledge based economic development to the west of London (Short et al, 1987; WDC, 2002). As such it is positioned in an area long recognised as amongst the most

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[9] The above discussion relates to the greater South-East rather than the government region. However, from this point forward references to the South-East refer to the administratively defined region unless otherwise specified.

economically dynamic in the UK (Allen et al, 1998; Raco, 2003). Within the South East Plan the Borough has been included in the Western Corridor and Blackwater Valley sub-region, which recognises this dynamism as a key asset that must be preserved (SEERA, 2006).

This economic strength has resulted in unemployment rates that are lower than both the national and regional averages, and nationally high rates of average income, car ownership, and educational attainment (WDC, 2002; WBC, 2008). This picture of "success" has been reinforced by the results of polls by the Halifax and Royal Bank of Scotland that described the Borough as amongst the best places in the UK to live in 2007 (Tinker, 2007). Such prosperity brings with it distinct advantages, but also particular challenges: the South East Plan, for example, suggests the need to carefully manage the impacts of high growth pressures on the qualities that are central to the sub-region's appeal (SEERA, 2006; Swain et al, 2007). This suggests an understanding that the levels of growth seen in recent years have caused some strain to the area's infrastructure and capacity to absorb further development.

Indeed, due to its privileged location, the Borough, in keeping with large parts of the wider region, has been subject to enormous growth pressures in the last thirty years. It has been designated for substantial growth since the early 1970s, with central government including it, along with the rest of Central Berkshire, within Growth Area 8 in the 1970 South East Regional Strategy (Short et al, 1987). Between 1971 and 2001 the Borough therefore witnessed a 50% increase in population from 99, 664 to 150, 229 (WBC, 2008). This occurred during a period when average household size fell from 3.23 to 2.55, resulting in an 85% increase in households. These increases have therefore been sustained by the building of around 22, 200 houses between 1976 and 2001, representing some 38% of the Borough's housing stock in 2001, and suggesting both the pace of, and pressure for growth (ibid). However, such growth has also been subject to long-standing local opposition, with an articulate and educated population continually opposed to, and willing to organise against development (see e.g. Short et al 1987). As a result growth, and especially the accommodation of housing development, has long been central to local politics in a pattern similar to that witnessed in other parts of the region (e.g. ibid; Murdoch and Abram, 2002).

A history of conflict over development

In many respects Wokingham is therefore a potent symbol of the regulatory planning style that has been a central object of those seeking to advance a more 'positive' planning culture. Certainly it shares many of the "NIMBY" traits decried by the TCPA, and can be considered typical of the shire county conservatism that was central to undermining the deregulatory reforms of the 1980s. Indeed Lower Earley in the west of the District, bordering Reading, has come to stand as a symbol of the private sector led approach of the Thatcher governments in the 1980s, and the politics of housing development in the face of strong local opposition (cf. Murdoch and Abram, 2002). Though, somewhat ironically, already designated and under way in the 1970s, Lower Earley was an entirely privately developed estate that grew to consist of more than 6000 dwellings by the 1990s (Ward, 2005). Most significantly, however, its development was accelerated in the 1980s after then Secretary of State Michael Heseltine's decision to impose an extra 8000 houses on the projections in the Berkshire structure plan (Short et al, 1987). The subsequent battle between the districts over how this allocation should be met led to the further expansion of Lower Earley, following the mobilisation of local resistance to a proposed new town north of neighbouring Bracknell (ibid).

Short et al (1987) suggest that such tensions typically lead local planning authorities to some combination of five possible responses. In the context of the thesis these can each be considered as discourses used to manage the politics of growth. As I shall describe below these discursive strategies continue to define local politics in Wokingham.

- Resistance to growth – this strategy is difficult in the face of the government's willingness to use its powers to override local opposition, but remains electorally popular and therefore a common political strategy. This has been something of a default position in Wokingham's local politics (cf. Short et al, 1987).

- Deflection of development – has led to considerable tension between neighbouring authorities and potential development sites as opposition seeks to move development to another location. Tends to lead development towards the path of least resistance.

- Deflection of blame – again a largely political strategy, but one that has important consequences in constructing a local identity through the "othering" of central government and other tiers/ authorities "*imposing development on us*".

- Control over development – in the face of strong public mobilisation this has tended to be the strategy reached only once opposition has been exhausted (cf. Murdoch and Abram, 2002). It is based on a discourse stressing that if development is inevitable the LPA should plan for it and minimise its negative impacts. This is a discursive line often argued by planning officers, who suggest such an approach is preferable to the alternative of "planning by appeal".

- Planning gain – part of the previous strategy, which stresses that by planning for growth it is possible to accrue benefits to the locality through planning gain agreements.

Growth tensions in Wokingham today

The continued centrality of growth issues within Wokingham can be gathered from a reference to these tensions in the council's short profile of the area on their website which suggests that:

> *The challenge is to balance the need for housing development against the protection and enhancement of the Borough's pleasant semi-rural environment.* (WBC, undated)

Local politicians meanwhile admit that the political culture is defined by, "*the threat of large housing numbers from the government*"[10]. During the period of the research, WBC was controlled by a Conservative administration with a strong electoral majority. The party was elected after a period of Liberal Democrat control, and the Liberal Democrats remain the main, though increasingly weak, opposition. Their administration was undermined by their agreeing to the growth levels proposed in the revision of the then Berkshire structure plan. By drawing on a discourse of opposition to growth the Conservatives were able to take control of

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[10] Quotations in this and the next chapter are taken from interviews. Wherever possible the speaker is made clear in the text as here. For reasons of anonymity quotes from planners are only identified by their position in the organisation. In the case of Wokingham this is as either managers, senior planning officers, or planning officers.

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the council. The Conservative administration subsequently refused to accept the allocation of housing for the district, forcing the Secretary of State to intervene to enforce the numbers, but allowing the maintenance of a strong opposition to nationally "imposed" housing targets. This acted as a strong identity marker and electoral strategy.

In asserting opposition to development as a central political value particular representations of Wokingham as a Borough are drawn on (cf. Healey 2007). This is a somewhat difficult task, however, as the Borough's spatial identity is not particularly clear, with its central market town of Wokingham suffering from something of an "identity crisis" according to the local civic society (Tinker, 2007). As the map in figure 6.1 suggests, the Borough is composed of a collection of small settlements - some of which, such as Lower Earley, clearly function as part of Reading – set within a largely rural context.

Rather than calling on particularly strong representations of place, however, appeals to a Wokingham identity often define the area in relation to what it is not, specifically by not being either a suburb/ extension of Reading, or part of a contiguous conurbation with Bracknell. This manifests in strong local commitment to maintenance of the spatial boundaries between settlements. Letters to the local newspaper, The Wokingham Times, for example voice concern about the coming of "Brackingham", and the loss of Wokingham's "authentic" character (Wokingham Times, 2007).

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Figure 6.1 Map of Wokingham Borough

(source: http://planaccess.wokingham.gov.uk)

This identity is further strengthened by a desire to preserve the high quality of life that its residents perceive. It also helps to sustain a small-c conservative political culture that takes particular pride in the maintenance of low council tax rates, and a strong mistrust of state intervention. This is well illustrated by *The Wokingham Times*, which adopts a strong and somewhat hostile editorial line towards WBC - "*they're not our friends*" as one WBC manager wryly admitted. The paper therefore closely monitors the Authority and its activities, particularly for any signs of financial waste. This serves to further fuel mistrust of government, and defines a tense relationship between the council and the local population. It is also manifest, however, in an understanding that the Borough is a net contributor to the national finances, receiving considerably less funding from central Government than its residents contribute, and notably less than neighbouring authorities. This reinforces local feeling and strengthens local identity by constituting national government as an essentially intrusive presence, imposing a tax burden in addition to unwanted levels of housing.

Wokingham Borough Council and planning policy's role within it

WBC, known as Wokingham District Council until 2007, became a unitary authority in 1998, following the abolition of the County Council and the former two-tier structure of local government in Berkshire. This extended the powers of the former district council to encompass responsibility for strategic planning policy, and other services including transport, education and social services.

Following the breaking up of a stand-alone planning department in 2005, the development plans team is located within a broader Strategy and Partnerships unit. This type of arrangement has become increasingly common in England (Hylton, 2008), and reflects the challenge to single service departments in local government posed by the managerial emphasis on corporatism (Campbell and Marshall, 2001).

The team is therefore based in a wider department that includes responsibility for the corporate plan, and the local strategic partnership (LSP) and community strategy, as well as a "rag bag" of other functions. This shift had been generally welcomed by planning policy officers, who saw their role as fitting closely with corporate strategy making. They had hoped that the changes would give them more influence over members and corporate strategy. However, it was also acknowledged that the transition had not had the expected results in terms of 'joining up' strategy making. Officers expressed reservations that the reorganisation had been motivated as much by "personal reasons", and the need to remove an unpopular head of planning as by any positive ambition. The fact that other key strategic components, including transport, had not been brought into the same service was seen as evidence of this. Meanwhile, the task of 'joining up' was acknowledged to be difficult, with the type of policy making undertaken in corporate planning seen as very "performance indicatory" and officers admitting that they had struggled to forge meaningful relationships with colleagues outside of the development plans team.

With DC based in a unit containing building control and other regulatory environmental functions, there was a physical as well as an organisational separation of the planning policy and control functions within the council. This was felt to have increased distance between the two and, despite regular meetings, it

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was difficult to ensure proper communication. This was exacerbated by the difficulty that the council was experiencing in attracting and retaining development control staff. Part of a wider national and particularly regional problem (Durning, 2007), this had led to a succession of temporary and contract staff being brought in. Whilst staff levels in the policy section were more stable, policy officers admitted that they struggled to keep up with the turnover in DC, meaning that they had little or no personal contact with control officers.

This had been, in part, a deliberate managerial strategy of change in development control, "big time" culture change as a senior manager described it to me. This was in response to a perceived breakdown in relations between officers and members, occasioned by what was described as a particularly "insensitive" and "policy-driven" interpretation of the density guidelines in planning policy guidance for housing, which had caused great unrest about in-fill of gardens. New management had therefore been brought in to lead a transition and to improve relations, a key part of which had been a period of high staff turnover. Such reorganisation was part of a wider process of corporate level change that had become a normal part of the institutional landscape in both the case study authorities. During the period when I conducted most of the interviews the arrival of a new chief executive was in the process of stimulating re-organisation in both authorities. Whilst there was some concern about the costs of reorganisation, such corporate change appeared to be generally accepted as an inevitable feature of contemporary local government. The presence of tensions between managerial/ officer power and the authority of elected members within the authority suggests, however, that such processes of change involve key challenges to power relations within local government (cf. Clarke and Newman, 1997; Newman, 2001; Cochrane, 2004).

Tensions between different forms of local leadership were also apparent in the Borough's approach to new forms of local governance, particularly the local strategic partnership (LSP). LSPs were set up to bring together representatives from the various public, private and voluntary sector organisations in a local area to consider local problems, and to produce Community Strategies (Geddes, 2006). They have also been viewed as an instrument for undermining and bypassing the authority of traditional elected local government, and, as such, have been met with suspicion and hostility by councillors who see themselves as the legitimate voice

of local government (ibid.). However, the constitution of LSPs varies greatly across England (ibid.), and in Wokingham the conservative culture of local government continued to insist on the primacy of electoral accountability. As a result, the LSP was firmly led by the Council with the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council the only two members with voting rights, and the Council holding the chair. Although viewed with suspicion by local politicians, the LSP was therefore understood as a council controlled process. The community strategy was therefore viewed as a document that followed from the Council's corporate plan rather than as a site capable of leading local change.

The political profile of development issues means that planning is subject to high levels of scrutiny from the council, local press and population. Given the unpopularity of development, this oversight is chiefly directed towards the exercise of planning's regulatory powers. As such development control officers acknowledged Wokingham was a "*tough patch*". During the period when the interviews were conducted several large planning applications were under consideration and had led to the formation of local citizen action groups, and high levels of press coverage. The *Wokingham Times* often covered these stories in emotive fashion, for example, taking on the role of a community organiser by reminding readers to register their opposition to applications with the council (e.g. Corbett, 2007; 2007a).

Planning is therefore defined locally by its regulatory powers and by local pressure that they be exercised strictly in defence of local property values and quality of life. This creates a political climate that officers recognised was often very difficult for members. In one high profile example, a proposal for 150 houses on a site called Plough Lane had aroused considerable opposition, including a local action group. The site had, however, already been allocated in the local plan approved in 2004, and approval was therefore considered a foregone conclusion by officers, whose main concern was whether politicians would be brave enough to grant permission in the face of such vocal opposition. Officers felt that, in the past, politicians had often been afraid to take the unpopular decisions that they "*needed to*", and as a result the council had been reduced to "*planning by appeal*". For the planners this was professionally unsatisfying, resulting in a loss of control over development and high costs incurred in fighting appeal hearings.

Planning policy had a generally lower profile within the local community, with the local press providing comparatively less coverage of the emerging local development framework (LDF). Nonetheless, consultations produced high response rates, ensuring that officers were very aware of local oversight and opinion. Within the council, meanwhile, policy was seen as a key battleground between centrally imposed restrictions and the power of local people, and particularly politicians, to shape the future of the area. This was felt not just in relation to housing numbers, but also issues such as brown-field development, and density and car parking standards. This played a strong part in sustaining the "them and us" discourse describing relations between central government and the local area (conceived as the victim of unjust interference). This was electorally popular and was strengthened by the presence of a Labour government nationally. However, it was also widely accepted to be an expression of local feeling and therefore not party political (in as much as a Conservative government at the national level would have found itself facing similar opposition, and Wokingham's Liberal Democrats adopted a broadly similar position).

Within this context, the development plans team felt itself to be on a "short leash", with the high profile of planning issues ensuring high-level political and corporate oversight over the plan-making process. A project board with high-level corporate representation, and an officer-member working group had been established to oversee progress on the LDF, and particularly the production of the Core Strategy[11]. This hierarchical structure also extended into the development plans team itself. This was structured around a "core team" comprising the manager and three senior planning officers (essentially an inner circle of senior officers that sought to manage the difficult process of negotiating the LDF), and "the rest" - three (junior) planning officers, a GIS technician, an information officer who works on section 106 negotiations, and an administrator. Officers felt that this team of ten was relatively large and well resourced in comparison with many others (aided by access to Planning Delivery Grant), and all of the planning officers were either chartered members of the RTPI or were working towards qualifications and membership.

Local Planning Issues around the development of the LDF

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[11] See Appendix 1 for a description of the different elements of the LDF introduced by the 2004 act.

Unsurprisingly, given what I have already described, housing numbers have proven to be at the centre of local controversy over the production of a core strategy for Wokingham, the first development plan document to be produced in the Borough under the new planning system. This was particularly focused around the implications of political opposition to the emerging South East Plan. Given the level of opposition shown by the administration to the Berkshire Structure Plan that was finally approved in 2005, the decision to roll forward the share of housing for each Berkshire authority from that document into the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) was always likely to meet strong opposition within Wokingham. This implied an increase of one-sixth in the Borough's allocation to 523 houses a year, a figure that was subsequently increased to 623 (SEERA, 2006; WBC, 2008a). The council meanwhile maintained that the figure should be set at 320, the projected brown-field land capacity of the Borough. The fact that neighbouring Reading had consistently exceeded its housing allocation, and would sign up as a "growth point" promising to deliver 10% above their South East Plan targets, added to a sense of injustice about the allocations. The imposition of these figures from an unelected regional body, meanwhile, further stoked the indignation of local politicians.

As a result the leader of the council, Frank Browne, wrote to every household in the District in October 2005 inviting them to respond to a questionnaire. This yielded some 18, 000 responses, a remarkable 31.8% response rate (WDC, 2005). A further letter was sent in May 2006 urging residents to make their opposition to the allocation for the district known to the panel of inspectors reporting on the draft Plan. Entitled, *Housing numbers: can our district cope?*, the letter argued that this opposition rested on two key principles: the high levels of growth seen over the last thirty years, and the impacts of further development on the Borough's already stressed infrastructure. These consultations provided the council with a strong popular mandate to argue for lower numbers. In order to further strengthen this case MORI were commissioned in December 2005 to conduct an opinion poll to, *"provide robust evidence of local opinions towards housing development"* (MORI, 2005). In addition to this, research was also commissioned from the consultancy Ove Arup in 2004 to investigate the amount of infrastructure investment required in the Borough. This suggested that there was a requirement for some £818 million in expenditure over the life of the proposed regional plan to 2026 (WDC, 2005).

This commitment of resources to opposing the housing numbers shows a populist politics of resisting growth at work. This was mobilised around the image of the "infrastructure gap", and of the injustice of already congested Wokingham continuing to "*take*" high levels of housing growth that could be more sustainably, and justly, absorbed elsewhere in the region (or even nationally) (WDC, 2005). This discourse of opposition to development was reinforced by appeals to the environmental qualities of the area and the need to maintain existing settlement patterns. The proximity of the *Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area* (SPA) therefore added further arguments against growth figures. Whilst the district is not a part of the SPA, a European designation protecting ground nesting birds, a large part of it lies within the 5km zone within which the impacts of development must be mitigated. This had led to a considerable investment of officer time in ascertaining the likely implications of the SPA for development in the Borough.

Once committed to a discourse of resistance, however, progress on the production of a core strategy became particularly politically sensitive, since agreeing to a strategy required the council to accept a set of housing figures. It was therefore clear that the political will to progress towards a core strategy was always likely to be compromised by the continued struggle over allocations in the South East Plan. The council's stance therefore created a particularly difficult working context for the development plans team, charged with finding a strategy that could meet with the approval of both the council and central government, and in line with the challenging new project planning framework and regulations introduced by the new system. This challenge therefore dominated the experience of the team who found themselves positioned between the central binary tensions of spatial strategy making in the south east of England; central vs. local government, and development vs. environment (Vigar et al 2000; Murdoch and Abram 2002).

Working the new planning system

The task of producing a core strategy was therefore always going to prove contentious in Wokingham. The political sensitivity of planning created a climate in which one of the central thrusts of the modernisation agenda, proactively planning for development, was extremely contentious. In order to produce a strategy, the council would be forced to accept a set of housing figures, which would imply a switch to a discourse of controlling and shaping development that ran counter to

the way in which the leader of the council had *"nailed his colours to the mast"* (as one planner put it). As a result the first local development scheme (LDS) adopted in Wokingham set out a *"deliberately cautious"* programme of work (WDC, 2005a).

For officers, on a *"short leash"*, the chief task was to navigate a "sound" strategy through the intricacies of the new system, and between the very different demands being made of them from both government and members:

> *What we've had to try and do is balance good professional judgement and government policies...It's saying the same thing in different words but that's [what] you... we... get used to using: what are members wanting? What does the government want? How can we try and deliver what the government are wanting using a version of words that the members want?* (Senior Planning Officer)

This suggests a clear understanding of the task of planning policy in Wokingham as one of mediation between conflicting objectives. A great deal of energy was being invested, behind the scenes, to forge support for the principle of accepting a core strategy and the growth that this implied. The development plans team, however, struggled to summon the agency to bring about this transformation. Rather, they were reliant on factors outside of their control to "deliver" the strategy.

Officers were acutely aware of these political tensions, the fragility of the political will to deliver a core strategy, and also of GO concerns about their ability to produce a strategy (one manager suggested that the authority were on GOSE's *"concern list"*). This led to a particular, somewhat embattled, emphasis on ensuring the "soundness" of the strategy, with planning officers' claims to authority resting primarily on their role as interpreters of the statutory requirements of the new system.

This concern with soundness was also reinforced by an awareness of the high costs of failure. This was related to a financial cost consciousness that was deeply inscribed within WBC, and was described as a product of low council tax rates and limited access to central government funds which imposed a responsibility on the council to achieve "more for less". The cost of planning appeals, and the experience of funding two separate inquiries into the previous Local Plan, had

already ensured caution about the financial implications of planning policy. The resource requirements of the new system meanwhile were identified as an additional financial burden, the evidence base for which alone required the commissioning of multiple large studies.

The cost of being found unsound became particularly apparent following the Planning Inspectorate's (PINS) rejection of the first core strategies to be examined in the summer of 2006. The names of the authorities concerned, *Lichfield* and *Stafford*, became synonymous with fears about whether the new system had been interpreted correctly. This led a number of other authorities to withdraw their strategies in the following months. The prospect of being forced back to the beginning of the process by a binding inspector's report understandably promoted a cautious approach. These early experiences spread concern about the consequences of failure throughout the country, prompting anxiety in all of the authorities I visited. In Wokingham this further undermined the anyway fragile commitment to press on. Officers saw the Lichfield and Stafford decisions as particularly demoralising, identifying a betrayal of the good faith shown by authorities engaging positively with the new system. This was heightened, as suggested above, by a feeling that advice about how to produce a core strategy had shifted significantly over time, effectively "moving the goalposts" and leading to a number of "false starts". The key to this was the level of site specificity required in a core strategy, with initial government advice suggesting that this was not required later being reversed (see CLG, 2007).

Figure 6.2 provides a timeline of the production of both the LDS and LDF in Wokingham, including reasons for delay, officers' reactions to the situation, and the wider context of governmental advice/ progress of the new system. This provides a sense of the convoluted and tense nature of the process. The figure further provides a sense of the frustration planners felt in trying to ensure compliance with shifting governmental policy and guidance. This task required planners to behave as *upward looking animals,* requiring large amounts of time and energy to be invested in making sense of the system and its requirements. This was symbolised by a complex relationship with the GO who were simultaneously seen as vital to the legitimation of any approach, but also, at times, as overbearing micro-managers of the process: *"oh should that comma be there, or should it be a semi-colon?",* as one senior officer somewhat caustically

characterised the level of this oversight (cf. Tewdwr-Jones 2002[12]). The complexity of the system and the speed of change in policy and advice were seen to have made the task of forging support for the strategy considerably more difficult. This produced a sense, particularly marked in interviews conducted in 2007, that the system had reached an impasse and was "just not working".

Date	Stage of LDF preparation against LDS commitments	Reasons for progress/ delay	Officer's interpretation	Wider progress of system/ Government interpretation
March 2004	Previous local plan adopted.		Lengthy process (2 public inquiries) but sense system increasingly understood/ accepted.	System felt to be slow, inefficient, ineffective and inflexible.
October, 2004	Initial (supplementary) consultation on developing a land-use vision		Going beyond the government's requirements for consultation	New System and Regulations come into force
February, 2005	1st LDS approved – key goals to progress Core Strategy and Housing and Site Allocations DPDs together, plus range of other documents.		"deliberately cautious" plan of work, acting on GOSE advice to bring forward the two DPDs together. Advice that is later revised leading to "shelving" of site allocations.	

[12] GOSE meanwhile maintained a discourse of seeking to discourage dependency and to encourage forms of licensed autonomy, within the boundaries set by certain "givens" (including, of course, housing delivery). At the time interviews were conducted this had led to a more "hands off" approach than had been adopted at the outset of the new system, a shift partly driven by resource constraints.

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June, 2005	Core Strategy issues and Options document published		Included *"new settlement"* option that did not comply with then govt. guidance	
November, 2005	Alternatives for a draft core strategy (preferred options stage consultation) published	Using less definitive language to maintain progress in face of opposition	Need to be vague about sites etc. but aware that government seeking more detail	
July, 2006	Council's executive defers publication of submission draft core strategy	Officially due to concerns about evidence base	Unofficially, council unwilling to sign off a strategy whilst fighting South East plan	Lichfield and Stafford decisions create considerable unease.
August-October, 2006	Work on housing and site allocations issues and options consultation/ Core Strategy further delayed.		Some relief that core strategy has been delayed as resources are stretched	Climate of uncertainty affects neighbouring authorities, a number of whom are found unsound or advised to withdraw emerging core strategies
May, 2007	Revised LDS accepted – reduces number of documents and focuses energies esp. on core strategy	Secretary of state slow and reluctant to "sign it off" – delays due to resources in dept. and Lichfield and Stafford uncertainty	Frustration at slow pace of approval. System felt to be moving back to the local plan as "portfolio" idea is sidelined.	

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August, 2007	Council further postpones following delayed publication of South east plan panel report		Sense system "just not working" is pronounced	
June, 2008			Further "shifting of goalposts"	Revised PPS 12 comes into force (CLG, 2008a) – moves further from "portfolio" approach, changes requirements for authorities
August, 2008	Submission core strategy finally published/ 3rd LDS approved	Shift in council's approach – commitment to making progress with South east plan contestation effectively over	Fragile sense positive progress may now be possible	

Figure 6.2 Timeline of LDF progress in Wokingham

This did, however, begin to lift in 2008. Change coincided nationally with a sense that authorities were beginning to understand the new system and its somewhat revised demands. However, it also followed the arrival of the new chief executive, and local elections in 2008 at which the leader of the council stood down. These two events marked an important shift in discourse within WBC that was driven by a new managerial ethos.

The new management team initiated change to promote more open relations between officers and members. This was designed to challenge the power of elected members, many of whom had developed an entrenched authority through long periods in office. Formal mediation processes were used to move beyond the essentially negative discourses defining WBC, towards a more positive vision of how the council would seek to shape change. Central to this was a desire for

members to "*take control of the development agenda*", reflected in plans to move development management into the same core policy-making unit as planning policy. Thus the arrival of the new chief executive indicated a managerial challenge to the authority of traditional, elected local government within WBC (cf. Newman 2001; Cochrane, 2004).

In relation to planning policy there was a concerted effort to shift the authority towards a discourse of controlling growth and seeking planning gain. The decision by the leader of the council to step down provided a convenient opportunity for this shift to occur. The new leader of the council was elected arguing that delivery of a core strategy was the "*number one challenge*" facing the Borough (Wokingham Times, 2008). More affordable housing for local young people, and proposals to revitalise the town centre of Wokingham were mobilised to gain popular support for the new approach. Senior management and officers meanwhile described this as a means to develop a more positive culture, to move off GOSE's concern list, and to begin to take advantage of the incentives available to positively performing authorities. The change therefore reflected a corporate prioritisation of the core strategy, however, this was also a product of pressure from central government to ensure housing delivery. This suggests recognition, particularly by officers, and more reluctantly by councillors too, of the need to accept the "*rules of the game*". It also therefore suggests central government's power to set those rules, and thereby to govern local authorities "at a distance" by controlling the conditions in which they are able to exercise autonomous agency (cf. chapter 2 above).

Thus the discursive shift required to facilitate progress on the core strategy was the product of a series of wider shifts within WBC. These reflected the effectiveness of managerial power in contemporary local government, but also the continued importance of elected officials in Wokingham. Planning policy was clearly understood as a corporate priority, however, the planning policy team's influence in effecting this change appeared limited, with the agenda being set from above. Planning policy officers were, however, cautiously optimistic that these changes had secured the necessary political will to take the strategy forward, and would allow them to play a more positive role in shaping development. However, they also recognised this as a fragile settlement that did not necessarily reflect any underlying shift in political or popular feeling.

"Performing" spatial planning

As suggested above, the task of ensuring soundness absorbed a large amount of energy and was central to planners' claims to influence local governance. Frustrations at the micro-management of change by the GO and constant shifts in policy and guidance were therefore acutely felt. When considered alongside the strength of local oversight over planning, this led to a feeling that there was little space for value driven professional judgement:

> ...there's not a lot of questioning, apart from housing numbers...I don't think there's an awful lot of questioning of what policy says and how we should be interpreting, I think it's very to the letter, and this is what's going to get us through examinations in public and stuff. (Planning Officer)

Attentiveness to finding a "sound" path between central government and members also produced a particularly studied performance of "spatial planning". This suggests the power of government guidance to command the articulation of key discourses. The principles of "spatial planning" had become a new requirement for legitimating spatial strategies. The emerging core strategy therefore had to demonstrate its commitment to participation, partnership, evidence-base, sustainability and delivery.

This outward performance of conformity with national guidance was particularly apparent in the drafts of the core strategy as it emerged. Thus the emerging strategy sought to "perform" spatial planning in a manner that would ensure strict compliance with government guidance, leaving no space from which the authority's approach could be criticised. This further suggests the centralisation of control over planning. It also betrayed an understanding that the approach adopted in Wokingham was likely to prove controversial, and therefore needed to be beyond reproach. The goal of this strict performance was therefore to meet local concerns in the light of this weight of central guidance, to manage the considerable tensions between the two, and to forge an acceptable local planning identity.

This task, however, required the planners to exercise considerable interpretive agency. For example, the "preferred options" stage of the core strategy was

renamed as "*Alternatives for the Draft Core Strategy*", a move that was designed to ensure political support by appearing less final, whilst also allowing the strategy to progress as timetabled, and in accordance with the regulations. In addition, initial consultation on the core strategy also included as an option the possibility of large scale green-field development, even though this was not in accordance with then government guidance. This reflected a long-standing solution to dealing with growth locally, and would eventually be adopted in the submission strategy. Thus, the discretionary agency of the development plans team, in as far it existed, was focused on the task of managing a path between central policy and local politics. This was considerably more complex than the simple articulation of nationally determined discourses. However, the performance of spatial planning remained tied to the statutory system, and this effectively circumscribed the sphere of operations of the development plans team.

Spatial strategies often involve performances aimed at very different audiences (Healey, 1993; Vigar et al, 2000). As such they seek to manage tensions between different interests. In the highly politicised context of Wokingham, however, the emerging strategy struggled to find a means of resolving the conflict generated by development issues. The settlement that emerged in the submitted core strategy reflected this, adopting a tone that argued growth was a bitter pill that had to be swallowed:

> *The Core Strategy although necessary will not please everyone but*
> *the threat of not having one cannot be overlooked. It is a vitally*
> *important document for local residents and businesses.*

> *The Council remains committed to protecting Wokingham Borough*
> *and, our residents quality of life. Whilst we have concerns about what*
> *is the right amount of development for our borough, we have to accept*
> *that some is inevitable* (WBC, 2008, i)

The strategy itself was therefore a complex mediation between different audiences, arguing to the local community for an acceptance that some growth was inevitable and that it must be planned for in such a way as to ensure high quality development and a share of the benefits that it might bring. At the same time, to the government it maintained that growth remained unwelcome but that

the strategy was capable of delivering, and had arrived at its approach through a sound process of evidence-based, spatial strategy-making. This stood in some contrast to the acceptance of development written into emerging strategies in other authorities in order to meet the expectations of government[13]. Officers admitted that GOSE had commented on the negative tone of earlier drafts. The strategy also sought to direct messages to the development industry about what was expected from development applications, however, this seemed intended as much to re-assure local people that the maximum level of benefits would be extracted.

The overall tone of the strategy and the local planning identity it performed, therefore, continued to reflect the embattled nature of these issues in Wokingham. Officers relayed GO comments that the strategy read like a "proof of evidence". Whilst they joked that this was a good thing, suggesting a thoroughly evidence-based strategy, it also revealed the extent to which the performance of spatial planning, and appeal to values of partnership, participation etc. had been overlaid on top of existing expectations of a regulatory planning system, rather than displacing them. This was further apparent in the consultation responses to the submission draft, a large number of which were concerned with particular sites, and therefore considered irrelevant to the strategic issues being considered in a core strategy (e.g. WBC, 2008b). This suggests the continuing strength of local commitment to a regulatory planning approach, overlaid by a somewhat fragile political and corporate will to accept the development the government was passing down and planning to control the inevitable growth that this implied.

The shift to spatial planning, and the process of adaptation to a new system in Wokingham have therefore been fraught with considerable tensions that the system, the emerging core strategy and policy planners have struggled to resolve. The highly politicised nature of growth issues ensured that the production of a strategy was a key task for the authority. This was clearly understood in regulatory terms by powerful elements within the local community. As a result planning policy was on a very short leash within the hierarchical culture of WBC. In this context, the role of planning policy within the authority has been defined in terms of producing a "sound" strategy, able to mediate the intractable tensions between

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[13] In two other previously "regulatory" planning cultures I visited emerging strategies had been re-written to express a more positive attitude to development. These changes were viewed by officers as a corporate intrusion into planning designed to court favour with government.

central and local interpretations of planning's purpose. It is clear that this task has been very difficult, and made all the more difficult by uncertainties created by the shift towards the new system. It has primarily involved planners in a complex interpretive task, deploying what agency they have to mediate between contradictory demands.

Going "backstage": identity work behind the performance of spatial planning

At this point in the chapter I want to move "backstage" to the experiences of the planners negotiating the performance of the new planning in this complex context. It is possible to learn much from the outward performance of spatial planning in terms of compliance to regimes of control and accountability, and the ways in which particular discourses are articulated. As Flyvbjerg (1998) suggests, however, the real politics of any planning episode is revealed by the story behind that performance (cf. Hillier, 2002). In shifting focus in this way, I aim to explore the processes of identity work in which members of the development plans team were engaged as they sought to negotiate the new planning system. In particular I want to understand how they negotiated their identities in relation to the subject positions that the system sought to inculcate. I therefore briefly introduce the planners and the ways in which they described their commitment to planning. I then move on to discuss how they interpreted, and understood this in relation to the principles of spatial planning.

Commitment to the job: the values motivating planners

The members of the development plans team I interviewed ranged in age and seniority from those beginning their careers, and concurrently studying towards a professionally accredited qualification, through to senior members of the team with managerial responsibility. There was a more or less even gender balance within the team, which was also reflected amongst those I spoke with[14]. In keeping with survey results of the wider structure of the profession, the team was largely white (Clifford, 2007), though one black and minority ethnic (BME) planner was recruited when I was conducting the research.

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[14] This was true of all the authorities I visited and perhaps suggests a difference in culture between policy and control work in planning, see e.g. Thomas (2004) on the masculine gendering of DC work.

All of the planners I spoke with described their commitment to planning as lying in some sort of altruistic motivation to make a difference. This sense of underlying motivation took on a slightly different shape for each individual. Some spoke of an environmental commitment, or a desire to promote sustainability, others saw the motivation in more social terms. The nature of this commitment varied according to a range of factors including age, the period when planning education was undertaken, work experience, and personal values. One senior officer, for example, who had come to planning later in life following a career in nursing, this was seen as a direct extension of the duty of care practiced by nurses. All, however, saw planning as a professional practice working to draw together different values to shape a broader, more holistic, public good. The essence of their motivation therefore lay in a belief that planning was capable of realising a version of the "public interest".

In keeping with the findings suggested by other research, however, this was often a somewhat 'fuzzy' commitment that they were not entirely comfortable discussing (cf. Campbell and Marshall, 2001). As a result it was easier to explore such values implicitly, in relation to what the planners actually did, rather than their underlying motivations. In some cases, as I shall go on to describe below, this suggested a hesitation to linger on the distance between the values that motivated a career in planning, and the day-to-day reality of practice. However, it also reflected another key commitment of public planning - identification with the idea of a public service ethos, where personal motivations are subordinated to the requirements of a role. A commitment to offering impersonal, professional advice to political advisors was very much in evidence in Wokingham, and was a crucial means of coping with the highly charged politicisation of planning issues.

Work in the public sector was also understood as an important expression of this altruistic commitment to planning:

> *Well I think, I would say, it's almost sort of a social mission working for a local authority* (Planning Officer)

For some this was defined strongly, or at least partly, in contrast to work in the private sector:

I have thought about working in the private sector, but I don't think I could have that much of my conscience removed! (Planning Manager)

For others, with private sector experience, this dividing line was less clear-cut, with professional practice in either sector requiring the same commitment to realising the public interest. It was generally accepted, however, that work in the public sector offered the promise of more directly contributing to the public good.[15]

This attachment to public service was understood as an embattled principle, represented by the relations between WBC and the wider community, and symbolised by the hostility of the local press. Continued commitment to an embattled public service ethos also served to forge a shared identity amongst WBC staff in relation to the community. Moreover, experienced officers had come to accept this relationship, and some saw in it a symptom of wider challenges to the principle of public service:

We all know, that it doesn't just have to be planning that knows, that public services are easy to knock, just by their nature, that whatever, whether it's DVLA, the NHS, whatever, we all know that public services are there to be knocked, and its part and parcel. (Senior Planning Officer)

This tied the experiences and frustrations of planning together with a broader set of changes, and narrative of declining public-ness that could, in part, account for the particular challenges the planners faced. For another, experienced officer this was the result of a long process of decline in faith in the public sector and its capacity to deliver change. He had witnessed this first hand over the course of his career with a mixture of regret and resignation.

Krumholz (1996) observes that not all planners are interested in pursuing planning as a value-driven vocation, with some simply happy to see it as a job. I have already suggested that the demands that are sometimes made of the planner in academic, professional and policy discourse seem to imply the need for a "superhero" rather than a civil servant. Though this varied in degree between those I spoke to, for most of the planners in Wokingham their commitment ranged

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[15] Though the flexible working arrangements available in the public sector were also a key attraction for several mid-career planners, particularly females, and those with families.

somewhere beyond being a job, without perhaps registering as a vocation. The extent of this personal commitment to planning had, however, impressed itself upon the administrator working with the development plans team:

I like the enthusiasm of the planners. Because I've been in lots of jobs where people are kind of enthusiastic about what they do, but there's something about planners who sort of live planning.

This accords with the description of professional labour in chapter 2 as requiring a strong degree of personal commitment to the job, and was apparent in various ways in the interviews. For junior planners starting their careers and simultaneously studying, the job and requirements of an academic course meant that at times they felt their lives were dominated by planning. In the case of more experienced officers, this was symbolised by a willingness to commit their evenings to meetings with parish councils, despite prior knowledge that this would be an uncomfortable experience.

Defining planning professionalism: a new ideological ethos?

Not all of those I interviewed used the term "public interest" to describe the purpose of their work, however, some, particularly older planners, did. This concept has been widely criticised as essentially empty, and an ideological cover for a wide variety of possible practices. However, it might also be considered as another empty signifier, functioning as a *"necessary fiction"* that sustains the identity of the planner. (Baum, 1996; cf. Taylor, 1994; Campbell and Marshall, 2001). In accepting planning as a process of value-mediation the planners did not seek to make any claim to a privileged knowledge of what constituted the public interest, or its proxies such as sustainable development. Rather they based their claims to professionalism on an ability to work the system, and thereby to realise democratically legitimated intervention in land-use that would realise public benefits (cf. Healey and Underwood, 1979; McClymont, 2006).

This holistic conception of planning as a public interest activity meant that the planners in Wokingham identified with the idea of a broader role for planning. In addition "good professional practice" was understood to rest on processes of partnership working, and public participation in the pursuit of sustainable

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outcomes. The idea of delivery too, interpreted as a concern to ensure implementation of policy on the ground, was accepted as an important principle. This suggests that the ideological ethos with which the planners identified was closely related to an interpretation of spatial planning as network governance. It also implies that spatial planning may have become established as a new "common sense" within planning. This was most vividly apparent in one of the scoping interviews when a planner stopped herself short when asked to describe the values of good planning, exclaiming, *"sorry, I sound like a government spokesperson now!"* However, it reflected a widely professed sense that the new system had produced a language it was possible to identify with. It also appeared, therefore, to reflect the extent to which the government acted as the 'author' of planning discourse.

However, there were considerable differences in the extent to which the planners identified with the term "spatial planning" itself. This was recognised as an inherently ambiguous, and somewhat esoteric concept:

> *Yes, yes, no, yes. I mean you could go on, there's all sorts of arguments, you could go on forever, in the same way you could go on what is meant by sustainability* (Senior Planning Officer)

> *Oh. That's a really difficult one, isn't it? I was hoping you weren't going to ask that. Ha ha. How would I interpret spatial planning?* (Planning Manager)

Whilst some planners were happy to accept the term as a symbol of change, moving beyond the narrower concept of land-use planning, others were more sceptical. In general, though the planners expressed some identification with the principles underlying modernisation, they also sought to distance themselves from the possibility of realising these goals in practice. In addition, as I shall explore in more detail below, all of the planners were aware of pressures that seemed to undermine their desired interpretation of the new agenda.

Moreover, the planners' conception of professional practice had been, to a large extent, internalised and formed a working sense of the purpose of planning. These values were not therefore directly equated with the modernisation agenda, or the profession's reform agenda. All of the planners drew on personal experiences and

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commitments to interpret the ethos of (spatial) planning. Planners with more experience often therefore expressed their sense of professional values in terms distinct from government discourse. The manager of the development plans team, for example, who clearly engaged with debates about planning beyond the workplace, described his commitment in terms of the TCPA's (1999) work on "positive planning". This he equated to the more delivery orientated public sector led planning that he first encountered on entering the profession, and which he contrasted to the "hijacking" of planning by property interests in recent years.

Behind the Performance of Spatial Planning

In order to further explore the lived experience of the planners in Wokingham as they sought to perform spatial planning, and negotiate a new role for planning, I now go on to describe their attempts to engage with the different subject positions suggested by the principles of spatial planning. This provides a way of exploring how the values that the planners espoused were realised or frustrated in use (cf. Argyris and Schon, 1974):

Partnership and Integration

The move into a central strategy and partnerships unit had been positively welcomed by the planners as an opportunity to place planning *"centre stage"*[16] within the corporate structure of WBC, but had also proven somewhat disappointing in practice. All of the planners I spoke to identified with the idea that planning was inherently a "joining up" process, capable of integrating concern for social, environmental and economic issues. The need to outwardly perform "partnership" was clear, particularly in the submission draft of the core strategy. In chapter 2 of which, the spatial issues for the Borough were presented as a list, demonstrating how the council had considered the links between the strategy, other council strategies, policy in neighbouring authorities and other public services (WBC, 2008).

As a unitary authority it was felt that WBC was well placed to achieve this integration, which was anyway driven by the cost conscious drive for efficiency in provision of council services, and the capacity of planning to deliver funds through

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[16] One of the senior planners I spoke with repeatedly used this "metaphor of renaissance", taken from the title of the RTPI's Planning Convention in 2007.

the negotiation of section 106 planning gain agreements. Planning's high political profile meanwhile ensured joint working through the project board and officer-member working group, which were recognised as useful vehicles for spreading understanding of the core strategy. This was understood as one of the key tasks within the new system, requiring much more time spent trying to communicate how engaging with planning could assist other services.

It was less clear that planning was capable of playing the role of a "ringmaster" in the Borough, however. Behind the rather studied performance of policy integration in the submission draft of the core strategy, achieving meaningful partnership was acknowledged to be difficult.

As I suggested above, within the corporate structures of WBC, and particularly in relation to the highly contentious questions planning raised, change was driven more by the interaction between senior management and politicians. Moreover, the imperative to "join up" policy making has been central to the wider LGMA and to reform initiatives in many different service areas, all of which see themselves as driving integration (Cowell and Martin, 2003). Whilst planning and the core strategy were recognised as important, planners did not necessarily have much space to influence the local governance culture. The political sensitivity of planning issues meant that planners were held strictly accountable. Meanwhile it also meant that other processes, such as the community strategy, found it difficult to effectively include planning in their working. Indeed as a service, planning was sympathised with as a particularly embattled arena.

Barriers to effective joining up between sectoral policy networks have been recognised in both planning and wider public administration literatures for some time (e.g. 6, 1998a; Vigar et al, 2000; Cowell and Martin, 2003). The challenge of coordinating work between processes with different timetables and policy priorities was acknowledged as a real barrier to effective partnership and "joined up" policy making, and was one of the chief drivers of the further rounds of restructuring underway in WBC when the research was conducted.

For WBC planners, however, particular frustrations related to the continuing inflexibility of the planning system that was understood as a barrier to effective integration with other strategies and services. Several of those I interviewed

illustrated this point through the example of a recent council decision to close a school. To them the authority seemed to have considerable freedom to make such significant decisions, in comparison to the consultation and evidence-base required to produce change through the planning process. For one, senior officer, this weight of statutory process prevented planning from playing the more holistic role in setting and realising corporate policy that he identified with. As such he felt that spatial planning remained too closely wedded to "town and country planning" and the history of failure that characterised post-war development planning.

This mirrored the frustrations that had motivated the spatial planning agenda at the national level, but suggests that the new system had not resolved such concerns. Identification with the idea of planning as an essentially integrative process was therefore difficult for the planners to sustain. This was particularly clear to officers within the "core team" involved in the delicate task of negotiating progress on the core strategy. For them, the limits of partnership working were clear, as was the requirement to secure the "buy in" of key stakeholders to provide the basis for "effective" planning. Even after this "buy in" appeared to have been won and a more optimistic atmosphere emerged within the team, a cautious sense of its fragility remained.

Participation

Participation too was seen as central to a legitimate performance of spatial planning. This involved an official discourse aimed at both the local population, to secure their support, but also crucially at the government. Thus, for example, it was argued that the renaming of the "preferred options" stage of the core strategy allowed greater scope for continued public input, and therefore a stronger interpretation of the rhetoric about participation in PPS1 and PPS12 than the government itself demanded. As officers suggested:

> *And so it's partly about using government and council spin against the government, and saying we're doing it actually better than the government is.* (Senior Planning Officer)

And we've consulted on it [the core strategy] much more widely than the regulations require, and generally we always consult more widely on most things we do than the regulations require. (Senior Planning Officer)

Participation was also, however, central to the performance of a planning professional identity, a symbol of planning's capacity to respond to local needs and to be socially inclusive. Two of the planners in particular saw this as central to their more "social", "people focused" approach to planning. Given the nature of local opinion and the relationship between WBC, planning and the local population, however, this was a particularly embattled commitment for WBC planners to sustain.

This led to a complex relationship between the planners and the public in Wokingham. "The public" was recognised as a hostile presence, represented by stories of consultation events turning nasty, with rooms full of people threatening to walk out. The public was therefore at times constructed as a hostile "other". However, it was also understood as a legitimate voice in the planning process, and the planners acknowledged the obligation to represent that public as central to their task and the legitimacy of the strategies they were producing. They therefore also sympathised to some extent with local people, understanding their opposition to change and a desire to protect what they valued about the Borough as a "*natural*" concern.

The idea of identifying with the need for public consultation as a principle of a planning identity, whilst simultaneously finding that relationship defined in hostile terms is a powerful example of the way in which particular planning identities were blocked in the Borough. A number of coping strategies were apparent in the interviews as means of reconciling this contradiction between aspiration and reality.

- Appeal was made to a more reasonable "majority", beyond the vocal minority of campaigners and the local press. This silent majority could be appealed to as the main target of planning activity, and could be represented as either future generations (who would need, for example, access to affordable housing) or as people without the time or ability to get

involved in consultations for planning (in contrast to those who did who were, in turn, constructed as largely wealthy, retired residents).

- Sometimes the "public" were also constructed as incapable of acting in their own best interests, or as hypocritical. This was again the case in relation to affordable housing. Planners recognised a contradiction between opposition to development amongst even relative newcomers to the area, and the desire of many residents to see their children settle in the borough (which would require more affordable housing development). This allowed an appeal to a higher wisdom to justify planning policies being imposed against the wishes of local people[17].

- Both government and local politicians were at times attributed with responsibility for this difficult state of affairs: the former having failed "to secure any buy-in" nationally for housing; and the latter lacking the political will to take on the public and challenge their opposition to "inevitable" development.

- Dark humour was also acknowledged as a means of dealing with this contradictory situation. For example, during one consultation period the team had run a sweepstake to guess likely responses. This was seen to reflect the predictability of the public response.

- In addition, the new system and its requirements were again constructed as a part of the problem. The planners felt that the system was based on an unrealistic, or naïve conception that, through the "front-loading" of consultation procedures a consensus could be reached. Experience in WBC made this a remote prospect. Meanwhile, given the prescriptive nature of central government guidance, the emphasis on continued consultation was seen as a way of "just winding people up". In addition,

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[17] Such appeals to "false consciousness" on the part of the public have been described before as part of the paternalistic insensitivity of the planning ideology and might therefore be considered dangerous (Davies 1973, cf. Thomas 1991), however, they can also be understood as both a coping mechanism and a powerful claim to truth (and one that was at least partially accepted in the shift to a discourse of controlling growth).

consultation fatigue was felt to be a serious risk, built into the structures for consultation[18].

Some of the planners had clearly internalised, and come to accept the presence of this tension between a commitment to participation and its reality, however it remained an acknowledged source of frustration. For those individuals who identified particularly strongly with the principle of participation it was sometimes possible to select specific tasks that allowed this identification to be expressed. For one senior member of the team this involved working with local people in the construction of village design guides or other supplementary planning guidance, where it was possible to find more rewarding forms of engagement. Another, junior officer, meanwhile expressed this by investing considerably more time than others in dealing with queries from the public desk (a task that officers took it in turns to be "on duty" for, but which most did not invest as much energy or significance in). This offered her a means of exercising some agency, and of fulfilling a commitment to directly serving the public.

Sustainability

The performance of Sustainability Appraisal was presented as central to all of the options put to the public from the initial options stage of the core strategy (see WBC, 2005b, 2). Officers clearly recognised this as central to their work:

> *we always try to ensure that good planning and the achievement of*
> *sustainable development is always key* (Senior Planning Officer)

> *you're* [planners] *almost going into Brundtland really, aren't you? To meet*
> *the needs of future generations without you know sort of impacting too*
> *greatly. So I mean your aim is some sort of sustainable development*
> (Senior Planning Officer)

The pursuit of sustainable development was therefore accepted as the purpose of planning, and the appeal to the strategy's sustainability was central to its legitimacy. However, the concept was also understood to be as much a discursive claim, as to have any substantive content:

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[18] This was also recognised by government in its tinkering with the system in 2008 (see e.g. CLG, 2007, PAS, undated*a*)

I don't think that anyone really knows what proper sustainable development is, so whether you [planning] could probably never achieve it is... (Planning Officer)

This meant that it was a negotiated outcome of the planning process and its attempts to balance competing demands:

Sustainable development is always key to things, and what we're trying to emphasise in that, it may be that we give more weight to other factors, because it depends...it's trying to recognise that and trying to balance things. (Senior Planning Officer)

This negotiation was considered the crux of the planning task, attempting to balance different interests and claims. Thus sustainability, as an empty signifier, was a suitably flexible goal for practice to pursue, with planners accepting their task as being to push for a "more sustainable" approach against the countervailing forces in any given instance. For example, on public transport, understood as key to a "sustainable" strategy:

We can't say we want "good public transport", what we've had to try and do is to balance good professional judgement and government policies, we want to "provide the opportunity for choice in transport modes", that's what we've had to do... (Senior Planning Officer)

Given the nature of the concept, however, the appeal to "sustainability" was less a claim for a strong, value driven planning practice, than a claim to legitimate planning's role mediating between different interests. Thus, the claim to sustainability was central to a professional planning identity, but also revealed the indeterminate goals of professional practice (Taylor, 2003; Gunder, 2006).

The planners' understanding of their task as one of "balancing" meant that they expressed sympathy for social, economic and environmental interpretations of local priorities, suggesting how the appeal to "sustainability" acts as a rehabilitated version of the "holism" that has long defined the planning profession (cf. Reade, 1987; Taylor, 2004). This appeal therefore acts as a central tenet of the

'inbetween-ness' of planning practice, summed up by the shifting of emphasis between the different elements of sustainable development. By stressing planning's role as one of "balancing" interests in this way, the planners in Wokingham claimed an ability to stand back from any given proposal, and to see the "other sides" of any given issue.

Evidence based policy-making

The council's understanding of the value of evidence to arguing their case has already been demonstrated above in relation to the commissioning of research to oppose the South-east plan. This was further demonstrated by the need to legitimate claims within the core strategy on appeals to evidence-base.

Thus the strategy was required to argue that its rationale was rooted in the evidence base rather than political choices. The job of officers was therefore to translate political (or professional) decisions into technical, evidence-based arguments. The idea of policy being evidence based was identified with by all of the planners I spoke to, providing a rational-technical justification for policy-making (Campbell, 2002). The appeal of such a depoliticised role was obvious within the politically contentious context of Wokingham and certain planners seemed particularly comfortable offering advice based on the details of regulations, or technical studies.

However, it was also clear that the politics of the planning process were inescapable and that the more political elements of planning work, involving negotiation skills, were central to the work that the planners were engaged in. Officers clearly accepted that evidence was subject to political interpretation, and not capable of speaking objectively (cf. ibid; Flyvbjerg, 1998). Rather it was felt that the evidence base requirements of the new system had created a considerable burden of work, was expensive to produce and based on an idealistic conception that evidence can determine policy choices. This, it was argued, was a further symbol of the naivety of the system. Thus, the idea of an evidence-based strategy was at once identified with as a self-evident good, seeming to promise the possibility of a rational-technical planning identity, but was also understood as naively depoliticising, and a resource burden.

Speed and delivery

The need for speed and delivery of policy-making, and for plan making to be subject to a performance management regime was widely accepted by the planners in Wokingham. This entailed recognition that producing up to date and effective plans was a long-standing problem, and was essential if planning was to be effective in shaping development. Experience of the protracted and adversarial production of the previous local plan in Wokingham had confirmed this belief.

However, whilst the idea of a performance regime for planning was generally accepted, and even sympathised with as a way of improving the speed of strategy production, the new system was also seen to have created a huge burden of "bureaucratic" work to adhere to regulations. This required large amounts of resources, and worked against the goal of speeding up the system, as well as frustrating planning's ability to engage in effective partnership, or to foster genuine participation. This was less of a constraint in policy than in DC, and it was acknowledged that the authority would not rush through a weak strategy in the interests of reaching timetabled "milestones". However, the planners felt that the pressures this had enforced further betrayed the technocratic view of policy-making that permeated the new system. This failed to account for the highly political nature of the planning process. For example, decisions had to be passed by the council's executive committee, which met only monthly and not at all for part of every year due to the period of purdah prior to elections. Thus the system's timescale did not necessarily fit with the "realities" of decision-making within the council. In this sense, though officers recognised that the previous local plans system had been complex and long-winded, they also expressed doubt that reform had addressed the roots of this complexity.

In addition, the planners were suspicious that the government's concern with "delivery", particularly of housing, was a threat to the broader conception of planning with which they identified. Though generally accepting the need for delivery of more housing, the planners felt that the government's intransigent and inconsistent approach made the task more difficult. For one officer this was summed up by then Secretary of State Ruth Kelly's using a language of local empowerment whilst still making it clear that the government was prepared to intervene in cases where authorities were "not delivering". This was also felt to be

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a frustrating symbol of the government's failure to understand the complexity of producing a core strategy in a highly politicised context.

Narrating a spatial planning identity?

Even where they identified with them, the planners in Wokingham were frustrated in their attempts to take on the subject positions that the discourses of spatial planning suggested. Planners' caution about identifying with the concept of spatial planning was therefore rooted in awareness of their limited ability to realise its normative promises. Rather their practice was defined by the heavily politicised antagonisms between central government and local politics, and the struggle to reconcile their obligations to both.

There was a strong feeling that the new system had failed to address the key tensions faced by planning policy in the Borough, and that both the system and government were unsympathetic to the challenges they faced. The "short leash" that defined local political and managerial oversight, meanwhile meant that planners had limited scope to assert a value-driven identity, and were instead held strictly accountable to the requirements of the statutory system. The struggle to bring forward the core strategy contributed to a frustrated sense that the system was simply not working.

Whilst this was showing signs of changing as progress was made on the core strategy, the planners remained cautious, aware of the fragility of the political will that sustained this change. In this section I move on to discuss the ways in which the planners negotiated their professional identities within this embattled context.

Between obligation and identification: negotiating a planning identity

The presence of a distance between professional ideals and the reality of performance is, of course, expected. In chapters 2 and 3 I described this as central to the obligatory action that defines professionalism within the state, conceptualising planners' work as positioned within a complex of different obligations, each of which implied accountability to a different source of authority. The planners recognised a range of "obligations" as legitimate influences on the planning process. These included:

1. The profession – including peer networks
2. Sustainable/ balanced outcomes
3. The needs of future generations
4. GOSE
5. PINS
6. PPSs/ central government guidance
7. Legislation and regulations
8. The public- NIMBY sentiment/ "silent majority"/ hidden voices
9. Local partnerships
10. Elected Members
11. Chief Executive/ corporate hierarchy
12. Other colleagues
13. LDS milestones/ Best value performance indicators (BVPIs)
14. Planning delivery grant/ Housing and Planning Delivery Grant

Planners therefore recognised themselves as, in some respect, accountable to each of these obligations, and at times they identified with the subject positions that these "made up" for them. As such each of these obligations produced different "identity claims" as the planners sought to take on subject positions in relation to them. Figure 6.3 illustrates this.

Obligation	Subject positions/ planners constituted as:	Corresponding Identity claims
1. the profession	Convinced spatial planner - value driven and value mediating	Convinced spatial planner/ sceptical land-use planner
2. sustainable/ balanced outcomes		Sustainability advocate Balancer/ mediating juggling obligations/ urban designer/ technical rational policy-advisor/ policy advocate/ agent of change
3. Needs of future generations.		Voice of missing, advocate for disadvantaged
4. GOSE	Obedient, deliverer of government agenda	Upward looking animal/ political negotiator/ Embattled public servant/ agent of change/ Deliverer of development/ interpreter of
5. PINS		
6. PPSs/ other guidance		
7. Legislation/ Regulations		

		government policy/ legal advisor
8. The public: vocal NIMBY and silent voices	Facilitator of public voice	Facilitator of participation/ embattled public servant/ voice of local people
9. Local partnerships	Trusted partner/ facilitator of collaborative vision	Local partner/ team player/ stakeholder analyst/ facilitator/ mediator/ political negotiator
10. Elected members	Obedient professional advisor	Spin-doctor/ technical rational policy advisor/ embattled public servant
11. Chief executive etc.	Team player/ contributing to corporate vision	Obedient civil servant/ technical rationalist policy advisor/ evidence based practitioner/ team player/ policy advocate
12. Other colleagues	Team player/ silo'd planner	Professional planner as regulator/ team player
13. LDS Milestones/ BVPIs 14. PDG/ HPDG	Rational actor responding to incentives	Obedient civil servant/ tick-boxer/ form filler

Figure 6.3 Mapping subject positions and identity claims onto the field of obligations in Wokingham

The development plans team in Wokingham understood their role in mediative terms, working in-between these different obligations. In this sense the planners in WBC largely accepted the 'in-between-ness' of their role in relation to the different obligations they sought to reconcile, and accepted that their power to shape change was defined by the key obligations to which they were held most closely accountable. In the highly politicised context of WBC they therefore sought to sustain a studied neutrality, in keeping with a traditional public service ethos and identity. However, this in-between-ness also seemed to reflect the fact that tensions between these obligations made it very difficult for the planners to realise their identity claims, as they found the roles they wanted to play were often not available.

This was most clearly illustrated in relation to the high profile tension between accountability to regimes of central government control, and the local agenda. In turn this represents the playing out at the local level of the tension between spatial

planning as a form of deliberative local governance, and as a "delivery" vehicle for centrally determined policy outputs. Unsurprisingly the planners in Wokingham struggled to resolve this tension. The result of being positioned in-between these conflicting imperatives, however, was that the planners found it very difficult to identify clearly with either.

For example, whilst more experienced planners, able to remember a planning system before the introduction of planning policy guidance, were sometimes critical of the principle of central control over policy, most expressed a shifting and ambivalent relationship to centralised policy guidance (PPSs). The policy framework at the national level created productive powers that both enabled planners' claims to influence local governance, but also imposed, sometimes frustrating, limitations.

Thus, in certain cases, the planners identified PPSs as a set of progressive tools for the production of planning policy, working towards the professional goal of "sustainable development". This was particularly the case in relation to issues such as climate change, biodiversity, affordable housing and public transport, these were seen as symbols of progressive professional practice, and also issues that, without the power bestowed by such guidance, it would have been difficult to "get past" local politicians. In other contexts, however, national policy guidance was understood as an inflexible imposition that inhibited planners' influence over local agendas. This was the case, for example, in relation to PPS3 and the new directives it imposed in relation to the supply of housing land, particularly the disqualification of windfall sites in calculating available supply. The requirement for strategies to be in conformity with the constantly shifting demands of policy guidance, and the conservative attitude of GOs to the testing of guidance, were seen as further barriers to local discretion.

This fitted with the wider construction of the government as both enabler and barrier to the emergence of a desired planning identity. The convoluted process of the new system, and its "treadmill" of "tick-box" regulatory requirements were felt to further impinge on the change the government had apparently proclaimed, and to act as a block on the emergence of a more positive planning practice (understood as deliberative local governance). Thus at times the planners were happy to act as "upward looking animals", empowered by the policy frameworks

within which they worked. At other times, however, they found other identity claims blocked by those same frameworks, particularly those related to public participation, and partnership working.

As a result, the planners at times identified with local anger at the central imposition of policy, aware of the contradictions within government rhetoric between empowering local communities, and the realities of having to behave as a *"branch office"* of central government in order to be found "sound". The suspicion that the government's chief interest was in the pursuit of housing delivery, rather than genuinely sustainable development further facilitated this identification. However, this too was only partial. An acceptance that more affordable housing was required to sustain the economy of the area, coupled with frustration at local politicians lack of will to progress the core strategy, and the extreme opposition of elements of the local population to any new development meant that the planners did not fully identify with the local agenda either.

This shifting sense of identification with either central government, or the local agenda meant a constant re-negotiation of the planning identity, but also made it very difficult for the planners to secure closure around any particular identity. In this sense the "in-between-ness" of their position was internalised in an ambivalent identity, maintaining a distance from any particular identification, and claiming to understand the "other side" in all contexts. Officers had come to accept such tensions and the incomplete identifications and identity claims that they implied, internalising them as an "inevitable" feature of planning in the face of political conflict. Despite this, however, they struggled at times to contain the frustrations that this gave rise to:

> *It's become more frustrating...It's certainly become more combative in the last few years and I think more and more housing has become the political issue in elections as to who can resist housebuilding most effectively...yes, and by being so negative we miss the opportunities that if we actually embraced it early on we could get, and we didn't go to appeal but we negotiated that we could get, we could get more out of it.* (Planning Manager)

This senior officer's use of "we" provides a good example of an exasperated sense of identification with the authority - the obligations of loyal service remained, but had become increasingly difficult to sustain, whilst the discourse of resisting growth remained hegemonic in the Borough. Indeed, in recounting their experiences it was possible to trace the planners' identifications from their use of possessive pronouns. 'We', 'us' and 'them' often shifted in the recounting of stories to reflect identification or disidentification with variously: the team; authority; locality; or central government. These shifting pronouns seemed to symbolise the incomplete and shifting identifications that constituted the "inbetween" identity of policy planners in Wokingham. They also illustrated the fragmentation and frustration of planners' identity claims, as they struggled to narrate a positive sense of self between the competing obligations of practice (cf. Stronach et al, 2002).

Identity work as coping strategy

The pervasive atmosphere of conflict around planning in Wokingham, and awareness that they had only limited agency to resolve the antagonisms generated by development, meant that the planners were required to cope with the threat of "failure". Though development planning has a history of failing to deliver, as suggested in chapter 2, little attention has been focused on how planners retain commitment in the face of "failure". In Wokingham several different coping strategies were apparent:

- Most obviously, all of the planners I interviewed asserted a sense of distance between their personal and professional commitments, and the realities of practice. This involved a subject position drawing on the impersonal "role" of the traditional public bureaucrat, and the "inevitability" of certain tensions. This allowed the planners to "perform" the obligations of practice at a distance, retaining a sense of purpose or of commitment to particular values even where they could not be realised. They therefore self-consciously distanced themselves from the consequences of a context over which they exercised only limited influence. The "in-between-ness" that characterised their identities seemed, in part, to reflect this wariness.

- For some, in certain situations, this distance appeared relatively straightforward to sustain, with underlying commitments providing less of a drive. In certain cases officers were also able to realise commitments through particular aspects of their work (as in the description above of the planners who identified with public participation). For others, however, this distance was greater, and harder to sustain, and frustrations were more keenly felt.

- Collectively, the planners also sustained a sense of identity by "othering" of those obligations that blocked "good planning". They therefore constructed central government, "the system", local politicians, or public opinion, as "mediatizing" factors, preventing the emergence of a "true" planning identity (cf. March, 2007). However, as discussed above, these obligations were also understood as entirely legitimate influences on planning, to which they were rightly held accountable. As a result, the planners implicitly accepted that a planning professional identity must be, to some extent, unfulfilled, or constituted of incomplete identifications.

- There was, however, a pervasive sense that the tensions between these obligations imposed quite unreasonable expectations on the planning system. Thus the planners further sustained their own sense of self by questioning the criteria of success and failure by which they were judged, and whether success was even possible in such circumstances.

- Commitment was also sustained in some instances by appeals to future practices, and to the prospect of a more fulfilling practice emerging once the new system "settled down", or other local authority services came to understand what planning could contribute to their strategies.

- Equally, however, the past failings of the planning system to effectively deliver provided a means for some more experienced officers to sustain a frustrated identity, providing an appeal to the inevitability of failure, or the long term failure to create structures that could facilitate successful plan-making.

Thus, a number of strategies were used to sustain commitment to, and allow a continued narration of the values animating planning practice. These reflected a need to manage the frustration generated by the distance between "espoused values" and "values in use"; and between the rhetoric of spatial planning and the reality of practice, and the often frustrating "in-between-ness" of the planning identity available locally.

Conclusions

This chapter set out to explore the ways in which a regulatory planning culture, and the policy planners working within it, have responded to the modernisation of planning, the new planning system and the exhortation to embrace the new ideological ethos promised by the shift to spatial planning. At the start of the chapter I set two questions to explore these dynamics:

- How have local planning cultures interpreted the imperatives of modernisation?
- To what extent have planners taken on new roles and identities in line with the ideological ethos of spatial planning?

In answer to these I have argued that, in the case of Wokingham, the new planning system seriously challenged the existing culture in the Borough. I characterised this as requiring a shift in the dominant discourse towards growth, away from an opposition to development and towards a resolve to manage it. The politics of this were understood as entirely familiar to the area, but also as having become particularly fiercely contested in recent years.

Within this tense political context the authority struggled to adapt to those elements of the agenda that implied a shift away from a regulatory and towards a more positive planning for development. This created a particularly embattled space within which the development plans team had to negotiate both the performance of a "sound" spatial strategy and local planning identity, but also their own professional identities in relation to the new ideological ethos of spatial planning.

The result was a particularly studied performance of spatial planning through the core strategy that struggled to manage the tensions between demands from central and local levels of government. The agency of the development plans team was therefore geared towards the mediation of these contradictory demands, as well as a strict adherence to the requirements of the statutory planning system that was the basis of planning's power to influence local governance. At times this involved the performance of spatial planning 'against' the government, whilst at others it involved a requirement to gain local acceptance of certain unpopular "*givens*" (as GOSE described housing numbers).

The development plans team struggled with this task, and experienced a great deal of frustration in their efforts to secure the necessary political will, and to follow the complex and shifting national policy framework that they were expected to work within. This meant that the "positive" planning identity with which they identified was largely blocked. Ultimately only wider changes in the power structure within WBC and the ruling administration created the necessary momentum to take the strategy forward. The submission draft therefore reflected a shift towards a more positive planning for major development in strategic locations, though this was still understood by politicians as a bitter pill and seemed a fragile overlay on top of continued local opposition. This struggle to sustain political will suggested the limits to the agency of the development plans team within WBC, and the "*short leash*" by which they were held accountable to local political control.

Planners' identities were therefore negotiated within this conflicted space. The result was an inherently "in-between" identity that sought to claim the ability to mediate between these contradictions. The 2004 system and discourses of spatial planning were understood to have imposed a considerable burden on planners as they struggled to manage the demands made of them. The tensions and contradictions in the national level agenda, and the concept of spatial planning, were therefore played out in the politics of negotiating a local planning identity, and in the identity work planners were engaged in as they sought to fulfil a range of often-contradictory obligations. The planners were therefore required to cope with the spectre of failure, and the presence of an uncomfortable gap between their commitment to the job and understanding of its values, and the realities of their work. Planners' identity work was therefore geared towards coping with the, often considerable, frustrations that this generated.

Chapter 7 Negotiating professional identity in a positive planning culture

Introduction

In chapter 6 I described the way in which the "modernised" planning system and the concept of spatial planning had been interpreted within the regulatory planning culture of Wokingham, and how the development plans team there had coped with change and sought to negotiate new roles and identities. I suggested that the centrality of key tensions between the government's agenda for planning, and local politics had made this a particularly embattled and frustrating process in which it was difficult to assert a positive identity beyond the "in-betweenness" of planning's role in seeking to mediate and manage the contradictory demands made of it.

In this chapter I turn attention towards my second case study, Oxford City Council (OCC). This was chosen to represent a positive planning culture where the local political culture has been generally supportive of development. Here then, in contrast to WBC, the political, organisational and planning cultures all appeared to fit comfortably with the central thrust of the modernisation agenda. As a result this might be considered as a site where a spatial planning identity could be embraced by policy planners. In order to investigate this I once again seek to answer the two research questions addressed to the local level:

- How have local planning cultures interpreted the imperatives of modernisation?
- To what extent have planners taken on new roles and identities in line with the ideological ethos of spatial planning?

The structure of the chapter follows the same pattern as the previous one. I begin by briefly introducing the area and its local governance culture, before describing planning's role within it and, in particular, the role of planning policy. I then move on to describe the planning policy team, before describing how they experienced and understood the transition to the new planning system, and the types of identity

work that they have engaged in as they seek to adapt to new discourses and practices.

Local Governance Culture and Political Identity in Oxford

Like Wokingham, Oxford is located in the affluent South East of England and benefits from proximity to London and good access to airports, and the rail and motorway networks. Oxford is a compact city, set in the middle of the county of Oxfordshire (see the maps in figure 7.1). The city has a renowned built heritage focused around the "dreaming spires" of its ancient University, a tourist attraction that drew almost 8 million visitors in 2001 (OCC, 2008). The City's boundaries are tightly defined, with some 26% of its area classified as Green Belt much of which is located on flood-plains, in addition to a series of green pockets and corridors within the city itself. As a result, parts of the built-up area of Oxford are densely populated (OCC, 2008). The population of the City was estimated to be 150, 100 in 2006 (ibid). There is therefore considerable pressure for new housing development and house prices are considerably higher than the regional average, making provision of affordable housing a key priority (ibid).

The presence of both Oxford and Oxford Brookes Universities make Oxford the only recognised world-class university town in the South East region (OCC, 2005) and contributes to a population with very high levels of educational attainment. However, alongside this highly educated workforce there are also higher than regional and national average rates of residents without any qualifications. This contributes to the presence of pockets of deprivation within the City where ten government defined "Super Output Areas"[19] are ranked amongst the 20% of most deprived areas in England (ibid). The Council recognises these areas as a "*less well known Oxford*" (OCC, 2005; 2008, 7) that must be juxtaposed with the "*dreaming spires*" to understand the city's "*complex identity*".

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[19] 'Super output areas' are government defined geographical units designed for the collection and publication of small area statistics, below the level of electoral wards (IDEA, 2009).

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Figure 7.1 Maps of Oxford

(sources: left hand side - Oxfordshire Data Observatory (undated), right hand side – Oxford City Council (undated))

The City is a major employment hub with high levels of in-commuting and low levels of out-commuting. The dynamism of the local economy has been recognised in the emerging regional spatial strategy (RSS), where the Central Oxfordshire sub-region has been newly created to foster the continued growth of an area recognised as a crucial driver of the knowledge-based economic success of the region and wider national economy (SEERA, 2006). This includes significant concentrations of activity in education, healthcare, biotechnology, IT, publishing and motor sports (OEP, 2006). The sub-region is therefore recognised as one of nine "*diamonds for investment and growth*" within the regional economic strategy (SEEDA, 2006; OCC 2008). This acknowledgment of the sub-region's economy has emerged from work on the County's economic development strategy that has stressed the need to recognise and promote the economy's "*world class*" potential (e.g. OEP, 2006). This can, in turn, be seen, at least in part, as a response to the perceived success of the so-called "Cambridge Phenomenon", and Oxford's failure to achieve similar recognition of its economic dynamism (e.g. Lawton-Smith et al, 2008, on Cambridge see e.g. While et al, 2004; Healey, 2007).

As in Wokingham, this economic strength has created both affluence, including lower than the national average rates of unemployment, and some significant challenges for the City. Unlike Wokingham, however, Oxford City Council is a

lower-tier authority within the two-tier structure of local government in Oxfordshire. The council therefore exercises considerably less power than WBC, with key services including transport, social services and education all provided by the County Council. The management of strong development pressures within Oxfordshire has therefore been a long-standing issue involving frequent tensions between the City, and the County and four surrounding District Councils. These have occurred particularly when the City has sought to pursue a developmental or modernising agenda. This has led to periodic pressure on the Oxford Green Belt, and boundary tensions with neighbouring authorities, notably South Oxfordshire District Council. The County, generally backed by the surrounding districts, consistently pursued through its structure plans a policy of constraining the growth of the city and directing development towards the surrounding "country towns" of Bicester, Didcot, Banbury and Witney (Oxfordshire County Council, 1979, 2005).

More recently, they sought to construct this as a model of sustainable economic growth managed by the planning process, arguing this to Select Committee enquiries into both the Planning Green Paper and the effects of the planning system on economic competitiveness (see Oxfordshire County Council, 2001; 2003), and depicting Oxfordshire as a model administrative unit:

> *Oxfordshire in many ways depicts an ideal of England: at its heart a cathedral city, market town and ancient university with surrounding acolytes of small ancient towns and villages, set in a varied and often beautiful countryside. It has been cited as the model geographical region and model administrative unit.* (John Minett, quoted by Oxfordshire County Council, 2003)

This policy of restraint contributed to the City's employment growth being slower than each of the surrounding Districts in the period from 1991-2001 (OCC, 2008). However, although the country towns policy was continued in the last Structure Plan, approved in 2005 (Oxfordshire County Council, 2005), it was contested by the City who argued that the policy was an artificial constraint on Oxford's development, and was inherently unsustainable as it generated considerable commuter in-flows to the City. This symbolised a strong "modernising" drive within the City, pushing for space to further develop and strengthen the City at the centre of the sub-region. In this way local governance within Oxford has apparently been

captured by a local growth regime or coalition (cf. Lauria 1997, Raco 2003, on Oxford see Hajer, 1989). This has drawn on the boosterist discourse of Oxford as a "world class brand", seeking to dispute the shape of the sub-regional economy by overturning the country towns policy. This contributed to an ultimately unsuccessful bid by the City Council for unitary status in 2007 (Sheldrick, 2007).

The abolition of the Structure Plan and the emergence of the South East Plan process therefore led to the creation of a new political space within which the policy of restraint could be contested, opening up opportunities for the City to challenge the "country towns" policy. The basis of this debate has been around competing claims to represent the most "sustainable" means of continuing to develop the sub-region's economic assets, with the priority accorded to the task of boosting the Oxford brand, a largely unquestioned goal of sub-regional planning for the area (cf. Allen et al, 1999). Whilst the Regional Assembly remained largely controlled by County Council agendas, particularly with Keith Mitchell the leader of Oxfordshire County Council as Chairman of SEERA, it seemed that this challenge would prove unproductive. However, subsequent interventions by the panel reporting on the South-East plan, and central government, have effectively overturned the policy of dispersal within Central Oxfordshire, and endorsed the further growth of both the city and the country towns. This has been most controversially achieved through designation of an urban extension to the South of the City in Green Belt land that lies largely in South Oxfordshire District (Swain et al, 2007). The City has also been designated as a "growth point" by the government in recognition of its growth potential and commitment to housing delivery.

The tensions between the city and county councils have often been magnified by the very different political complexion of the city and the surrounding, largely rural, areas. Following a twenty-year period of Labour Party control, the City council has, in recent years, been politically balanced between Labour and the Liberal Democrats, with strong Green Party representation on the council. This included a short-lived Liberal Democrat/ Green coalition administration. Unusually in the South East there is no significant Conservative presence, a fact that was central to the bid for unitary status (Sheldrick, 2007), with the council arguing that the Conservative controlled county had no legitimacy to govern in Oxford, and was largely unsympathetic to the needs of the city (ibid). During the period when the

research was conducted no party had overall control of the City Council, though the Liberal Democrats gave way to Labour as the ruling party. Despite some differences in emphasis between the major parties, officers suggested that the city was governed by a fairly stable understanding of the challenges it faced. Whilst politicians, perhaps unsurprisingly, were quick to stress these differences of emphasis, they too accepted that there was a broadly shared understanding of key issues. For both the Liberal Democrats and Labour Party these were related to the management of the City's economic success and the benefits it could bring. This reflected the relative stability of the "Oxford brand" as a hegemonic political discourse within the governance of the city and the wider sub-region (OEP, 2006; OSP, 2008), and its key role in sustaining the local growth coalition. This was understood to present opportunities to address the other challenges facing the city which were recognised as:

- provision of housing, and particularly affordable housing,
- tackling pockets of deprivation to ensure that "success" is socially inclusive
- dealing with the challenge of climate change
- managing change within the limits of Oxford's built and natural environment

These priorities were all reflected in the city's emerging review of their Sustainable Community Strategy, entitled Oxford: A World Class City for Everyone (OSP, 2008), and suggested a relatively coherent local governance culture within the city. Interviews suggested that this was widely understood and shared within OCC.

This governing "growth regime" appears also to have the uneasy, or perhaps tacit, support of the local population. The local press, the daily Oxford Mail and weekly Oxford Times, have been broadly supportive of certain key elements of this modernising agenda, notably plans for the regeneration of the West End, a substantial part of the city centre (e.g. Oxford Times, 2006; 2007). However, articulate voices within the local community have made clear their opposition to the emphasis on growth. In particular long-standing conservation lobbies, and environmental groups keep a close watch over the planning process - with the sightlines of the "dreaming spires" and green space within the city particularly jealously guarded. As in many parts of the country this oversight is exercised particularly vigorously at a site-specific level, with the national profile of Oxford capable of generating considerable controversy. This was clearly illustrated during

the fieldwork, for example, in relation to the high profile re-development of a boatyard along the canal in the north, or University of Oxford proposals to build a new bookstore in the south-west of the City. However, planning policy also generates considerable interest, and consultation response rates are generally high, with particular concerns voiced about the impacts of pursuing growth where this threatens key green spaces.

Oxford City Council and planning policy's role within it

In Oxford, during the period when the research was conducted, the planning policy and development control functions were located together within a single planning service located within the Community Services Directorate. As a service, planning in Oxford has, in the recent past, suffered from a poor reputation, particularly in relation to performance against the government's targets for processing of planning applications in development control (DC) (see e.g. Audit Commission, 2001). Thus the authority was recognised nationally as a symbol of the poor performance of local planning authorities and the need for change to the planning system (e.g. Falconer, 2002). Following the appointment of new management, performance had improved. However, these problems were part of a wider set of challenges to the performance of the entire authority that had led to periodic processes of corporate level change. These were once again underway during the research following the appointment of a new chief executive and announcement of further restructuring.

Despite working in close organisational and physical proximity to DC, policy planners expressed some doubts that the working relationship between the two was as close as it might be. As noted in chapter 4 above this divide has proven an enduring tension for planning. Whilst several officers had experience in both DC and policy, they acknowledged a "cultural" divide between the two that the new system, through the creation of separate, resource intensive processes, was felt to have exacerbated. The policy officers expressed awareness of the need to balance their relationship with DC (and the crucial importance of implementation of policy), with relations with corporate policy makers - a juggling act which they acknowledged as problematic. Until the most recent rounds of restructuring, whose implications were not entirely clear when most of the interviews were conducted, much of the council's strategic policy making had been based in a

separate Strategy and Review unit set up by the previous Chief Executive. Officers suggested that there had been talk of planning policy being a part of this unit. Whilst the decision not to do so had preserved the idea of a unified planning service, it was also seen to have distanced planning policy from the wider production of corporate strategy, including the community strategy. The emerging process of restructuring was, however, generally seen in optimistic terms, with key strategic policy officers, including those responsible for the community strategy and economic development, set to move into a new policy unit working under the current planning policy manager. This was seen by policy planners as an opportunity to play a more central role corporately, whilst retaining relationships with DC – "*the best of both worlds*" (though, as I shall explain below, it also raised doubts about the continued existence of a distinctive planning policy identity).

Similarly to the situation in Wokingham staff shortages were considered more of a problem in DC than in policy, with posts proving difficult to fill and a higher level of turnover evident. In policy, meanwhile, there was relatively more stability (though several years earlier there had been significant staff turnover). The policy team in Oxford felt that they were well resourced, including 12 officers, all but three of whom were either members of the RTPI or working towards membership. The team was split into two smaller teams of 6, one of which was labelled "planning policy implementation", and the other "planning policy development". In practice this arrangement had been designed to allow work to progress in parallel on two separate development plan documents –one an area action plan (AAP) for the West End, and the other the core strategy[20]. Though formal, hierarchical control was evident in Oxford, the structure of policy seemed to reflect a more horizontal organisational structure, with the two teams operating with relative autonomy. This was something that management was keen to emphasise in communicating its plans for restructuring. Individual planners within these teams meanwhile had often taken on particular specialisms in areas such as economy, housing, and environment, over which they were given some autonomy to produce policy. This reflected a level of power devolved to officers that contrasted somewhat to the "*short leash*" I described in the previous chapter. This was, in turn, perhaps indicative of the strength of the assumed consensus on local issues, and the absence of particular points of tension between local concerns and those

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[20] Officers' job titles in Oxford ranged from managers to principal planning officers, senior planning officers and planning officers. As in the previous chapter I will use these titles to indicate the position in the organisation of those I quote.

promoted by the government through the planning system. The result was that planning policy was offered a higher degree of operational autonomy than was apparent in Wokingham.

Local Planning Issues around the development of the LDF

In the context of the local growth regime and the strong physical constraints to development in Oxford, spatial issues, or issues with a strong spatial dimension, enjoyed a relatively high priority within OCC. Certainly the central challenges associated with regeneration, climate change and housing were all identified by policy planners as "planning issues", and they sought to claim some level of ownership over them, even if corporately it was clear that these were seen as wider issues which planning would play a part in delivering.

The Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016, which had finally been adopted in 2005 (OCC, 2005) was seen to have begun this process, introducing strict targets for delivery of 50% affordable housing on developments over ten units - this was identified as progressive and innovative by both local politicians and GOSE. Having been approved after the passing of the 2004 Act, the Local Plan was seen as a "transition document" that had sought to embrace some of the key principles of spatial planning and to prepare the ground for the authority to progress swiftly with preparation of a local development framework (ibid).

One key political priority was to progress work on the regeneration of the West End. This "urban quarter", including a substantial part of the City Centre, had been considered a problem for some time, having suffered from what the emerging AAP described as "insensitive redevelopment" in the past (OCC, 2006; see also Bryson, 1999, 168-170). Around the time that the local plan was being finalised a major set of development proposals for the long vacant Oxford Castle site, located within this area, were also being finalised. With further development proposals emerging and interest in other key sites, a partnership was established between the City and County Councils and the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) - the West End Steering Group - to explore a more comprehensive approach to the regeneration of the area. With both the City and County council major landowners in the area regeneration was seen as both feasible, and a means of generating revenue by raising land values.

This led to the commissioning of an Area Development Framework (ADF) for the West End in 2004 (David Lock Associates, 2005), with the decision subsequently taken to pursue regeneration through an AAP. For the policy planners this was seen as an opportunity to get involved in a process that had been instigated without their involvement, and was therefore welcomed as a sign of corporate commitment to planning's role in delivering regeneration and other priority projects - one of the major goals of the new system. The AAP was brought forward in advance of the core strategy, an unusual arrangement endorsed by GOSE due to the particular circumstances and strength of the corporate and political will to pursue regeneration in the West End.

Work on the core strategy was meanwhile begun slightly behind the AAP, along with a range of other supplementary planning documents. This represented an ambitious attempt to embrace the principle of the LDF, and the idea of a "portfolio" of different documents (and contrasted again to the "deliberately cautious" approach adopted in Wokingham). This can be seen as an illustration of both the willingness of the planners in Oxford to pursue the new agenda, and of strong corporate and political will to support such a change. Indeed, the then leader of the council, formerly a chair of the planning committee, suggested that the move towards the new system, and what he recognised as a "spatial planning approach" offered an opportunity for planning to become more central to shaping change, which he understood as a useful corrective to the narrower, development control orientated approach he felt had previously dominated. This had contributed to planning being understood locally as negative and unresponsive, rather than as a dynamic process. In similar terms the chief executive expressed his desire to more fully integrate planning with emerging corporate policy and the work of the Oxford Strategic Partnership, moving beyond the "silo" within which it had previously worked.

In this way it was clear that the modernising agenda within Oxford City Council recognised and was responsive to the wider imperatives of both the local government modernisation agenda and the modernising planning agenda. As such planning was being offered a role in helping to articulate the spatial vision through which the growth regime could be developed, and also in delivering the growth agenda through the planning system. It was not clear, however, how central that

role was, or whether the identity that the policy planners sought could be fulfilled within those opportunity structures. It was apparent, however, that, in strategic terms, particularly at the level of the core strategy, this involved planning in playing a balancing role between corporate priorities that often appeared to push in quite different directions. Most notable here was the challenge of accommodating growth within the City's development constraints. Equally, however, tensions between addressing climate change whilst pursuing large-scale house building, or social inclusion whilst pushing for high quality development in the West End were not always explicitly recognised.

Working the new planning system

Political and corporate support therefore created a climate within which officers were given the resources and space to deliver key objectives through the new planning system. This was particularly the case in relation to the West End AAP where the wider West End steering group and partnership ensured that substantial resources were available to prepare the evidence base and strategy. As a result of this environment, planning policy sought to embrace the *"different philosophy"* that they recognised at the heart of the new system (OCC, 2007, 1). The opportunities presented by this change in philosophy were therefore seen in positive terms by the planners:

> But it's exciting times...as planning becomes more and more central to a lot
> of the other services strategies produced by the city council and others like
> the county... (Planning manager)

> People carp about some aspects of the new system but I think it has been
> positive compared to when I came into planning. (Principal planning officer)

The policy planners in Oxford, though, as I shall explain below, still sceptical at times, were generally positive about the *values* they saw as central to the changes they were making. The new system was understood as an opportunity to embrace a more holistic role within the council, particularly in relation to issues like regeneration. This broadening of planning's remit was welcomed by officers, who understood it to involve some notable changes to their working practices, with a particular emphasis on *"talking to people"*:

*You're expected to be a lot more proactive in trying to get people involved
and think about ways to involve more people* (Senior Planning Officer)

*I can genuinely say this...we're talking to loads of people we've never
spoken to before...* (Principal planning officer)

It was also understood to mean that planning policies were no longer to be written
as "DC" policies, but as a means of drawing together wider aspirations. The key
concern for officers therefore related to the capacity of the new planning system to
allow this new role to be effectively performed. It was less clear to them, however,
that the system provided the means to actually achieve these values.

For some, having only recently completed the local plan, this manifested in a
questioning of whether the old system truly required fundamental reform, or the
new one was capable of realising the faster and more flexible process that it
proclaimed. This was generally seen as a desirable aspiration as it was
recognised that, to play a more influential role, planning needed to be more
responsive to political and corporate agendas. However, as in Wokingham, the
new system was seen to have created a *"quagmire"* of process that was extremely
difficult to navigate, commanding large amounts of time, energy and resources,
and working against the stated aims of increasing speed and flexibility:

*No, that's a laugh, that's a joke, I think there's no way, I can't understand
how they think that's quicker* (Principal planning officer)

*I'll give you an example, one of our members they want to review a local
plan policy they don't like and you have to explain to them well actually...it'll
have to be in another dpd...and it's five or six years away, and they just
want to review the policy!* (Principal planning officer)

Despite these misgivings, with the resources and political commitment behind the
West End AAP this progressed relatively smoothly through the system, surviving a
shift in political control from Labour to the Liberal Democrats in 2007 that briefly
threatened to undermine the emerging strategy, and proceeding to examination in
January 2008, before being found sound in April. The AAP was therefore

understood as a generally positive experience by the planners involved, and as a symbol of planning's capacity to play a key role in delivering corporate priorities. The site-specific nature of the AAP, and a perception that the public and local press were generally supportive of the proposals, were seen to have created the conditions for a "proactive" and successful planning effort.

The core strategy meanwhile was recognised as a more difficult document to produce. This was, in part, because the original idea of a short, "high level" strategic document was felt to be difficult in an authority with as many development constraints as Oxford; tending towards a wish-list of desirable outcomes, but without any way of showing how those aims could be achieved in practice, or the tensions between them managed. In addition, the need to consider sites for development, and the setting of an overall pro-growth strategy, proved controversial, generating strong opposition to certain initial options (notably a proposal to build on a golf course in the east of the city). This led to political horse-trading over locations for development and ultimately to a slight downgrading of the emphasis on growth in later drafts of the strategy. Overall, officers considered the core strategy a source of some frustration as they struggled to reconcile the different demands it was required to manage.

The shift in government guidance towards a more site specific document following the Lichfield and Stafford decisions, was seen to make sense, but also to represent a major "shifting of the goalposts" that Oxford's core strategy struggled to adjust to. This issue, and the authority's desire to embrace the "portfolio" approach even after the government appeared to backtrack on it, continued to hang over the strategy, and led to an inspector raising serious pre-examination concerns about whether the strategy could be found sound. This led to the strategy being further delayed, having already been put back following the decision by the Panel reporting on the South East Plan to back the proposed urban extension to the south of the city. This had led to the publication of a revised consultation, "preferred options" document ("PO2" as it came to be known). Thus, as in Wokingham, the planners preparing the core strategy in Oxford struggled at times to adjust to the demands made by a complex and shifting policy landscape at higher governmental scales. Figure 7.2 provides an overview of progress made in Oxford on production of these documents.

Date	Stage of LDF preparation against LDS commitments	Reasons for progress/ delay	Officer's interpretation	Wider progress of system/ Government interpretation
March, 2005	"Ambitious" LDS approved – including number of supplementary planning documents.			New System and Regulations come into force
November, 2005	Local plan approved		Transitional document. Positive experience and doubts that system is broken, though acceptance of goals of reform.	
September, 2005- January, 2006	Commenced Core Strategy/ West End AAP.			
Early 2006 – March, 2007	2nd LDS produced as circumstances change is never brought into effect, 3rd LDS is approved March, 2007.			
June-July, 2006	Core strategy issues and options consultation.			Lichfield and Stafford decisions create considerable unease/ Climate
September,	Slightly delayed	Change of	Moment of	of uncertainty

2006	preferred options consultation on West End AAP.	political control from Labour to Liberal Democrats	concern that new admin. will not back plan	affects many authorities, a number of whom are found unsound or advised to withdraw emerging core strategies.
March-May, 2007	Slightly delayed core strategy preferred options published.		Pro-growth tone softened. Concern at ability to make meaningful policy choices against Oxford's spatial limits.	
June, 2007	Submission of West end AAP.			
November, 2007	Further preferred options published.	Need to consult on southern urban extension proposed by panel report into south east plan.	Concern at quality of proposed site.	
January, 2008	Examination into West End AAP.		Concern as to whether inspector will back the "vision"	Revised PPS 12 comes into force (CLG, 2007) – moves further from "portfolio" approach, changes requirements.
June, 2008	West end AAP found sound			
November, 2008	Submission draft core strategy published			
December, 2008	Inspector raises concerns about soundness of core strategy, delaying examination and leading to changes.			

Figure 7.2 Timeline of LDF progress in Oxford

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The process of seeking to work with the new system in Oxford has therefore involved some similar frustrations to those experienced in Wokingham, but in a very different context. In Oxford the struggle to adapt to the new system and its complex and shifting requirements raised concerns that it was acting as a barrier to planning performing the new role that the government had apparently endorsed, local planners embraced, and the authority was keen to foster. I now move on to assess the nature of the performance of spatial planning that this produced in Oxford.

Performing Spatial Planning

Planning policy in Oxford therefore sought to embrace what officers understood as a more "visionary" role within local governance. This was evident in interaction with the emerging review of the sustainable community strategy (SCS). Senior policy officers were regularly invited to Oxford Strategic Partnership meetings to provide progress reports on both the core strategy and West End AAP, and the emerging SCS included a section explaining the key links between the two processes, recognising that:

> *If both strategies are to be effective, it is important that they complement one another, and that the OSP works with the planners for the benefit of local communities.* (OSP, 2008a, 9)

In addition, emerging planning policy was clearly positioned in relation to the *"community aspirations"* articulated through the SCS (e.g. OCC, 2008). Thus work on the integration of the two strategies, a symbol of the shift the new planning system had sought to introduce, was being pursued in Oxford and was seen as central to the articulation of a wider "vision" for the future of the city. The vision was to *"build a world class city for everyone"* (OCC, 2008, 12; OSP, 2008), by supporting the creation of a *"modern and forward looking"* city (OCC, 2008, 12). Thus planning policy was incorporated within the local growth regime, with the attempt to sell this vision of growth at the centre of the performance of planning. Planning policy was granted autonomy within these terms to deliver this agenda through the planning system.

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One significant test of the capacity to produce this desired "performance" was the examination into the West End AAP. As noted above, the AAP process had been considered a generally very positive experience, however, given the high cost of being found unsound, the examination was viewed with some trepidation. From the opening remarks of the examination by the planning policy manager, the council sought to argue for the centrality of their overarching vision for the West End, and that this ought to supersede technical or detailed concerns about the soundness of the strategy, and particularly what was feared to be the government's potentially overbearing concern for housing delivery (throughout the examination developer's agents in contrast sought to contest this claim, seeking to hold the strategy strictly to account in relation to the limits of government guidance and permissible evidence). OCC planners therefore sought to argue for the legitimacy of their "vision" of a future, "sustainable community" over the complex requirements of the statutory planning system. This involved an appeal for government to trust that as a "performing authority" housing delivery was a given that should not threaten the balance of future uses in the West End.

It was also clear during the examination that the authority was concerned with the management of their "performance" of spatial planning in other respects. For example, considerable anxiety was caused by the appearance of several members of the West End steering group to air objections, whilst considerable efforts were made to encourage other partners, notably the county council, not to appear but to rely on written comments. I will go on to explore the tensions and backstage implications of these efforts in more detail below. It was clear, however, that an important emphasis within the "performance" of spatial planning in Oxford was to establish planning's capacity to play a more central role within local governance by articulating a deliberatively produced and "deliverable" vision. In this context the planners were fearful that the tests of soundness, and other uncertainties and rigidities within the planning system and government guidance would act to block this desired performance.

Such anxieties were, at the time of writing, still to be resolved in relation to the core strategy. Whilst the West End AAP was ultimately found to be sound, doubts persisted about the core strategy's capacity to adjust to changing guidance. Equally, the document had struggled to manage the tensions between different aspirations, a product of the greater complexity of articulating a high-level,

strategic vision. The job of reconciling growth with conservation, and other key issues including climate change, biodiversity and social inclusion had proven a difficult balance to achieve. The appointed planning inspector also raised concern about the extent to which the strategy had succeeded in responding to the local distinctiveness of Oxford. The attempt to perform a vision-led planning was therefore considerably more complex in this document than in the West End, where what the Oxford Times (2007) described as a *"blank canvas"* created considerable room for manoeuvre.

Thus, those planners working on the core strategy were more aware of the limits and competing goals that they were required to somehow integrate into this performance. In the West End meanwhile, there was a more positive sense of agency, with the planners feeling that, within the scope provided by the local political agenda and West End partnership, they had been granted considerable autonomy. In part this reflected the absence of any real points of tension between the vision identified by planners and that of the wider partnership, though officers were aware of seeking to rebalance some aspects of the strategy, including its more overtly gentrifying implications. This was represented by a deliberate distancing from some aspects of the earlier ADF, notably in arguing for maintenance of existing "social" uses and affordable housing requirements in preference to the earlier document's vision of high quality public realm, and high value land uses.

Going "backstage": identity work behind the performance of spatial planning

The first part of this chapter has sought to describe the political and organisational context within which the policy planners in Oxford worked. It has argued that this presented spaces for planning to play a broader role within the governance of the city, an aspiration of both the national level reform agenda and of the planners themselves, who have sought to take advantage of these opportunity structures. In the previous section I suggested that this involved a performance of "spatial planning" that sought to go beyond "soundness", aiming to prove planning's capacity to play a more visionary role and to "deliver" key elements of the wider corporate agenda for the City's development - thereby enrolling planning policy in service of Oxford's growth regime. I now shift the focus of attention "backstage", in so doing exploring the processes of identity work in which the planning policy team

were engaged as they tried to negotiate this new role. In particular, I seek to understand how they negotiated their identities in relation to the subject positions that the system sought to inculcate. First of all, I briefly introduce the planners by discussing the ways in which they described their commitment to planning and approached their work. I then move on to discuss how they interpreted and understood this in relation to the discourses of spatial planning. Finally, I describe the ways in which they negotiated their identities within this context.

Commitment to the job: the values motivating planners

Oxford's planning policy team has a relatively young staff, with a core of planners in their 20s and 30s. This reflected the departure of several older, more experienced officers in recent years, and also a deliberate policy of seeking to promote internally and hire graduates (many of whom had arrived in Oxford to study planning at Oxford Brookes University). The majority of the team are female and, as in Wokingham, it is predominantly white, with only one BME member, a "non-planner" responsible for section 106 agreements. The gender balance was reflected in the planners I interviewed, who also ranged in age and seniority from senior management to early career planners seeking professional accreditation.

As in Wokingham, all of the planners I spoke with described their commitment to planning as an altruistic motivation, even if this was often prefaced by a somewhat embarrassed awareness that this seemed unduly idealistic:

> It's more the public good, it sounds a bit kind of em [laughs] a bit kind of over the top, but yeah making sure the time's were the best they could be for the people I suppose (Principal planning officer)

> I just got into it through that being, wanting to kind of influence I suppose, I say "change the world" you know, trying to influence the world around me (Principal planning officer)

> Whatever you say it sounds clichéd I suppose, but it's doing geography just because I'm interested in the world around me really, and I'm conscious of how the environment does affect people...[planning] can make people's quality of life better I think (Senior Planning Officer)

Once again this underlying motivation took on a slightly different shape for each individual planner. For some, particularly younger planners, this reflected a concern for the "environment", though, as in the quote above this was broadly defined to include concern for people's quality of life. For others, as in the first two quotes, a more social motivation was declared and a desire to pursue a career that was expressly about helping people. However, as in the previous case study, planning practice was based on an appeal to work towards a higher set of values, even though it was acknowledged (in the embarrassment of those describing these commitments) that these high-minded values often seemed distant from the need to pragmatically engage with the realities of the job. Older members of the team again explicitly described this commitment in terms of working to uphold the "public interest" (perhaps a symbol of an older language of professionalism).

A strong sense of a personal commitment was also expressed by all of the planners in Oxford, suggesting a commitment to planning that extended beyond the job, and was perhaps closer to a vocation:

> *I was about to say that I think planners, planners find it hard to move away from being planners I think* (Planning manager)

> *...I think it is a vocation, and I think in a way that's what attracted me to it, but, it can become very all consuming. I'm very aware that the last few months it's just been work. And I think that's partly down to the fact that if the inspector finds this* [the West End AAP] *unsound that I've wasted two and a half years...* (Principal planning officer)

As the second of these quotes suggests, it was clear that the demands of working the new system had been intensive, relying on a considerable commitment of personal time and energy. This had raised the stakes to encompass a sense of personal as well as professional consequentiality, suggesting that the job consumed a large amount of the self, extending well beyond office hours.

As in Wokingham, a strong commitment to public service was also expressed by the planners in Oxford, often understood in relation to the alternative of private sector practice. The public sector was seen as the "proper" location for planning,

and doubts were expressed about the ethics of private sector practice and its financial motivation (*"that's not really why any of us probably went into planning"*) as against the possibility of a deeper engagement with the qualities of place and the pursuit of the public good through work in a local authority. Whilst it was accepted that the dividing line between the public and private sectors was not as stark as it once was, and that there were some interesting opportunities in certain parts of the private sector, only one of the planners in Oxford had previously worked in consultancy, and none expressed an intention to make this transition.

Whilst the public sector was acknowledged to *"have its frustrations"*, with one DC planner suggesting that a certain masochism was a requirement of the job, there was generally less sense that the public sector ethos was embattled in Oxford. This seemed a reflection of the more positive working climate, and of a set of challenges that the professionals expressed strong identification with. Whilst all described *"inevitable tensions"* that I will discuss in more detail below, they also expressed a sense that the issues they were able to deal with in Oxford, notably regeneration related, but also in pushing for stronger policies on issues like climate change, provided a good fit with their own values. For most of the team, then, it seemed that there was a reasonably strong correlation between the values that motivated them, and the work that they were doing. This was also reflected in a sense of optimism about the trajectory of change in planning, with the emphasis on considering a more holistic range of issues and the potential results of ongoing organisational restructuring seen to facilitate a more progressive planning practice. For some this was also understood as a positive change, following time spent in political cultures where the sense of working to realise their values was more problematic:

> *Yeah, I mean when I came here I thought, god, Oxford, Oxford's great, in that I knew exactly how to pitch a report...I knew what I could say and I knew what the members would like which was what I happened to agree with anyway.* (Principal planning officer)

Defining planning professionalism: a new ideological ethos?

Thus, there was a sense amongst the planners in Oxford that their underlying values were being given expression through their professional practice. In similar

terms to the previous chapter, this sense of professionalism was founded on a belief that intervention in land-use was a means of securing the public interest.

As in the previous chapter, it was also clear that this sense of professionalism was founded on an interpretation of their practices that emphasised the central dimensions of spatial planning as a form of network governance. I have already stressed that the capacity to play an enhanced role within OCC was central to the ambitions of the planning policy teams. This was seen to rest on a capacity to effectively "join up" across departmental boundaries, and also with external stakeholders, to produce effective and "deliverable" visions. Public participation was also central to this, with the capacity to become, *"the more proactive, consult, you know, consulting type planner"* key to the democratic legitimacy the planning process was able to bring to policy-making and implementation. The capacity to implement or deliver policy was also recognised as a crucial element of planning professionalism, reflecting a pragmatic orientation to getting things done.

Some of the planners in Oxford were happy to identify these goals as "spatial planning", however, there was, again, a wariness about expressing full identification with a term that was problematic and whose meaning had been a source of ongoing uncertainty, particularly in relation to the preparation of the core strategy:

> *I can't really explain what I think it is very well, because it's not something I've ever fully understood, and it would be quite nice if it means what I feel it ought to mean, but somehow I feel that's now how it's applied...I'm not sure if it's a misinterpretation but when we talk about spatial planning it just means write something in there that says, or that means we've spoken to the health authority.* (Senior Planning Officer)

For one relatively young, senior planner, the label spatial planning remained remote:

> *I still think in terms of land-use planning, it makes sense to me, and well it's what we studied in a sense.* (Senior Planning Officer)

This suggested a certain level of resistance to the new agenda (rooted in pre-existing identifications), and a desire to retain some distance from it. However, it was also apparent that her understanding of "good practice" was largely founded on the principles of spatial planning as network governance. These were therefore, once again, understood to emanate from a more enduring, internalised understanding of planning's purpose. This was related to the specific values that motivated officers and the variety of personal and professional resources they had available, rather than identification with the discourses of spatial planning. For more experienced officers, for example, change was often described as a welcome return to a broader and more holistic basis for planning practice, moving beyond what several officers recognised as the *"jobs in filing cabinets"* period, when only strictly land-use related issues were admissible in policy.

In relation to the new system this identification with the values of spatial planning was, often, as I suggested in the previous chapter, expressed as a sense that the principles underlying modernisation were good. However, this was generally qualified by a cautious assessment of the prospects for achieving these through the new system:

> *I think it's been quite a hard term to understand and communicate, but certainly in terms of broadening the remit of what it is we're trying to do.*
> (Planning Manager)

In this way the values animating professional practice were not seen as synonymous with the new planning system and the change it had introduced. Rather they were considered common-sense principles of good planning, the ability to achieve which was the key test of the system and its claims. However, it was also clear that the language available to describe this, and the change it had introduced drew on discourse produced at the national level. In the example below, for example, one planner described the change to her practices in terms drawn directly from planning policy statement 1, and the description of spatial planning as being "more than" or "beyond" land-use planning:

> *It's much more than just land-use, in a way I'm a bit jealous of the old days when you could just sit in your office and write something, write a policy that sounded good...*(Principal planning officer)

Behind the performance of spatial planning

However they labelled or understood the new subject positions advertised by modernisation, and the changed opportunity structures that seemed to be opening up within OCC, the policy planners were keen to embrace new working practices and a new, or renewed planning identity. The performance of this new identity was understood as a means of realising values that were identified with both personally and professionally. The attempt to do so was seen as a test of planning's capacity to fulfil its potential locally, and of the new system's capacity to support that effort. Below I describe how the planners experienced the attempt to realise these values as they engaged with the central principles of the new planning system.

Partnership and Integration

The attempt to play a more integrative role was central to the way modernisation had been interpreted by planners within OCC, an approach that had received the backing of senior officers and councillors (albeit that they did not see planning as driving the corporate vision but as supporting it). This was identified with by planners who understood planning as *"the natural vehicle"* to integrate different strategies due to its being *"outward looking"* and able to look toward the bigger picture. Officers were aware of corporate support for this effort and detected clear signs of change from the previous local plan regime:

> *I think it has turned a corner from the local plan that was seen as the more old-fashioned view of planning, the rules and regulations and the "thou shalt not" kind of thing.* (Principal planning officer)

This was seen as evident in the ongoing corporate restructuring process and the decision to bring officers responsible for the SCS, economic development and some other functions into the same broader team as planning policy. In addition, for senior officers an increasing amount of their time was spent meeting with other services and external stakeholders. The West End AAP was seen as a particular symbol of this change, with the trust placed in the planning process having produced a document that had become a central element of the wider partnership's efforts.

However, this was also understood as a work in progress, and it remained difficult to achieve effective integration with other services that worked to very different timescales and priorities. Thus, whilst the effort to tie in with the SCS was acknowledged, it was also recognised that the OSP had very different ways of working that made genuine "joining up" very difficult. Thus whilst there were signs that this message was beginning to be understood, the visionary identity that the planners sought to adopt was not necessarily available. This was the case, for example, in the examination into the West End AAP where the attempt to orchestrate a convincing performance of partnership was partially undermined by the appearance of steering group members objecting to aspects of the proposed strategy. For the planners this was a disappointing symbol of the difficulty of sustaining support for partnership working from abstract principles through to concrete implementation proposals.

It was therefore understood that planning was not necessarily capable of exercising the power to ensure integration. It was also recognised that, though there were signs of change, other council services continued to hold a "narrow" view of planning that restricted the planners in their attempts to take on a more dynamic role. It was also recognised that some external stakeholders remained to be convinced of the need to engage with planning, and the planners felt that efforts to integrate, statutorily demanded of them, were not always reciprocated. For one planner this was brought home by an encounter with an internal document produced by the authority's property section, which described plans for regeneration of a housing estate. On a page marked *Planning* she had discovered, "*all the negative stereotypes of problems with planning*", laid out as a barrier to achieving effective regeneration. She had found this "*really disheartening*":

> *I don't think that other people see us as being visionary at all, I think we still suffer from a reputation for being stuck in the mud and bureaucratic and not being very, you know not being very visionary and being proactive*
> (Principal planning officer)

This incident had served as a reminder that the new, visionary and proactive planning identity to which she aspired - values that she explicitly recognised as being "*more new system*" - was not necessarily available until others could be convinced of planning's value. Thus, despite signs of change, there was a sense

that effective partnership and integration required a further shift in planning's image locally:

> *It's just that little stigma thing about what a planner is and what a planner does that we need to do a bit more work on...* (Principal planning officer)

The terms on which this integration was to be achieved were also, however, at times a cause for concern. Whilst the planners saw engaging across boundaries as central to their task, it was also clear that they felt that there were limits to how far such processes should develop. For example, some members of the team were concerned by the possible loss of a planning identity resulting from processes of corporate restructuring. It was still unclear when interviews were conducted how the restructuring process would affect the planning policy team but, though willing to welcome other officers into planning policy, the planners were less willing to step outside of planning themselves and asserted a desire to retain "planning" in the name of their new team:

> *[I'm] more than happy to work with all the other departments and other sections and I think we need to, but I still think it needs to be recognised that we're planners rather than just other strategy makers or whatever...* (Principal planning officer)

A central element of this commitment to a planning identity was a sense that other processes and strategies lacked the statutory basis to ensure that they were implemented and delivered, and therefore risked being "left on a shelf". This was seen as particularly true of the SCS process, but also in relation to the West End, where it was felt that the planning process had provided the partnership with a means of actually implementing its vision. This suggested an attachment to planning as a pragmatic, implementation orientated activity, and an ongoing awareness of the need to balance the flexibility to work across boundaries with the capacity to deliver policy through DC. Thus whilst OCC policy planners identified with a more flexible and visionary planning identity, they also recognised the value of the "inflexible" and "regulatory" statutory planning system as central to another aspect of their identity – a claim to be able to deliver. This sat uneasily with what was understood as a move away from writing "DC policies" in the new system, and

suggested limits to the planners' willingness to identify fully with planning moving *"beyond the statutory system"*.

At times the imperative to break down boundaries in the search for effective partnership also raised ethical concerns. One example of this was a proposal by a consortium of developers keen to advance an AAP for an area to the north of the city (which came to be known as the "Northern Gateway"). Given resource constraints within the authority this was likely to take some time and, as a result, the consortium proposed that they could pay for the officer time required to develop the plan. This was initially greeted with considerable concern within the department, where it was felt that such an arrangement threatened to merge the boundary between public and private sectors and potentially raised a conflict of interest.

The development of ever-closer relations between public and private sectors can be seen as an extension of the shift towards network governance. It is also the kind of partnership arrangement that the government has been keen to promote through the reform process (e.g. DTLR, 2001; CLG, 2007). Within the modernising culture of OCC meanwhile, in the light of considerable resource constraints, and given the cost of producing the requisite evidence base, this was seen as an effective means of developing a site that was designated for employment creation in the emerging core strategy (OCC, 2008). The willingness of the developers to engage with the planning process and to push for an AAP was also welcomed. Planning officers accepted much of this argument, equating the arrangement to the significant levels of external funding for the West End AAP. However, they remained concerned, and aware that this raised a set of highly sensitive issues:

> *If [someone] suddenly became an employee of these people then obviously that's not right at all, so I think, and I guess in the middle there's a grey area, em it has to be carefully handled. Because at the end of the day the bottom line is, it's a resources thing, we'd like to be able to do this and we'd much rather start now and have them on board than not start and have a hostile planning application.* (Principal planning officer)

Thus, the financial bottom line drove acceptance of a need for flexibility in defining the boundaries between the public and private sectors. With this came an, albeit in

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some cases reluctant, acceptance that successful planning relied on being *"grown up"* and *"pragmatic"* about such relations. The planners therefore found themselves arguing that the proposal was workable, provided that clear boundaries could be maintained within the "grey area" in which a resource constrained public planning was forced to practice. Whilst officers suggested that they had been reassured that this delicate balancing act would be sensitively managed, it was clear that it raised issues for them in their commitment to a public sector planning identity.

The "grey area" this proposal had called into existence seemed to symbolise the *"boundary work"* (see chapter 3 above, Fournier 2000, Newman and Nutley, 2003) that planners in Oxford faced as they sought to respond to the imperative to integrate. Whilst identifying with the principle of integration it was also clear that the planners were aware that their capacity to take on the *"ring master"* subject position remained limited. Equally, it was also clear that processes of integration and partnership could potentially be taken too far, raising questions about the nature of their identities as public sector *planners*.

Participation

Being a *"consulting type"* planner was also strongly identified with by the planners in OCC as a principle of good practice. The legitimacy bestowed by public involvement in planning was seen as central to the claims of planning strategies, and officers contrasted this with other strategies that lacked the same degree of democratic rigour. Within the authority the commitment to participation was seen to have pre-dated the new system, with officers suggesting (as they did in all of the authorities that I visited), that a pride in consultation was long-standing. It was also felt, however, that the requirements for consultation within the new system had taken this further, and brought new practices and skills around facilitation and engagement into focus:

> *We always consulted before, we had consultation events, but mostly we just wrote really boring forms and sent them to our standard people and I think one thing that has changed is that you're expected to be a lot more proactive...so your role is more going out there and talking to people and*

trying to get their ideas...I think that's a good thing. (Senior Planning Officer)

It was less difficult for planners in Oxford to express identification with "the public" than in Wokingham, and it was generally felt that planning worked with the grain of local feeling – as reflected in local press coverage of the AAP, and in the consensual local political culture. Equally however, it was also apparent that the public in Oxford was a complex concept, and officers were aware of opposition to the pro-growth tone of the core strategy, and to the wider growth regime in the city. Thus, despite identifying with the idea of a deliberative planning process, the planners were also aware of real limits to their capacity to engage the majority of residents, let alone to claim to *"speak for the community"*. This was most visibly illustrated in early 2008 when protests against the redevelopment of a city square, including one protestor who moved into a makeshift tree house on the site, gained local media coverage. For one officer this was a symbol of his wariness of planning's ability, through public participation, to resolve the antagonisms generated by development:

> *I've still got a little bit of cynicism. Yeah, as we sit here there's someone up a tree in Oxford...so, I mean I kind of reserve judgement on that.* (Principal planning officer)

The government's apparent faith in the idea of "frontloading" (encouraging early engagement with the planning system) was therefore widely described as *"naïve"*, suggesting one way in which the OCC planners sought to assert a degree of distance between the aspiration and the reality of participation:

> *Well, I think it's just naïve to say involve local communities more, as if they are all just sitting there wanting to be involved with planning, obviously they're not, most of them are quite happy not to be involved with planning at all, I think there was perhaps a simplistic vision from the central government...*(Senior Planning Officer)

Thus, the planners asserted the limits to their ability to perform in a truly deliberative way. The complexity of the new system, its language and multi-stage process, particularly the tests of soundness and the examination, were also seen

to have made it difficult for people to really sustain engagement with the policy process.

The problem of community engagement was therefore constructed as a *"perennial"* or *"inevitable"* tension for planning, one that planners were required to live with. Officers were particularly aware of this in relation to the difficulty of accessing *"hard to reach"* (or disadvantaged) groups, and there was a widely shared fear that those who *"shout the loudest"* had a disproportionate effect on local politics and planning:

> *That's always the way, I suppose that's part of the task for planning to try and ensure that it's not just those that shout the loudest that get heard. It's going to be tricky to take that to its best outcome.* (Principal planning officer)

This too provided a means of distancing planning from the reality of public participation, whilst also encouraging an appeal to absent voices as justification for specific policies. Similarly, resistance to growth was sometimes constructed as emanating from a vocal NIMBY minority rather than as a legitimate voice of public feeling, as a result appeals to a silent majority were also a means of legitimating policy. Thus, the planners identified and constructed a number of different publics with which they were more and less able to engage, and more and less able to speak for and identify with. In so doing they asserted both the centrality of participation to their understanding of professional practice, and their right to speak for the people, but also an awareness of the limits to such claims.

Sustainability

I have already suggested the centrality of debates about the most sustainable pattern of growth to policy-making at the sub-regional level in Central Oxfordshire. Most of the policy officers in OCC had accepted that Oxford was an inherently sustainable place for growth to occur. They had therefore accepted and to some extent internalised the basic tenet of the local growth regime:

> *It's just the way that things work, because it's a sensible place to grow. If you've obviously got a need for growth, if you're going to be competitive, and it's a sensible place to put new development really...you can get very*

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philosophical about it...I don't want to get into an argument about capitalism or something...[21] (Senior Planning Officer)

Within interviews in OCC there was generally less appeal made to "sustainability", with planners appearing to accept that the values embedded within the local culture worked towards progressive, and therefore "sustainable" outcomes. This was apparent in response to issues such as climate change in which the authority considered itself to be a leader, and officers were encouraged to push policy as far as possible. This suggests that the appeal to "sustainability" in Wokingham was, in part, defensive, as was its justification through the sustainability appraisal process. By contrast in Oxford this was understood as something of a hindrance, imposing a veneer of objectivity over essentially political choices.

In Oxford therefore sustainability was generally implicit within officers' descriptions of their work, and particularly the idea of "balancing" the social, environmental and economic, which was central to their thinking. This constituted their role as one of weighing up competing pressures within the City's development constraints. Officers often related this to the particular specialisms they had adopted, with those responsible for economic development, housing, or natural resource planning understanding the task as being to balance this against other requirements. Thus, the planners understood their task as lying "in-between" these different pressures. The challenge of managing the tensions between these goals was not always fully acknowledged within policy, particularly the core strategy, but also arguably in relation to the AAP's claims to both a gentrifying and socially inclusive mandate. The planners themselves were aware that certain trade-offs were inevitable. As such, at times, officers consciously presented themselves as advocates of particular forms of re-balancing. This was apparent when arguing for the maintenance of affordable housing levels, and a commitment to maintaining existing "hidden" social land-uses in the West End. It was also suggested by the presence of doubts about the extent of the growth agenda locally, and a feeling that this risked the loss of valuable green space, or the development of intrinsically low quality sites. However, the planners seemed to have relatively little power to

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[21] Interviews were conducted before the current recession, and this quote reflects a period when the term "capitalism" was seen as distant from day-to-day discourse. This was the only mention of the concept within the interviews. It would be interesting to explore if this has changed since a questioning of the logic of competitiveness re-entered public debate.

questions these pressures, and were rather obliged to try and manage the tensions created by the local governance culture.

Evidence based policy-making

The emphasis placed on planning as a weighing up of different pressures suggested that the planners in Oxford saw their task as essentially political. In this sense, whilst happy to accept that there was a *"technical element"* to planning, they also felt that the emphasis on evidence base within the new system was somewhat idealistic:

> *I mean the idea clearly of the new system which comes through it all is that you gather your evidence and test options and you reach a logical conclusion, and in the real world that doesn't always work like that.*
> (Principal planning officer)

This was apparent in the examination into the West End AAP where developers' agents frustrated officers by consistently arguing that policy could only reflect what the evidence allowed. Thus they disputed the strategic choices made by officers where the evidence suggested a range of possible options. Though the inspector generally upheld the officers' judgement in her report this had been a cause for concern:

> *We'd decided to go for the lower end, you know by using our professional judgement, but that wasn't good enough...I mean it's always been a planners' job to take evidence from all these different conflicting aspects and then to put them together in a way that will work and I thought that was the skill of the planner...*(Principal planning officer)

This suggests a clear view of the planners' task as an interpretive one, taking evidence from various sources and interpreting it in the light of government policy and local politics. This was a view that was widely shared. There was, therefore, some fear that the strength of the evidence-base requirement potentially undermined this scope for discretionary agency. Evidence base requirements were therefore understood in ambivalent terms, as both a potentially useful means of holding policy-making to account (and planners accepted that the previous local

plans system had not been sufficiently evidence-based – *"it was amazing what we got away with"*), but also as a potentially frustrating limitation.

Overall, the status of rational-technical knowledge within the system was understood in ambiguous terms. At times it was clear that planners felt that the *"rational"*, or *"informed planning view"* was frustratingly overridden by local political considerations, yet they also clearly recognised the legitimacy of this political process. This was therefore recognised as another "inevitable" tension. It was not one, however, that would be resolved by any objective truth to be found in more or better evidence.

The gathering of the evidence base meanwhile was understood as much as a resource issue as a question of the planners' own expertise, with many specialist studies commissioned from out-with the department. This was understood as a cost that even a well-resourced department had struggled to manage (and would not have managed without external support for the West End AAP). Thus the idea of evidence-based policy making was understood as a good principle, but also as a simplistic and potentially restrictive requirement of the new planning system.

Speed and delivery

Officers recognised the drive to introduce a performance regime into planning policy as a key change:

> *It is becoming more of a performance culture, a kind of target culture in policy since the last few years really.* (Planning Manager)

The pressure to produce a constant stream of documents against LDS milestones had intensified these pressures, and made policy more like DC:

> *When I first came into policy it did seem like, I have to admit, a heck of a lot less pressurised than DC and now it's becoming, the pressures are becoming quite similar.* (Principal planning officer)

The drive to introduce a performance culture into planning policy was also, however, understood in distinctly mixed terms. On the one hand, it was recognised

that it was necessary to introduce an element of project management and to promote a greater consciousness of timely policy-making, which had not always been a priority. On the other hand, it was felt that this created a "*treadmill*" that could impact negatively on quality. Thus, though performance management and targets had clearly become accepted, or at least tolerated, in principle, in practice they were often seen as constraints to "*real*" planning.

As described above, the often frustratingly "bureaucratic" process requirements of the new system were also understood as a constraint to achieving the more meaningful, outcome related goals with which the planners identified. In addition, they worked directly against the idea of a faster, more flexible system. However, officers also related to the idea of planning as a pragmatic, outcome orientated activity. The statutory system therefore provided planners with the power to produce "deliverable" strategies. This was essential to planning's legitimacy locally, and a symbol of the strength of the planning process in relation to other corporate strategies. Thus, frustration with the system was tempered by an understanding that its complex statutory requirements were the basis of planning's claims to influence local governance- a key part of the identity the planners aspired to.

Pressure to demonstrate the deliverability of strategies to government was, however, understood as another tension, and a source of anxiety:

> *It's all very well the government writing, 'oh you need to make your plans deliverable' and you do - to an extent. There's no point just writing a load of aspirational stuff, but as I said there's only so far you can go and I think that needs to be understood, you're still only a planner.* (Senior Planning Officer)

Concern was also expressed about the capacity of the new system to facilitate implementation of policy aspirations when they were no longer writing "*DC-policies*" (e.g. regulatory policies). In this context policy officers worried whether DC colleagues had grasped the changed requirements of the policy framework they would soon be required to operate within. In particular, however, there was concern as to whether the system, premised on a view of consensus, was adequately equipped to deal with the potential for "*hostile*" applications from

developers, who were ultimately going to be responsible for development on the ground.

This went hand-in-hand with suspicion that beneath the rhetoric of spatial planning, the government's over-riding concern was to simply deliver more housing, to the exclusion of all else:

> *But I think the huge emphasis on delivering housing, how are you delivering housing, em if you're not delivering housing you need to deliver housing, flies in the face of everything that spatial planning is really trying to deliver...my objection to that is unless you're building the community with the housing you're almost going back to the old land-use issue of housing numbers....(Planning Manager)*

Thus, whilst the planners were generally sympathetic to growth, and to the need for more affordable housing in particular, they were also wary of the drive for delivery, and suspicious that it might not allow for the "balancing" of other concerns they felt was central to a spatial planning approach. Overall, then, the principle of delivery produced a complex response from officers who had reasons to both identify with, and question its implications.

Narrating a spatial planning identity?

With the corporate and political will to adopt the ethos of the new planning system Oxford's policy planners were in a position to embrace the subject positions created by the shift to spatial planning. There was a sense of optimism about the place of planning within OCC and its role in shaping change locally, and a desire to be recognised as more "visionary". This had led to considerable change in the working practices of officers, with projects such as the AAP involving them directly in processes of partnership working, and in seeking to broaden planning's role to embrace a more "holistic" planning identity. This was accepted as a work in progress, but one that had brought new challenges and welcome change:

> *It's much more than just land-use, in a way I'm a bit jealous of the old days when you could just sit in your office and write something, write a policy that sounded good, and then you could just give it to the public and say do you*

agree...and it would just, you know, become policy. Now there's so much more to it, there's so much talking to other, other things that are beyond planning's scope...It's a good positive move, but just makes it harder work. (Principal planning officer)

Oxford's policy planners therefore felt they had been given considerable license to advance a progressive planning agenda. However, it was also clear that officers remained aware of limits to their capacity to make the change that these new opportunities presented, and they were therefore cautious about identifying fully with the new ideological ethos of spatial planning.

These limits were clearly felt at times, for example in local resistance to Oxford's growth regime; and, in organisational terms, in relation to the continued presence of "*old system*" perceptions of planning. Other, "*inevitable*" or "*perennial*" tensions, such as local political intervention over site allocations, also acted as reminders of the limits to planning's agency ("*you're still only a planner*"), serving to distance actual practice from the values planners professed. Thus, though generally working with the grain of local politics, and therefore able to experience their practice as value driven, the planners were still sometimes required to accept that their truth claims, those of the "*informed planning view*", came up against other, more powerful claims, to which they were obliged to cede.

Meanwhile, at times the new system itself was seen as a barrier to planning's capacity to exploit the opportunities presented. This was notable in the tension between housing delivery and the wider aspirations of spatial planning, which led officers to suspect a lack of trust within central government that planners could deliver:

Yeah, it's getting mixed messaged really. I mean as a planner you do get fed up with just being an easy target for everyone all of the time, whenever ministers want to blame someone. (Principal planning officer)

So, yes, I suppose the one tension I would have in terms of the government is that as a performing authority in terms of housing numbers, I wish the emphasis was less on chasing us on numbers and more on allowing us to

get on and do it, without having to risk chucking everything in just to demonstrate housing numbers. (Planning Manager)

The second of these quotes shows how it was felt that a proactive spatial planning identity was blocked by the government's over-bearing focus on housing numbers, betraying exasperation with central control and a plea for greater autonomy for *"performing authorities"*. Such tensions were also apparent in relation to the "bureaucratic" process requirements imposed by the new system. This too was seen as an impediment to the emergence of a more proactive planning. Thus, the planners remained unsure of their capacity to fully "perform" the spatial planning identity that they sought.

Equally, however, at times, the planners also seemed unsure whether they wanted to embrace certain elements of a spatial planning identity. This was evident in relation to the "boundary work" that new forms of partnership working drew officers into. Whilst keen to embrace these opportunities, they felt other important dimensions of their identity could be lost through absorption into a wider corporate culture, or the development of overly close relationships with developers. This implied a negotiation of the boundaries of planning's sphere of operations and relations. It also suggested the negotiation of a distinctive planning identity that prized a capacity to work with others across boundaries, but also recognised that those boundaries were a key part of their distinctive professional identity. In this regard the statutory planning system was viewed as both inflexible and limiting, but also as the basis of planning's claim to "deliver", and therefore as central to the planning identity.

Between obligation and identification: negotiating a planning identity

Planners in Oxford recognised the legitimacy of the same obligations as those identified in Wokingham. However, they experienced their work in quite different terms. Here the central obligations to which planners are accountable, between central government and local politics, were generally aligned. This created a space within which the planners were able to identify positively with the values they sought to promote through their work – moving from *"no go, to can do…"* as one manager described the change. This allowed them to explore the limits of the powers that the statutory framework enabled. They therefore experienced their

work as value driven, and were able to narrate a sense of themselves as engaged in progressive practice, and as agents of the change that the discourses of spatial planning (interpreted as integrative local governance) had facilitated. They generally felt able to manage the range of different subject positions that these obligations made up for them, forging these into a relatively more stable and positive set of identity claims than was available in Wokingham. Figure 7.3 illustrates the range of different "identity claims" that planners in Oxford made in relation to these obligations.

Obligation	Subject positions/ planners constituted as:	Corresponding Identity claims
1. the profession	Convinced spatial planner - value driven and value mediating	Convinced spatial planner/ holistic land-use planner/ from "no go" to "can do"/ optimistic sceptic
2. sustainable/ balanced outcomes		place shaper / Juggler/ weighing up evidence/ / expert advisor/ visionary policy advocate/ agent of change
3. Needs of future generations		Voice of missing, advocate for disadvantaged
4. GOSE	Obedient, deliverer of government agenda	Upward looking animal/ regulator/ Embattled public servant/ Delivery agent/ interpreter of government policy/ from "no go" to "can do"
5. PINS		
6. PPSs/ other guidance		
7. Legislation/ Regulations		
8. The public	Facilitator of public voice	Facilitator of participation/ embattled public servant/ voice of hidden communities
9. Local partnerships	Trusted partner/ facilitator of collaborative vision	Valued local partner / integrator/ joiner up/ pragmatic implementer/ facilitator/ mediator/
10. Elected members	Obedient professional advisor	expert advisor/ embattled public servant
11. Chief executive etc.	Team player/ contributing to corporate vision	Obedient civil servant/ expert advisor/ evidence based practitioner/ policy advocate/ corporate strategist

12. Other colleagues	Team player/ silo'd planner	Regulator/ valued local partner
13. LDS Milestones/ BVPIs	Rational actor responding to incentives	Obedient civil servant/ tick-boxer/ form filler
14. PDG/ HPDG		

Figure 7.3 Mapping subject positions and identity claims onto the field of obligations in Oxford

Nonetheless, planning's role in Oxford, as in Wokingham, remained essentially "in-between" the different obligations that it was required to reconcile:

I think that any planner in local government has to slightly interpret government guidance in the light of knowing what local politics, what the local political situation is, and it's always a bit of a balance...(Principal planning officer)

It [local politics]...*yeah... "gets in the way", it, it can influence it* [planning] *and shape it. And I mean that's fair enough, that's the democratic process, but on the other hand...* (Principal planning officer)

As such, their identities, like those of the planners in Wokingham, were, to some extent, characterised by this "in-between-ness", and a claim to understand all sides of any given situation (*"on the other hand..."*). This in-between-ness provided one means of coping with the tensions that these different obligations generated, allowing planners to hold back from identifying fully with any particular obligation, aware of the need to balance this against other factors.

In Oxford, many of these tensions were understood, and accepted, as "inevitable", such as those related to the difficulties of public participation, or the role of local politicians. In this way, although it was clear that these influences generated frustration, distorting the rationality claims of the *"planning argument"*, they were also accepted as legitimate forms of distortion. Planners therefore accepted the claims of these obligations to legitimately mediatize the planning process, and their own need, as impartial public servants, to be held accountable to them. As the reluctance of the speaker in the quote above to accept that politics *"gets in the way"* suggests, they did not consider an unmediatized planning practice desirable.

However, it was sometimes difficult to contain the frustration that blocked identity claims generated. The example above of the planner becoming aware of the negative view of planning held by the council's property service provides a useful example of this. The claim to a central role in the development and delivery of regeneration was an important part of the new, spatial planning identity that she sought to claim. The realisation that the visionary subject position to which she aspired was not acknowledged by colleagues was a source of considerable disappointment. Whilst frustrated by the continued presence of a regulatory image of planning (an *"old system"* view) she also, nonetheless, recognised this power to regulate as a key part of planning's claim to influence local governance. Ambivalences such as these suggest the challenge planners faced in negotiating an identity in-between the different obligations of practice.

Coping with identity work

As a result, a number of different coping strategies were apparent as planners sought to make sense of the limits to their identity claims:

- As in Wokingham, and as described in the previous section, a sense of role distance was crucial to this. This was sustained by an ongoing commitment to a normative conception of planning, and an ability to retain the integrity of this commitment in the face of obligatory practices that often called it into question. This distance was, however, generally less pronounced in Oxford, with planners expressing satisfaction that they were, for the most part, working with the grain of their personal and professional commitments. As a result frustrations (instances when this distance was stressed) were perhaps easier to manage and accept.

- Given that Oxford's planners felt themselves to be working in line with their values, one key coping device was to appeal to future practices, and the optimistic trajectory of change in planning's role within OCC, suggesting that certain impediments to a spatial planning identity were in the process of being broken down.

- This commitment was also, however, once again sustained by the "othering" of obligations that threatened to block the emergence of a

planning identity, notably the government, the system and local politicians. Given that these "others" were also understood in some sense as legitimate influences on planning, it is necessary again to recognise that the planning professional identity may be an essentially fictional ideal (cf. Baum, 1996).

In this context, suspicions about the government in particular, and their "true" motives for previous and ongoing rounds of planning reform, acted as one way in which the planners managed the distance between their identities and their practices. This was sustained by a sense that planning was a victim of government, and included occasional, dark echoes of an anti-planning conspiracy:

> *I suspect that they actually want to do away with as much planning policy as possible* (Senior Planning Officer)

This was based on fears that the planning system was ill-equipped to deal with the range of different issues it was being asked to address, and doubts about whether the new system provided the tools to succeed. In these terms the planners remained wary of the prospects for spatial planning.

Thus, even within a culture where change had been positively embraced, a certain, critical or cynical distance remained central to the planners' capacity to cope with and understand the often contradictory demands being made of them, and the frustrations of practice.

Conclusions

The aim of this chapter was to explore the ways in which a pro-development planning culture, and the policy planners within it, responded to the modernisation of planning, the new planning system and the exhortation to embrace the new ideological ethos of spatial planning. For both of the case studies I set two questions to help explore these dynamics:

- How have local planning cultures interpreted the imperatives of modernisation?

- To what extent have planners taken on new roles and identities in line with the ideological ethos of spatial planning?

In answer to these questions I have suggested that, in Oxford, the central thrust within the modernisation agenda in planning was generally well aligned with a modernising local governance culture, characterised by the hegemony of a local growth coalition. As a result, there were opportunities available for planning to embrace the change implied by the discourses of spatial planning, and the promotion of a more "proactive" planning identity.

Within this political context, and the relatively stable terms of local political debate, planning was granted some autonomy to develop the spatial implications of OCC's strategic policy. This entailed facilitating the development required to support the growth coalition, whilst seeking to direct this modernisation towards key local priorities and manage the tensions between potentially contradictory objectives. The planners in Oxford, encouraged by this political and corporate support, were therefore optimistic about the prospects for planning taking on a more "visionary" role within local governance.

This produced a performance of spatial planning that argued for OCC to be trusted to deliver this pro-growth agenda in a progressive and innovative way. Whilst this was felt to have succeeded in the case of the West End AAP, it had been more difficult in relation to the core strategy which had struggled to manage the multiple different demands being made of strategic policy-making within the tight administrative boundaries of OCC.

The planners in Oxford therefore negotiated their identities in relation to the availability of the new subject positions created by the discourses of spatial planning. In particular, they identified closely with the idea of a more corporately influential role. Attempts to embrace these new subject positions, however, revealed the presence of clear limits to planners' ability to perform the identity they aspired to. Furthermore, despite welcoming the central thrust of change, planners were also drawn at times to recognise limits to their own willingness to embrace it. The attempt to adopt a new planning identity drew Oxford's planners into forms of "boundary work" as they adapted to the implications of new practices, and

explored their capacity to influence processes beyond the statutory planning system.

These limits to the emergence of a new planning identity were understood in part as "perennial" or "inevitable" tensions, but also as products of both the new system, and the contradictory demands imposed by the different obligations planning has been asked to manage. Whilst this sometimes led to frustration at the blocking of particular identity claims, in general Oxford's planners felt able to manage these tensions, and work towards the realisation of a spatial planning identity. In making such a claim, however, it was clear that this coherence was a sum of fragmented parts, and at times elusive - forged in the "in-between" space of planning practice. In this context planners still had to manage a sense of distance between their professional ideals and practices, retaining a cautious reserve that allowed them to cope with a working context over which they had some, but limited, control.

Chapter 8 Analysis: assessing the modernisation of planning cultures and planners' identities

Introduction

The previous three chapters have outlined the empirical elements of the thesis, stretching across the two stages of the research at the national and local levels. I have sought to develop clear threads of analysis in these chapters, and to make explicit some of the connections between them. This chapter further develops that analysis, drawing out key elements from each to consider:

- How the analysis of the national level framing of modernisation can be understood in relation to the local level cases.

- And, in turn, how the local level cases further inform understanding of the national level agenda.

- To develop key comparative insights from the two local level cases, highlighting points of similarity as well as difference in the experience of these two cultures and the "identity work" of the policy planners working within them.

To do so the chapter uses the conceptual tools outlined in chapter 3, and draws on some of the wider literature reviewed in chapter 2, to consider the implications of the argument for: attempts to govern professional cultures and identities; the nature of contemporary planning professionalism; and planners' identity work. This provides the basis from which the overarching problematic can be addressed in the final chapter, along with its implications for understanding the modernisation of planning. The chapter is therefore split into the three sections, reflecting the three conceptual dimensions identified at the end of chapter 3:

- First of all I interrogate modernisation as an attempt to articulate a *new ideological ethos* for planning, considering the extent to which spatial planning has succeeded in articulating new rationalities capable of governing the planning policy network, and how these were interpreted by planners in the two case studies.

- Following from, and related to this, the second section discusses the *powers of culture governance and identity regulation* within the planning policy network, and the reasons for the success or failure of attempts to bring about culture change in the case studies.

- Finally, I consider the nature of the *identity work* that planners have been drawn into as they attempt to come to terms with the implications of modernisation, considering the lived experience of change and its implications for the production of new, planner identities and a new planning practice.

Modernising Planning: articulating and interpreting a new ideological ethos?

Chapter 5 described modernisation as a contested agenda, instigated by a government with an ambivalent attitude towards planning. It suggested that strong elements of neoliberal continuity within the New Labour project, and particularly within the Treasury, created a fundamentally suspicious attitude towards the regulation of land-use. This created the space for a discourse coalition to emerge that sought to problematise planning as a constraint to the functioning of markets, and as damaging to economic competitiveness. This *strategy of problematisation* apparently underlay the government's resolve to introduce *"fundamental change"*, and determination to dislocate the existing ideological settlement governing the policy network.

At the same time, however, a rather different, modernising discourse coalition had emerged, based on an alternative problematisation of existing practices, and particularly the narrowness of the regulatory rut into which planning was perceived to have slipped. This discourse argued for the adoption of a broader, spatial planning approach as an articulation of emerging forms of networked governance. This, it was claimed, would provide the basis for the re-invigoration of planning as a governmental activity and professional project.

With the *"balls in the air"*, and the need for a new settlement capable of governing planning, New Labour's collaborative approach to policy-making, and hybrid ideology created opportunities for the spatial planning agenda to influence the direction of change. The resulting package of reforms were, however, marked by a

planning specific version of the wider, ideological hybridity that has characterised New Labour in government, and the Third Way claim to reconcile apparently contradictory policy goals. In the case of planning this has led to the framing of an agenda marked by key tensions, some of which are long standing, but all of which have been embedded in the new system in a new way. Central amongst these are tensions between:

- The speed of plan and decision-making, levels of public involvement and quality of decisions
- The desire for a more flexible and visionary process, and the regulatory complexity of planning's powers to shape change
- Central control over key decisions areas, and local and/ or professional empowerment to deliver the visions set by local communities
- Economic development as the primary goal of the system, and a broader sustainability focus

This has created the impression of a fluid and unstable reform process, making visible fractures within the government, and across the policy network. In this context, the spatial planning discourse coalition has sought to secure its own identity through the construction of the Treasury agenda as a hostile "other", and the discursive claim that the shift to a spatial planning approach is capable of managing the tensions within the policy network – simultaneously capable of meeting business and community concerns, whilst also promising to revitalise the planning professional project. The discursive politics of reform have therefore been particularly significant, with key empty signifiers, like spatial planning, seeking to manage the tensions between different interests, and to provide a "fix" capable of governing the policy network.

I identified three particularly significant interpretations of spatial planning at the national level, as: network governance; delivery vehicle; and renewal of the professional project. I suggested that there were points of both convergence and tension within and between these different interpretations. This is represented in figure 8.1 (see also figure 5.3 on p.126 above).

Spatial planning as...	Key obligations to...	Planner subject position(s)	Tensions within the discourse	Tensions with other interpretations
Network governance *Key advocate:* *Spatial planning* *discourse* *coalition*	1. Local partnerships 2. The public 3. Elected members 4. Corporate leadership	Ringmaster - facilitating participation, managing partnerships	1. Open participation vs. effective partnership 2. Participatory vs. representative democracy	1. Local deliberative process at odds with centralised delivery. 2. Decentring of professional expertise at odds with renewal of professional project
Delivery vehicle *Key advocate:* *Treasury/* *business* *discourse* *coalition*	1. Central government guidance 2. GOSE 3. Legislation and regulations 4. BVPIs 5. PDHG	1. Upward looking animal 2. Homo-economicus	1. Policy guidance contains contradictory messages	1. Centralisation at odds with local deliberation 2. Standardisation at odds with creative local/ professional work
Renewal of the professional project *Key advocate:* *Planning* *profession*	1. Local partnerships 2. The public 3. The Profession 4. Sustainable/ balanced outcomes 5. Future generations/ missing voices 6. Delivery (implementation) on the ground.	1. Ringmaster as above 2. Expert voice of missing values/ sustainability etc.	1. Professional expert decentred within network professionalism	1. Trust and empowerment of professionals at odds with low trust, high-output model of delivery vehicle 2. Potential for conflict with decentred role in local governance

Figure 8.1. Three interpretations of spatial planning

These tensions suggest a struggle to articulate a new ideological ethos for planning, capable of containing the antagonisms that the policy network is charged

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with managing. As a result, following Lipsky (1980), I suggested unresolved tensions were likely to have been passed down through the system to the local level where they may have created both interpretive spaces, and an interpretive burden for planners. I therefore now use these three interpretations of spatial planning to explore how spatial planning was understood in the case studies. This links the analysis at the national level, to the experience of the local cases. I then suggest an overall understanding of how successful spatial planning has been as a new ideological ethos, its capacity to manage tensions, and its ability to gain planners' commitment to the new subject positions it has "made up" for them.

Spatial Planning as 'network governance'?

The policy planners in both Oxford and Wokingham understood spatial planning as a form of network governance. This was manifest in their identification of the new system as synonymous with integrating with other services, and increasing levels of public involvement. The integrative interpretation of spatial planning had come to be particularly emphasised within the policy network as the new system was rolled out in practice (RTPI, 2007), and was a crucial dimension of the official "performance" of planning in the strategies emerging in both locations.

For both sets of planners this had already, to some extent, become internalised as a "common sense" view of planning professionalism. This was secured in different ways for different individuals, based on their own personal commitment to planning and experience. More experienced planners in both locations, for example, saw strong echoes of the more holistic role that policy planners had sought to play within local government in the 1970s. Spatial planning therefore promised to restore a long-standing element of the planning professional ideology that was lost in the 1980s and 1990s, providing legitimacy for planners to pursue a broad definition of the public interest. All of the planners identified with the idea of planning as a more holistic process, capable of bringing together a wide range of different stakeholders. In addition, the need for planning to involve local people was universally accepted and valued, particularly by planners who were motivated by social, or 'people centred' issues.

This suggests that policy planners have come to identify with a discourse of "network professionalism" (cf. Furbey et al, 2001; McClymont, 2006). Though planners in both locations expressed occasional frustration with the weakness of

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the "*planning argument*" and its lack of influence over local governance, they also accepted a decentred view of professional expertise, where they have little claim to expertise that can be imposed onto people from above. The idea of the planner as facilitator, or mediator, as advocated in communicative planning theory, had become accepted as an ideological principle underlying planning practice in both authorities.

Despite identifying with the principles of spatial planning as network governance, however, the planners in both cases expressed reservations about their capacity to take on the subject positions this suggested. This was particularly clear in Wokingham where the "*short leash*" of local political control, and the controversial nature of planning issues, made it difficult for planning to proactively join up with other services, beyond the boundaries of the statutory system. Instead, processes of integration were driven from the top down as an attempt to manage the political implications of planning policy. In Oxford too, however, where planning policy was afforded considerable scope to pursue the goals of the local growth regime, the planners discovered limits to their capacity to work beyond the boundaries of the statutory system. They also suggested limits to their willingness to work beyond the boundaries of the system where this drew into question a distinctive planning identity.

Moreover, the aspiration to join-up policymaking has become central to the wider local government modernisation agenda. As such, the claim to be integrative has become a key goal of a wide range of different actors, including senior managers in local government (e.g. Cowell and Martin, 2003; Newman, 2004; 2005). Planning policy's capacity to claim a central role in coordinating such processes therefore appeared limited. Rather, in both case studies, it was understood as a second order function, a means of realising the priorities set by senior management and politicians, rather than a forum in which such principles were debated and worked out (though the planners themselves often claimed a more central role than their managers recognised). In this context the planners often had to recognise limits to their power to command the attention of other services and actors, and the "role confusion" that calls to move beyond traditional boundaries generated as they sought to convince other services of the value of collaborating in the production of planning policy.

In both locations too, it was clear that planning struggled to take on a positive role as a facilitator of public participation. The political antagonisms generated by development were often beyond planning's capacity to manage. As a result the planners were aware that their desired identity claims were blocked in relation to the public, often by tensions generated by other obligations within the planning system e.g. to be in conformity with central government policy. The frustrations that this generated found expression in planners' doubts about the planning system's "naïve" assumption that consensus could be achieved, and its failure to account for the politics of framing local planning policy.

This suggests the presence of key questions concerning the locus of power within network governance, and the potential presence of tensions between participatory and representative regimes of local governance. These tensions were not always manifest within the local governance cultures in Oxford and Wokingham, and though alluded to, did not appear central to planners' accounts of their experiences and the dilemmas they had to negotiate. Rather they were accepted as part of the complex structure of the "field of obligations" within which planning must work. However, they do raise crucial ethical questions about the obligations to which planners should most closely relate and be held accountable (cf. Newman, 2004; 2005).

Overall, planners in Oxford were able to claim a more positive identity, coming closer to realising the principles of spatial planning as network governance through their practices. However, the "ringmaster" role that has been proposed for spatial planners did not seem to be readily available in either location. Moreover, it was clear that the planners felt that the presence of other, strong pressures within the planning system often worked against the realisation of spatial planning as network governance.

Spatial planning as 'delivery vehicle'?

The pressure to "deliver" has been another central thrust in New Labour's modernisation agenda for public services. The modernising planning agenda was driven in part by a shared frustration with planning's persistent failure to deliver coverage of up-to-date plans, or timely decisions on development applications. However, this critique was most strongly articulated by the Treasury/ CBI

discourse coalition and echoed long-standing neoliberal critiques of planning as a restriction of the free market.

New Labour's concern for delivery has manifested differently across different areas of the state. However, it has been strongly linked with the continued use of centralised control and regimes of performance targets (Newman, 2001; Barton, 2008). This betrays a low trust, high-output model of public services and local government (Hoggett, 1996; Cochrane, 2004), and a mechanistic view of the policy process that is blind to the complexity of implementation (Chapman, 2007).

The planners in both cases were resistant to the idea that planning could be treated as a "*delivery vehicle*" for pre-determined policy outputs. They expressed suspicion of those elements of the government's agenda that pointed in this direction, these included:

- An over-emphasis on speed that had a negative influence on development control planners, and was increasingly spreading to policy also.
- Centralisation of control over policy through PPSs that minimised the role and discretion afforded to planning policy, and undermined the scope for genuine local deliberation.
- The emphasis on introducing greater market sensitivity, particularly in planning for housing, was seen as a means of circumscribing planning's regulatory control and ensuring delivery of more housing at the expense of the balanced communities planning could deliver. This suggested that planners continued to resist the imposition of economic rationalities, claiming a broader purpose based on the rationale of sustainable development (cf. Campbell and Henneberry, 2005; Cowell and Owens, 2006).
- The level of policy oversight exercised by GOSE, and the complexity of the regulations the new system had created. The quantity of "bureaucratic" work generated by the new system was a source of considerable frustration in both locations. This led to a sense that the system had become bogged down in regulatory detail that prevented effective policy planning and implementation.

This suggested a degree of resistance to this interpretation of spatial planning, and a desire to articulate a broader planning identity. The narrowness of the government's concern for delivery was also identified as a source of frustration, where it blocked the emergence of a more deliberative planning practice, able to shape locally determined, creative policy solutions; or failed to appreciate the complexity of shaping local political settlements and dealing with the political antagonisms over development that planning must manage. In this the planners echoed the RTPI's (2003a; Upton, 2008) critique of performance management regimes and centralised control as working against the emergence of spatial planning as network governance.

However, the planners in both locations also expressed identification with the idea that planning was an outcome-orientated activity. This was an expression of another, long-standing dimension of the professional ideology - that planning is a pragmatic process concerned with implementing change "on the ground". The planners in both locations were quick to point out that plans are only useful if they are actually implemented, rather than "left on the shelf". In Oxford the presence of a planning policy implementation team was evidence of this, with the team increasingly involved in discussion with developers to ensure implementation of the West End AAP. In Wokingham the desire for "positive" planning was an expression of frustration with the local agenda, and the implications of refusing to plan for development. In both authorities the planners expressed concern about the likely future impacts on development control officers of emerging policy frameworks that did not contain regulatory policies. Policy officers were also wary of losing contact with DC, and of the extent to which the problematisation of regulatory planning may have limited planning's capacity to deliver, and to resist "hostile" applications. Thus, many planners articulated a partial identification with the discourse of delivery, when interpreted as a concern to ensure policy implementation.

This seemed to also shape planners' shifting and ambivalent interpretations of central government policy guidance and performance management regimes. Central policy guidance was central to planners' ability to influence local governance, providing a framework of enabling powers that underlay their claim to discipline local politics. However, by the same token these frameworks also became a frustrating constraint where they created conflict with local agendas, or

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where local political (or planning) will came up against the limits of the powers circumscribed by that framework. As such the planners in both locations recognised central government as both enabler and barrier (cf. Murdoch and Abram, 2002).

Managerial regimes were also widely accepted, in principle, as driving a heightened concern to ensure plans were prepared in a timely fashion. In Wokingham this was mobilised as an argument to maintain pressure on local politicians to approve progress on the emerging core strategy (though, it was also understood in both locations as a relatively weak argument, with neither authority likely to rush the production of a strategy to ensure that it met "milestones"). This suggests that planning policy has been subject to some pressure to adapt to managerial regimes of control. However, rather than being viewed as a threat these have been incorporated within professional's understandings of their practice, seen as a resource that is capable of improving practice (cf. Fournier, 2000; Stronach et al, 2002; Newman and Nutley, 2003; in planning Imrie, 2001; McClymont, 2006).

Wider questions about the extent to which managerial and "delivery" logics rested on a depoliticised understanding of the planning process as a mechanistic "delivery vehicle" were also raised by the planners, particularly in the conflicted space of Wokingham. This suggested a further, long-standing ambivalence for planners – that of their relationship to local politics, and elected members. The possible dangers of a managerial approach, legitimating a restoration of planning's depoliticising role in imposing change on local communities has been noted (Imrie, 2001; Sager, 2009). This kind of claim was not particularly apparent amongst the planners, though they did, at times, seek to manipulate the space between central and local regimes. They also, however, noted considerable difficulties in managing the demands that pressures for planning to perform as a rational delivery vehicle often imposed on the messy, spaces of local deliberation.

Thus, the planners were, to some extent, constituted as "upward looking", and "rational-economic" subjects by central governmental and managerial regimes, in as far as they were obliged to comply with the logics of action that they produced. Planners were capable of identifying with these positions, particularly where they provided resources that they were able to mobilise as they sought to influence

local agendas, and to shape the behaviour of local politicians. However, it was also clear that they retained a suspicious and, at times, frustrated distance from them, where they were understood to threaten or undermine other aspects of the performance of spatial planning. Thus, the discourse of delivery generated considerable ambivalences for the planners in both locations – whilst it was understood as a legitimate professional goal, it was also a potentially threatening presence.

Spatial planning as renewal of the planning professional project?

Given New Labour's ambivalent attitude towards planning, the tensions within the modernisation agenda, and the concept of spatial planning itself, the national level agenda has, at best, produced an uncertain renegotiation of the state-professional pact in planning. The prospects for spatial planning to fulfil the high hopes invested in it by many within the professional community, and to hold off arguments emanating from the Treasury/ CBI discourse coalition, have therefore been passed down through the system to be dealt with at the local level. The rank and file of practitioners have therefore been charged with managing the tensions within the concept of spatial planning, and realising its potential to empower a more central role for planning within local governance.

In this regard, in both locations, planners expressed some optimism that their work had become recognised as more of a corporate priority. This was particularly marked in Oxford, where planners felt there had been a shift in the view of planning amongst senior officers and members. In Wokingham, meanwhile, the "short leash" and politicisation of planning issues ensured that the core strategy came to be seen as a corporate priority. In both locations, this was driven, in part, by pressure from GOSE and central government on Chief Executives to recognise the importance of core strategy production to housing delivery.

As noted above, however, it was much less clear that the "ringmaster" role suggested by the profession's advocacy of network professionalism was available to planners. In both case studies, the planners' agency was limited and essentially agenda following rather than shaping. Exhortations for planners to move beyond the statutory system to integrate services were viewed in positive terms, but the "boundary work" (Fournier, 2000) that this drew planners into as they sought to re-negotiate their roles often revealed the limits to their agency to realise this in

practice. Moreover, it also revealed the extent to which planners' claims to be able to get things done (e.g. to agency within local governance) relied on the regulatory powers of the statutory system. Thus although frustratingly bureaucratic and complex, moving beyond the system was no simple matter, both because of its resource intensive nature, but also because it formed the core of claims to a distinctive planning identity, and, particularly in Wokingham, of public perceptions of planning's purpose.

As suggested in chapter 5, calls to take on a broader role within local governance suggest the continued presence of "role confusion" within the planning professional project (Underwood, 1980; Reade, 1987), and of key "neo-traditional" tensions concerning planning's capacity to manage antagonisms and realise a mediated public interest (cf. Peel and Lloyd, 2007). Calls for planners to have the "self confidence" (Gillman, 2008), or the "chutzpah" to realise these new roles in practice seemed particularly distant from practice in Wokingham. The politicisation of planning, and the intractable nature of the antagonisms the system was attempting to manage, led planners towards the traditional role of the public bureaucrat (Healey, 1991), invoking role distance, and deferring to more senior decision-makers. Even in Oxford, where planners were granted more autonomy, they still accepted the limits of their ability to shape the agenda within which they worked (e.g. in not being able to challenge the logic of growth, even where quality or other outcomes were felt to be threatened by it). The charismatic authority implied by the ringmaster role therefore seemed distant in both cases, where planners instead struggled to manage 'in-between' the different obligations of practice. This suggested a much more "uncertain politics of professionalism" (Stronach et al, 2002) than the interpretation of spatial planning as renewal of the professional project has called for. It suggests a need to understand the ambivalences and limits that professional planners navigate as they seek to negotiate their roles and identities. This may be distant from the drive required to renew planning, but is perhaps more reflective of the tensions that the national level agenda has struggled to reconcile, and their impacts on planners in local authority practice.

The professional community at the national level has recognised its advocacy of spatial planning as a "leadership" role, promoting practices that at times have been distant from the reality of rank and file experience. The two case studies suggest

the likely range of different experiences across the country, it is therefore possible that the normative promises of spatial planning have appeared less remote in other locations. However, even in Oxford, where the new agenda was positively embraced, the gap between this normative call for leadership and the reality of practice was considered problematic.

Towards a new ideological ethos?

In this context it was perhaps understandable that many planners were cautious about identifying with spatial planning and its prospects. Even amongst those who identified with the change, the 'convinced spatial planner' was a difficult identity claim to sustain when it was often frustrated or blocked by other rationalities embedded within the system. The ideological ethos of spatial planning, as embedded in the new system, has been marked by the central tensions within the modernisation agenda. These reflect key tensions, and often long-standing contradictions, in the demands made of planning, and also central tensions in New Labour's wider ideological project and pursuit of state modernisation. These tensions are most clearly represented by the differences between the interpretations of spatial planning as network governance, and as a delivery vehicle. This suggests that, rather than offering a convincing opportunity for the renewal of the planning professional project, modernisation has instead produced an uncertain politics of professionalism, marked by the ambivalences of partial and blocked identifications with different aspects of the ideological ethos of spatial planning. In this context the capacity for planners to mediate the tensions passed down to them through the new system, and in doing so negotiate a coherent spatial planning identity, must be questioned. This implies the return of the *"role confusion"* that has been a recurring feature of the planning professional project within local government, and raises questions about the capacity of planners to exercise agency within the wider local cultures in which they work. Following from the above, I now therefore move on to critically reflect upon the nature of "culture change" in planning, and the prospects for effective culture governance in the planning policy network.

Culture governance in the planning policy network

At the national level the culture change agenda has acted as a means of bringing different actors in the planning community together (e.g. NPF, 2008), and

therefore as a mechanism for managing the tensions between different conceptions of a "modern" planning. However, it is equally clear that different conceptions of planning's purpose presuppose quite different planning cultures, means of managing change, and subject positions for planners. In this way different strategies for managing change within the policy network can be understood to act as quite different forms of identity regulation. The presence of a range of different strategies for managing change in planning can be understood to suggest a range of confusing and sometimes contradictory messages to planners. This was illustrated in figure 5.5 on p.135 above.

In this way, the tensions within the modernising planning agenda extend into the prospects for any putative culture change. The literature suggests that culture change is complex and difficult to secure where it pre-supposes fostering genuine commitment to new practices (Schein, 1992; Alvesson and Svenningsson, 2008; in planning Shaw, 2006; Lord and Shaw, 2007). The presence of such apparently contradictory strategies for securing change in planning, however, suggests that the modernisation agenda requires particularly careful scrutiny.

Representing change: the new planning and the new planner?

By opening up the contested politics of framing the planning reform agenda at the national level, it becomes possible to question the construction of change as an 'inevitable' imperative, and to critically interrogate the conceptions of a modern planning culture it implies (cf. Marquand, 2004). This opens up the tensions between different conceptions of a modern planning system, and of modern planning cultures and identities.

Calls for planners to embrace the opportunities presented by the shift to spatial planning must be understood in this complex context. Such exhortations have rested on an assumption that the change implied by modernisation is a straightforward (if challenging) step on a path towards progress. This betrays an understanding of the concept of spatial planning, and the reformed planning system as relatively coherent and as offering opportunities for the empowerment of planning practice. The often highly normative rhetoric of spatial planning, and in particular its interpretation as network governance and renewal of the professional project, have provoked committed responses at the national level. However, as described above, the wider modernisation agenda has been considerably more

conflicted than this allows. The presence of key tensions within the planning reform agenda, and within the concept of spatial planning itself, has often, therefore, been underplayed but has also made it difficult for planners in practice to interpret and commit to the new ideological ethos they imply.

If modernisation and spatial planning are instead understood as ambiguous concepts, containing apparently contradictory elements, within a fluid agenda, it becomes more difficult to express exasperation with practitioners who are hesitant to embrace change. In this context the negotiation of reform in local planning cultures, and in planners' own conceptions of their work, must be understood as an attempt to respond to a complex and at times potentially confusing change environment. Modernisation can therefore be understood to have imposed a considerable burden of *identity work* on local authority planners.

At times, at the national level, culture change has apparently been viewed as the basis for the transformation of planning. This suggests responsibility for realising the normative promises of spatial planning lies with the system's users rather than the system itself (see e.g. CLG, 2008, p. 120). There is also an element of critique of "*old school resistance*" (CLG, 2008, p.119) inherent to exhortations to embrace change, representing planners themselves as responsible for the success or failure of the new system (cf. Tewdwr-Jones, 2004; Richards, 2006; Morphet, 2007). This can be related to the return of calls to attract the "*best and brightest*" into the profession (Barker, 2006; see also Schuster, 1950; Keeble, 1961, Eversley, 1973). In this instance the discourse has reappeared in conjunction with the recognition of a "*skills gap*" in local government planning (see CLG, 2008; Glasson and Durning, 2004). It has also, however, been a feature of calls for planners to show the self-confidence required to make spatial planning work. Interviewees at the national level looked to the past, and the powerful chief planning officers of the post-war period as a model for change. As alluded to above, many suggested the need for a measure of charismatic professional leadership to make a success of spatial planning (and thereby renew the professional project).

The potential re-emergence of the "superhero" problematic, however, suggests reasons for caution (cf. Glass, 1959; Abram, 2004). Indeed, it is worth noting also the considerable genealogy of the discourse of culture change in English planning.

As the 1947 act came into force, Lewis Silkin (1948), the minister responsible, wrote in the Journal of the Town Planning Institute in response to concerns that the new planning powers were essentially negative or regulatory. He suggested that the success of the act would depend largely on the "*spirit*" with which it was taken up, and that this would be the key to ensuring that the powers were used positively and in the public interest, and were capable of retaining public confidence. Prior (2005), meanwhile, provides a good overview of the continuity of broadly similar concerns to ensure a more "positive" planning system throughout the post-war period. In this context the idea that a change in 'culture' or 'spirit' can provide the basis for the transformation of planning should be treated with caution. In particular such calls appear to disregard the complexity of securing culture change.

Planners in search of a role: opportunity structures and limits

As suggested above, the extent to which planners were able to influence their roles within the local governance cultures of Oxford and Wokingham often appeared limited, with the strength of the "*planning argument*" weak in relation to other concerns. It was recognised in both locations that the conditions for planning taking on a new role were set as corporate priorities beyond planners' immediate sphere of influence. In Oxford, where corporate commitment was evident, and broadly aligned with the goals of the planning system, planners had some autonomy to explore the opportunity structures open to them (within the powers the system and local governance context enabled). In Wokingham, however, the tension between central objectives of the planning system, and the local agenda reduced this space considerably. Moreover, it was also recognised that the capacity of planning to more effectively shape local development relied on a wider local planning culture that was also often beyond planners' control.

The culture change required to realise spatial planning as a tool central to local governance therefore relied on a series of shifts in the wider organisational and governance cultures within which planners worked, but over which they exercised relatively little agency. This has apparently been recognised at times, with central government putting some pressure on chief executives to ensure delivery of core strategies, for example (though they have also resisted calls to give statutory protection to the role of chief planning officer). The nature of the co-articulation between spatial planning and wider processes of local governance reform

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meanwhile remains unclear, and is clearly being negotiated in practice (Allmendinger et al, 2006), with considerable differences in the approach to local strategic partnerships, and their interaction with planning between the two authorities investigated here.

In this context, the complexity of securing this wider change was visible in both cases. In Oxford, where the effort to embrace a spatial planning approach was most enthusiastic, there was high-level corporate support for a more proactive planning. This drew planners into forms of boundary work (cf. Fournier, 2000; Newman and Nutley, 2003), negotiating the scope of planning locally, and seeking to take on a more integrative and visionary role. It was, however, clear that this process would take some time, and the planners acknowledged difficulty in securing understanding of the new role they sought to play. In Wokingham, despite high-level corporate engagement, a more expansive role was difficult to claim in the midst of entrenched political conflict (though there were perhaps signs of it emerging in the more positive context of planning for the strategic development locations).

In both locations meanwhile it was accepted that planners often had very little control over the wider local planning cultures that they sought to shape. In Wokingham in particular, the antagonisms that planning generated could not be effectively governed through the planning process, and it was unclear that the fragile political and corporate will to accept a core strategy would succeed in the face of concerted public opposition.

Thus, there were clear limits to planners' agency to take on the roles implied by spatial planning - a shift that required widespread acceptance of any such change throughout local governance. Although there were some signs of this emerging in both locations, and particular signs of optimism in Oxford, it was also clear that planning's agency in both locations was exercised at a secondary level, largely directed by and reliant on senior management (in keeping with the wider empowerment of managers within the local government modernisation agenda, e.g. Cochrane, 2004; Newman, 2004). Equally, it was clear that, in complex organisations like local authorities, and in the wider landscape of local governance, there were multiple possible sources of resistance to this culture change. Moreover, it was widely recognised that the esoteric nature of the term

"spatial planning" itself often acted as a barrier to communicating why planning should be offered a new role (and equally that the constant shifts in policy language and initiatives in other services caused similar problems). This, therefore, re-emphasises the complexity of attempts to engineer culture change, and the limits to planners' capacity to take on the new subject positions suggested by spatial planning (Schein, 1992; Shaw, 2006).

Awareness of the limits to their agency to bring about culture change shaped, and was shaped by, planners' reluctance to commit to the ideological ethos of spatial planning. This was symbolised, in both cases, by planners' doubts about the full implications of taking on this broader role, beyond the statutory planning system. In Wokingham this was partly shaped by the failure of the move into Strategy and Partnerships to lead to a more positive policy planning agenda. In Oxford meanwhile, ongoing restructuring was seen as potentially improving planning's capacity to take on a new role, but also as a potential threat to a distinctive planning identity. The experience of working across boundaries had reinforced the belief of some planners that the rigorous statutory process required of them, and the power this afforded to actually implement planning strategies, was central to planning's claim to a distinctive role in local governance. This was contrasted to the more aspirational, and less deliverable, strategies produced elsewhere (particularly the community strategy). Thus, the planners acknowledged that a central part of their identity, and capacity to claim a more influential role, was rooted in and derived from the statutory system. Their attachments to the system were therefore marked by ambivalences, with statutory requirements imposing frustrating limits through their onerous requirements (involving large amounts of time and money even in these two well resourced locations), but also bestowing considerable legitimacy. In this context, planners' continued attachment to the statutory system must be understood as rather more than a conservative resistance to moving beyond the "regulatory rut" of land-use planning.

Performing spatial planning: new legitimizing discourses and obligatory practices

Thus, there were clear limits to planners' agency to shape either local governance or planning cultures in line with their desired roles, and this seemed to influence their willingness and ability to commit to spatial planning. However, it is important to recognise the extent to which the formal performance of spatial planning, and

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the discourses of the new system, had become central to the legitimacy of emerging spatial strategies in both case-study locations (cf. McClymont, 2006). This suggested that whilst there may be limits to the power of culture governance to generate commitment to culture change, the policy process does exercise considerable powers to shape particular performances in compliance with key governing rationalities.

This was perhaps most clearly expressed in Wokingham, where that performance had a particularly studied quality – argued almost as a proof of evidence. The speed with which the language of spatial planning – of partnership, participation, integration, and delivery – had become embedded within the official language of the profession was perhaps unsurprising. It does, however, bear testimony to the reliance of professional planners on discourse authored at the national level, suggesting the 'upward looking' orientation engendered by central government's policy guidance and the power of the requirement to be in conformity with it to be found 'sound'. It also suggests the extent to which the national level governs the local from a distance, setting the parameters of legitimate planning discourse, and the basis for the 'truth claims' planning seeks to make. This discourse was the basis for planning's claim to play a legitimate and expanding role in local governance.

In this sense local planning cultures were obliged to perform spatial planning in such a way as to outwardly manage the tensions within the concept and between its different principles – partnership, participation, sustainability, evidence-base and speed and delivery (though this was not always possible, as in both Oxford and Wokingham central tensions remained apparent even in their submission draft core strategies). The key interpretive task, and source of the agency exercised by planners in both locations, was in assessing the nature of the new system and government guidance, and finding a fit between this and local governance and planning cultures. In both locations the task of interpreting and coming to terms with the requirements of the new system had been a frustrating process, marked by fears about the fluidity of the government's agenda ("moving goalposts"), and doubts that emerging work would be considered sound. In this way the shifting requirements of the new system were felt at times to undermine the basis for a self-confident understanding or performance of spatial planning.

However, behind the official performance, planners in both locations experienced limits to their ability to make the transition to a spatial planning approach. This can be understood through analysis of the different obligations that the planners recognised as legitimately shaping their practice.

Mediating tensions: the 'in-betweenness' of local planning

The claim to be able to mediate the tensions between different obligations was acknowledged as perhaps the central plank of planners' professional 'expertise'. This is expressed in the RTPI's conception of planning as the "mediation of space", and is central to the conceptualisation of planning as a field of tensions between different obligations introduced in chapters 2 and 3. It was also accepted by planners in both case studies who admitted that they were "pulled in different directions" by different obligations, In this way the planners had apparently grown accustomed to this in-between role and were used to working within this apparently ambivalent space. In chapters 6 and 7 I identified fourteen different obligations recognised by the planners. This suggests the complexity of the field of tensions which policy planning has to manage, with different obligations produced in relation to different regimes of control each implying different patterns of change and continuity in practices. Figure 8.2 illustrates this by mapping these obligations onto the model of change introduced on p.37 above.

Professional empowered culture
1. The profession

2. Sustainable/ balanced outcomes

3. Needs of future generations/ silent majority/ disadvantaged groups

Differentiation/ Decentralisation. Public sector as partners with government in achieving change

Local empowered culture
8. The public

9. Local Partnerships

10. Elected members, esp. executive members

11. Chief Executive and service heads

12. Other colleagues, esp. DC

Continuity, order ⟵ ⟶ Innovation, change

Culture of central control
4. GOSE

5. PINS

6. PPSs/ guidance

7. Legislation/ Regulations

Centralisation/ vertical integration. public sector as delivery vehicle for government

Target culture
13. LDS Milestones/ BVPIs

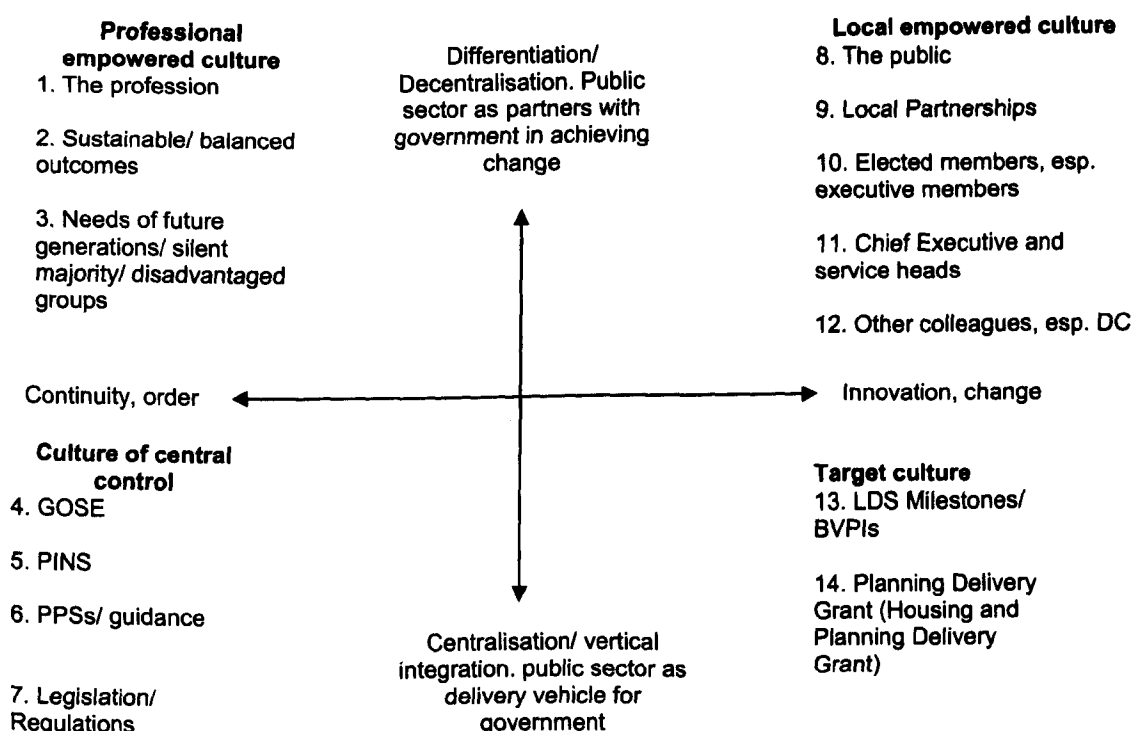14. Planning Delivery Grant (Housing and Planning Delivery Grant)

Figure 8.2 Mapping obligations onto the model of change/ field of tensions

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Many of the planners I spoke with had internalised the presence of *"inevitable"* or *"perennial"* tensions between different obligations, whilst accepting that planning could never satisfy all of the demands being made of it. As a result it was, at times, difficult to discern to what extent tensions had been exacerbated or even created by the new system, or had impacted on the task of managing this field of tensions. Although all of the planners I interviewed admitted to periodic feelings of frustration with this "in-between" role, their acceptance of it perhaps limited their ability to question the possibility of successfully managing all of the different demands being made of them.

It was apparent, however, that both sets of planners were aware of the incompatibility of certain goals within the new system, and of the strain it had placed upon them, e.g. between speed of plan making and more collaborative or evidence-based policy making; or, between central government's commitment to housing numbers and the aspirations of local governance. Certain tasks also forced the planners to confront the limits to their ability to manage contradictory obligations, or to achieve the different normative goals of spatial planning. It was in response to this that planners accused the new system of being naïve and blind to the value judgements and trade offs that characterise planning in practice.

Although this "in-between" position created frustrations and considerable tensions the planners in both locations accepted the legitimacy of the obligations they were subject to (or held accountable to). In this way it was generally accepted that planning was a question of *"satisficing"* (Simon, 1957), where it was never possible to satisfy all of the demands being made, and the planners task was to find a best available fit. The planners in both locations also accepted that the strength of *"the planning argument"* was only one "truth claim" within local governance, and that it was, at times, correctly over-ruled by the greater legitimacy of, for example, elected members, even where this was a source of frustration. Although some older planners retained a more critical attitude to the principle of central government's policy guidance and control over planning, this too was generally accepted as legitimate, even as it was experienced as either facilitating or frustrating local ambitions. As such there was little sense of a strong claim for an unmediatized planning professionalism to be granted greater autonomy. Rather the planners accepted that they were rightly held accountable to these different

obligations. In the case of some older planners this was accepted with a sense of resignation, based on the failure of a stronger model of professional autonomy to produce defensible results in the past. For most younger planners, however, this was simply the reality of the system they had always known.

Though accepted *in principle*, the legitimacy of these different obligations was, in practice, constructed in an ongoing and shifting fashion in response to particular circumstances. The patterning of planners' sympathies and frustrations, or sense of the "planning argument" (e.g. which obligations should be granted primacy in any given instance) could be detected in their discursive construction of the different claims they responded to. Thus local politicians were generally accepted as democratically legitimate voices but in certain circumstances, as for example when intervening in site allocation debates in Oxford, were constructed as narrowly self-interested to the exclusion of more sustainable policy options. This shifting construction was perhaps most notable in relation to the public whose right to be heard in the planning process was accepted as a central value, but who were also constructed in a number of different ways as, for example, a vocal and short-sighted NIMBY-minority, set against a silent majority. Similar patterns of construction were visible in relation to central government, local stakeholders and partners, the value of evidence, or the nature of sustainability.

This construction of different obligations in different contexts must be understood in at least two different ways. From the perspective of planning research it has often been related to questions of power, and the capacity of the planning process to (re)produce patterns of inclusion and exclusion (e.g. Forester, 1989; Flyvbjerg, 1998). Whilst it was clear that these constructions and appeals to particular conceptions of legitimacy were being enrolled in local political processes, planners appeared to have quite limited opportunity to shape the obligations to which they had to respond. It was therefore also clear that shifting constructions of different obligations were also used by the planners in both cases as a coping mechanism to deal with the frustrating limits of the planning argument's truth claims, a fact perhaps less widely appreciated within the planning literature.

The planners' capacity, and tendency, to shift identifications through different constructions of the obligations they faced, nonetheless, suggests something of the complexity of any effort to regulate their identities. It also suggests the difficulty

planners had in articulating any stable relationship to the different obligations they sought to mediate, and therefore the struggle they faced to negotiate a stable sense of self and professional purpose. Where the pattern of obligations and identifications was more closely aligned, as for the most part in Oxford, it was more possible for the planners to claim a sense of positive purpose and identity, however, even there this remained a fragile and fragmented construction.

Limits to culture governance

In accepting their practice as a form of obligatory action, where agency was exercised in the spaces between different obligations, the planners in both locations showed a continued commitment to a public sector ethos of neutrality, and an understanding of their roles as those of public bureaucrats, and their professionalism as a form of independent advice to political decision-makers.

They sought to assert a certain 'distance' between their personal commitment and their roles, whose 'logic of appropriate action' was determined by the obligations to which their action was held accountable. This suggests that governing planning professional cultures is possible, where culture change is understood as securing compliance with new rationalities, embedded in new logics of obligatory action. Though sometimes expressing resistance to elements of the system, or the national or local level agendas, the planners in both cases seemed generally prepared to accept this distance, and to continue to act at a distance from their personal or professional values.

Resistance to the emergence of the new planning therefore appeared to reside more in local governance and planning cultures, and in the tensions between different obligations that planners sometimes struggled to manage. This was again most clearly apparent in Wokingham, where the local governance and planning cultures were strongly resistant to the government's growth agenda, and planners struggled to produce a performance capable of managing this. In Oxford this was less of a problem, making progress easier, however in framing the core strategy, for example, the planners struggled to manage the demands that different obligations made. This suggests the importance of fully understanding the agency required to generate culture change, and the danger of assuming that failure to "deliver" constitutes wilful resistance amongst planners. Rather, the new system

has created multiple possible points of resistance, whilst not always fully acknowledging the role of local politics in mediating the planning process.

Thus, although welcoming of elements of the new agenda, the planners' caution about embracing the new ideological ethos of spatial planning seemed to stem from the way in which many of them had internalised and come to cope with the uncertain political spaces and ambivalences that their roles "made up" for them. It was therefore hard to secure their commitment to culture change, where they understood themselves in "inbetween" terms and were wary of the prospects for successfully generating the change described at the national level.

Having described the extent to which planners identified with the ideological ethos of spatial planning, and the struggle they had to manage the different obligations of practice, I now move on to consider the different types of identity work that this drew planners into as they negotiated their sense of self in relation to the complex field of obligations/ tensions in which they worked, and the different types of identity regulation that this imposed.

Negotiating professional identity

In both case studies it was apparent that the demands from different obligations within planning's field of tensions created a range of, more and less welcome, subject positions to which planners had to respond. Planners shifting constructions of these obligations were one key form of identity work, helping them to negotiate their identities in relation to these different demands. Figures 6.3 (p.178-9) and 7.3 (p.223-4) mapped the very different subject positions this created against the different identity claims made by planners in both locations.

This highlights the ways in which different obligations were negotiated by planners as they sought to make sense of their professional identities. As such it also illustrates the fractured and fragmented range of different subject positions that planners have been asked to perform within the new system. This suggests the complexity of attempts to narrate a stable sense of self in relation to these quite different requirements. It also raises questions about the burden of identity work created by the demands of the new system and the tensions between them.

Professional labour has always been marked by complexity, with the management of demands from different clients creating a multi-facetted or complex planning professional identity (Campbell and Marshall, 2001; 2005; Kitchen, 1991). Different contexts constitute different subject positions, and such complexity may therefore be manageable (e.g. public consultation work requires a quite different orientation to the defence of evidence base in an examination, but these are not necessarily mutually exclusive). However, it was clear in both case studies that at times the tensions between different subject positions blocked certain identity claims. Uncertainty around planners' identity claims meanwhile seemed endemic in both cases, as in Oxford around the examination of the AAP, where planners were unsure if their commitment to a wider interpretation of spatial planning would survive the need to conform to the government's concern for delivery.

As such the identities of planners in both cases were constituted as fragmented and unstable. Both sets of planners were required to live with the frustration of, at times, not being able to take on the identities they desired, or of responding to obligations that suggested quite contradictory subject positions. In this way planners' identities appeared post-modern, fragmented and marked by multiple fractures (cf. Bauman, 2004; Hall, 1996). This presented a challenge to planners' efforts to narrate a coherent sense of their professional selves, and of the relation between their working practices and their espoused values. In Wokingham, in particular, the planners struggled to successfully narrate any positive sense of identity, amidst a series of broken or frustrated stories. Whilst the experience in Oxford was more positive, there was still a struggle to manage tensions. The implications of embracing a spatial planning identity meanwhile suggested that the logic of pursuing a more networked mode of professionalism might pose a different threat to claims for a distinctive planning identity.

As described in chapter 2 such fragmented identity requirements have not just been linked to post-modern conceptions of identity, they have also been associated with the task of state agents charged with managing emergent forms of governance and the burden of the different demands being made of them. Newman's (2004, 2005) work with senior managers in the public sector, for example, has suggested that emerging forms of governance, overlaid on top of more traditional forms of government by New Labour, have pulled managers in

different directions, whilst also opening up spaces for the exercise of discretionary agency and the forging of particular identities.

In the case studies there was less sense that these tensions opened up any particular space for the exercise of creative agency by professional planners – though it was clear that the planning process continued to include discretionary spaces and that planners at times sought to take advantage of these, this was generally understood as the space between different obligations. Though appeals to, or even just symbolic identification with, "other" obligations was one way in which planners were able to assert a distinctive professional identity, it seemed that planners' agency was largely structured by key obligations. Where, as generally in Oxford, these were aligned so as to allow some relative autonomy this created a very different working environment than was the case in Wokingham, where key antagonisms disrupted planners' identity claims. In this sense the negotiation of planners' professional identities seems close to Stronach et al's (2002) account of the *"uncertain politics of professionalism"* amongst nurses and teachers - both subject to, and yet constituted by the different regimes to which they were accountable - yet also pulled in multiple different directions by them, and therefore struggling to narrate a coherent account of themselves.

Between espoused values and values in use: coping with "inner distance"

Within the field of obligations in which local authority policy planners are situated it is clear that espoused values are often not realised in practice. As a result of this, one of the central types of identity work engaged in by planners involved managing the distance between the values they espoused (and sought to identify with), and those they were obliged to work towards in practice (cf. Argyris and Schon, 1974; Hoggett et al, 2007). As such the management of this distance between identification and obligation can be seen as crucial to planners' capacity to cope with the fractured demands made of them.

This distance was considerably more marked in Wokingham, where the production of the core strategy was subject to high levels of mediation, and at times appeared stuck in intractable conflict. The *"short leash"* planning was on, and the struggle to make progress with the core strategy meant that the planners were conscious of a frustrating gap between their professional values, and the realities of their practice. In Oxford meanwhile the planners felt themselves to be engaged in projects that

generally worked with the grain of their professional commitments and values, creating the impression of a more value-driven practice, and where an easier "fit" between espoused values and values in use allowed a greater investment of their personal and professional selves into the process. However, even here it was clear that any such fit was imperfect, shifting and beyond the immediate control of the planners. As such the management of a certain, inevitable "distance" might be considered central to planners' capacity to negotiate their sense of professional identity.

Jessop (2000) suggests that actors in governance processes must cultivate an ironic detachment from their work, viewing failure as the most likely outcome of any attempt to govern the complexity of the social world. For Jessop (ibid, 7) this requires someone who "recognizes the likelihood of failure, but proceeds as if success were possible". Hoggett (2005) sympathises with Jessop, but is unsure that the ethical detachment that this presupposes comes easily to public officials, who he understands to be often highly committed to their work. Whilst planners in both case studies clearly accepted the presence of a certain distance between their values and practice, it was also clear that at other times they struggled to manage this distance and the frustration it could generate. In this context planners' relationship to their personal commitment to, and understanding of, professional values seemed capable of acting as a point of orientation, an external ideal that anchored their practices, providing a coherence to their narration of their professional lives as "the changing same" -a means of "coming-to-terms-with their 'routes" (Hall, 1996, 4).

The planners in both cases felt a degree of embarrassment in talking about these values, suggesting that they were remote from the day-to-day reality of work. However, it was also clear that the appeal to "the planning argument" was valued in practice, and was understood as a claim to uphold some conception of the public interest. The concept of the public interest in planning has been widely questioned (Taylor, 1994; Campbell and Marshall, 2002), and planning's professional values have been widely regarded in the literature as ideological (in the sense of providing a gloss of legitimation to processes of professional advancement) rather than a normative value system (Hague, 1984; Healey, 1985, Reade, 1987). As noted above, however, the use of such concepts as a coping mechanism has been less widely considered (though see Baum, 1996).

This is not to deny that such values can and do act in an ideological fashion, or to assert that planners' personal commitments necessarily orientate them towards ethical action. Indeed the instrumental pressures imposed on planners by the complex demands of the system arguably serve to erode the space and capacity for ethical reflection – as many of those I spoke with suggested, the interview presented a rare opportunity to reflect on practice in these terms. Rather it is to consider the perhaps missing dimension of how such external value commitments *can* function to orientate planners within the field of obligations in which they work, and as a result how they might be valued and valuable in this context. Such commitments might allow planners to retain a sense of *"inner distance"* (Wood, 2003, 155; also Newman, 2004) that potentially enables the, *"development of 'personality' as a way of being in but not of impersonal, rationalistic systems"*. As such this suggests a particular, though qualified, contribution to recent accounts that seek a more sympathetic account of professionalism in the face of the hostile pressure it has come under in recent years (Evetts, 2003; Friedson, 2001; Campbell and Marshall, 2005).

Whilst the maintenance of commitment to external, normative values may help to provide a form of ethical, and also to provide a means of coping and maintaining a coherent sense of self in the face of a complex field of obligatory action orientation (and I shall reflect further on the scope for this in the next chapter), it was also clear that planners relied on a range of other coping strategies to manage the gap between values and practice:

- A certain degree of ironic detachment was indeed detectable at times. For example, most planners withheld their judgement on the prospects for the new system and asserted the limits of their ability to influence results ("we're still only planners"). This was also central to the undercurrent of suspicion about government's "true" motives. It was also retained through appeals to a traditional 'public bureaucrat' role, and the distance this presupposes.
- Ironic detachment was also apparent in the construction of "inevitable tensions" which suggested a resignation to particular frustrations – this was noticeable in relation to planners' accusations that the new system was

naïve as it did not account for the inevitability of dissensus and messy political deliberation.

- The construction of "others", blocking particular planning identities and performances has already been referred to above as a means by which planners managed frustrations. This also functioned at times to displace responsibility for perceived failure onto others e.g. "the system", "self-interested politicians", "central government" or "NIMBYs".

- Humour was also used to manage frustrations with particular obligations, as in reference to certain unflattering stereotypes of the government, public, or local politicians, or the Wokingham planners' sweepstake (cf. Halford and Leonard, 1999).

- Planners at times placed particular emphasis on certain tasks that allowed them to adopt a desired, positive identity and to claim a successful outcome. Such moments of micro-emancipation (Alvesson and Wilmott, 2002), or the assertion of mediative agency (Gleeson and Knights, 2005) were widely referred to in interviews as offering a source of job satisfaction.

- Planners appealed to future prospects as the basis for a belief that certain frustrations/ limits may be resolved.

- Equally the appeal to the past was used to contextualise recent changes and to ground the prospects for a more holistic planning in either a positive or negative sense of its likelihood.

It is possible that these practices of "distancing" could take on a cynical tone (Spicer and Fleming, 2003; Jessop, 2000) - suggesting an uncaring detachment or mechanistic forms of compliance. This was not, however, apparent in interviews. Though most planners perhaps lacked the strength of personal, vocational commitment displayed by the regeneration workers Hoggett et al (2006, Hoggett, 2005) interviewed, it was still clear that they struggled to cope with particular dilemmas when the distance between espoused values and values in use grew uncomfortably wide. It was also apparent that the demands of the new system had, at times, stressed this capacity to cope by raising expectations of a more proactive planning that in practice remained difficult to achieve.

Where this became unmanageable, anecdotal evidence suggested that a change of jobs was a likely resort (cf. Thomas and Healey, 1991; Campbell and Marshall, 2000), or even a change of career in certain more extreme cases (and particularly

among younger entrants to the profession). It is also in this context that anecdotal accounts of large numbers of older planners seeking early retirement can perhaps be more readily understood. As I suggested in chapter 2, systemic change brings with it a considerable burden of interpretive, and identity, work, often premised on the desire to bring about new *"attitudes"* or dispositions through reform. At such moments willingness and capacity to embrace change is likely to be unevenly spread throughout any given occupational group. In the context of the new planning system that has concerned this thesis, however, it must also be asked whether the subject positions planners have been exhorted to take on are readily available, and whether the modernisation of planning has offered genuine prospects of a planning renaissance or instead imposed a near unmanageable burden on planners. It is to this, overarching question, that the thesis will turn in conclusion at the start of the final chapter.

Conclusions

This chapter has further developed the analysis emerging from chapters 5-7 of the thesis. In so doing it has used the analytical dimensions identified at the end of chapter 3 to tie together the different empirical stages, and to draw out the key reflections emerging from them. Overall, the chapter has stressed the impact of key ambivalences and tensions within the modernisation agenda for planning and their implications as they have filtered through the system and been interpreted by policy planners in the two case studies.

These tensions have been reflected in the hybrid ideological ethos of spatial planning that emerged as an attempt to manage the political antagonisms that lay behind them. For planners in the two case studies this created considerable uncertainty about what was being asked of them, and whether it could be achieved. In this context the prospects for the renewal of the planning professional project appear uncertain.

This climate of uncertainty has also been reflected in the closely related capacity to govern planning cultures. Whilst the official "performance" of planning in both case studies was governed by the need to comply with key rationalities, it was clear that there were multiple barriers to the emergence of any genuine commitment to change.

For planners this meant that they often found their identity claims blocked as desired roles proved unavailable. Moreover, they often struggled to claim a committed identity "inbetween" the multiple different, and often contradictory, obligations to which they were subject.

I now move on to conclude by returning, finally, to the point of departure from which the thesis began, and offering an answer to the overarching question the thesis set out to address. In so doing I also suggest some implications or recommendations emerging from the thesis, outline the contribution that has been made, the limitations of the work, and some possible directions for further research.

Chapter 9 Conclusions: a new planning and a new planner?

Introduction

In chapter 1 I introduced the central empirical problematic that the thesis has sought to investigate – assessing the extent to which the modernisation of planning has inculcated a new ideological ethos into planning, and whether this has produced a change in planning cultures, empowering planners to take on new professional identities.

To explore this I set the following, overarching question (see p.22 above):

Has the modernisation of planning succeeded in articulating a new ideological ethos and empowered planners to take on new positive professional identities?

In order to answer this question the thesis has investigated the framing of the modernisation agenda, and the discourse of culture change, at the national level, and the experience of being modernised/ modernising in two different local authorities in the South East of England. In particular I have focused attention on the extent to which the culture change agenda has succeeded in providing the basis for a new, empowered planning practice to emerge, and for planners to take on new identities within local planning cultures. To conclude the thesis I begin by addressing the overarching research question, I then use this answer to suggest the contribution the thesis has made, including some of the central implications/ recommendations emerging from it for planning theory and research, policy makers and practitioners. Finally, I go on to discuss the suitability of the approach adopted in the work, and to make some recommendations for further research.

The struggle for a new planning, and a new planner

By reading the reform of planning as an agenda marked by multiple ambiguities, tensions and contradictions the thesis has developed an interpretation that questions the official narrative of modernisation as a renaissance for planning. This reading opens up a more complex picture of the change implied by modernisation, and the prospects and possibilities for culture change, and the production of new professional identities for planners.

It further suggests that the profession's advocacy of spatial planning as a new ideological ethos and the basis for the renewal of the professional project has been just one claim to a modern planning, and subject to considerable political challenge at the national level. This has resulted in a series of conflicting purposes being ascribed to planning. As a result the concept of spatial planning itself has become a crucial empty signifier, charged with containing the tensions within the planning policy network. Though ambiguities of purpose have a long history in planning (e.g. Reade, 1987; Vigar et al, 2000), and are a central feature of many areas of policy (Fischer, 2003), the modernisation agenda has struggled to define a coherent ideological ethos for planning. These tensions have been visible in relation to the discourse of culture change, embedding quite different conceptions of a modern planning culture, and the modern planner into the new planning system.

This pointed towards a critical questioning of the prospects for spatial planning as an articulation of network governance, and a principle for the renewal of the professional project. It also, however, suggested that the modernisation of planning was likely to have put local authority planners under considerable pressure as they seek to manage these tensions. A key element of this has been the burden of 'identity work' created by uncertainties within the modernisation agenda, and the very different kinds of identity regulation that different discourses of reform have implied.

This indeterminacy suggested the possible opening up of opportunities to exercise interpretive agency within local planning cultures. In practice, however, it appears to have been experienced more as a struggle to interpret a coherent sense of purpose from amidst the mixed messages of modernisation. Considerable frustrations have been felt as planners have sought to claim new roles and identities but have found that these are blocked, often by different obligations embedded within the new system, and their own limited capacity to shape and influence the local governance cultures in which they are situated.

The literature recognises that culture change processes are complex and subject to multiple possible points of resistance even within a single organisation (e.g. Schein, 1992). Unsurprisingly, within the policy process this complexity is greatly

increased. The experience of change in Oxford and Wokingham bears testimony to the complexity of any effort to effect culture change in planning (cf. Shaw, 2006). It also suggests that there are clear limits to professional planners' agency to generate the change required. This suggests the need for a more sympathetic and measured response to planners' perceived failure to fulfil the normative promises of spatial planning.

The agency required to contain the possible antagonisms between central government, and the variety of local stakeholders involved in planning policy was clearly difficult to generate and sustain. Even in Oxford, where the central thrust of these agendas did seem to be generally aligned, other points of resistance ensured that it remained difficult for planners to claim the roles and identities that they sought. In Wokingham meanwhile, the power required to shift local policy discourse, even uncertainly, required influence that lay beyond the agency of the development plans team. Central tensions within the planning reform agenda meanwhile, most obviously between central control and discourses of local empowerment, were experienced as key frustrations blocking progress towards strategy production. In this context, the ability to embrace a new planning role and identity, extending beyond the regulatory function of the statutory planning system, remained at best uncertain.

Thus, although the official performance of planning in both locations had adopted the key discourses of spatial planning, and the planners themselves generally identified with these principles, the "backstage" story of attempts to realise them in practice was marked by considerable frustrations. Whilst blocked identity claims were often accepted as a normal or "inevitable" part of the field of tensions/ different obligations within which planners work, it was also clear that different goals within the new system prevented the achievement of other aspirations. The tensions between different aims within the new system therefore proved difficult to mediate in practice.

For the planners in both locations, seeking to negotiate their sense of identity in this context was an ongoing and ambiguity laden process. The need to mediate tensions between different obligations in order to negotiate a local planning identity was reflected in the range of different subject positions planners were obliged to perform. These ranged from those that matched planners' own desired identity

claims, to more unwelcome and frustrating positions that made it very difficult to lay claim to identities that could be reconciled with personal and professional value commitments. The multiple tensions between these different subject positions also resulted in an often frustrating awareness of blocked identity claims, and as a result of broken stories as planners struggled to narrate a coherent sense of themselves as good professionals practising in the public interest.

The modernisation of planning has therefore proven a complex, contested and congested process that has struggled to articulate a new ideological ethos for planning. In this context the uncertain forms of identity regulation implied by the discourses and practices of the new planning system have imposed a considerable burden of identity work on planners. The normative promises of spatial planning have, in this context, generally remained remote, however strongly planners have sought to identify with them, or been offered the chance to embrace new subject positions. Whilst this may be a work in progress, it requires a more sensitive understanding of the difficulty of remaking planning, and the limits to the emergence of a new planning practice.

Contribution of the thesis

Following on from this overarching response to the research problematic, the thesis's distinctive contribution to knowledge can be stated in three parts: at the national level; at the local level; and conceptually.

At the national level

By focusing on the framing of modernisation, the thesis has opened up a critical reading of the change implied by planning reform. This has illustrated the contested, discursive politics of planning reform, and the use of key empty signifiers, such as spatial planning, to defuse these tensions and manage the process of change. This suggests a distinctive interpretation of spatial planning as a means of managing the tensions between reform aspirations.

The result is an analysis that highlights the presence of key tensions and conflicts that question the official rhetoric of modernisation as a straightforward process of necessary change, and of spatial planning as a basis for the renewal of the planning professional project. These tensions can be traced to ambiguities that

planning has long been asked to contain and manage, and that have long marked the planning professional project. They also, however, reflect particular tensions within New Labour's Third Way approach to government, and to managing public servants.

In so doing the thesis has also focused attention on the cultural dimensions of reform, how different interpretations of the purpose of planning and the change implied by modernisation imply very different forms of culture change, and subject positions for planners. As such it has demonstrated the ways in which discourses authored at the national level seek to govern the culture of the policy network, and regulate the identities of those working within it. It also suggests, however, that the planner has been an awkward subject within the planning reform agenda, at once both an object to be modernised, and an agent of modernisation in a complex dialectic.

This suggests a need to understand how this complex and contradictory reform agenda has impacted on those charged with making it work at the local level. At the same time it problematises accounts that posit culture change as a solution to the complexity and tensions that have marked planning reform.

At the local level

This reading at the national level highlights the importance of attentiveness to the lived experience of modernisation. As such it questions the distance that appears to exist between the policy and professional communities and the rank and file of planners; the ways in which they have constructed the change required by modernisation; and the expectations of planners in practice.

Through the lens of culture and identity it was possible to explore how planners have interpreted and adapted to the new ideological ethos of spatial planning. It was also possible to trace the impacts of unresolved tensions from the national level as they interacted with local planning cultures. The result was to restate the complexity of attempts to govern change in planning cultures. The attempt to realise spatial planning in practice, meanwhile, has re-asserted the role confusion that has been central to the planning professional project. In practice, planners have struggled to take on the subject positions suggested by spatial planning, even where they have identified with them. Moreover the intensification of the

"field of tensions/ obligations" in which they work has created a considerable burden of identity work. For example, calls to "go beyond" the boundaries of the statutory system and the regulatory rut of land-use planning misrecognise the extent to which that system has become the basis of planners' claims to exercise distinctive powers, and therefore to which it creates subject positions that they are reluctant or unable to move beyond without sacrificing important elements of their influence and identity.

This suggests the need for a more attentive listening to practice stories to understand the impacts of planning reform on planners' identities and capacity to cope with the challenges and expectations of practice. It also points to a need to more explicitly recognise the tensions planners are being asked to mediate, and questions the assumption that cultural or attitudinal change is capable of resolving them.

Conceptually

Conceptually the thesis has developed the value of adopting culture and identity as an analytical lens to assess the human dimensions of change in the planning policy network. In so doing it draws inspiration from John Forester's (1999, undated) work on the importance of "*practice stories*", an approach only rarely explored in relation to planning practice in the UK. It also, however, seeks to position those practice stories in their wider context, showing how planning cultures and planners' identities are constructed in relation to the regimes of culture governance exercised in the planning policy network.

As such it contributes a distinctive addition to existing literature on the nature of planners' professional identities. This stresses that planners' identities are constituted between different discourses in the "field of tensions/ obligations" in which they work (e.g. Campbell and Marshall, 2001; Healey, 1997; Campbell and Henneberry, 2005; March, 2007). Within this context, planners are required to cope with the distance between their own professional values, and the values they are obliged to perform in practice (Argyris and Schon, 1974). The thesis has argued that the modernisation of planning has intensified the field of tensions that planners work in, and thereby created a burden of "identity work", that has emphasised the capacity to manage that distance, whilst intensifying the "in-between-ness" of planners' identities.

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This suggests the need for a more uncertain politics of planning professionalism (cf. Stronach et al, 2002), sensitive to the complex construction of planners' identities and agency in relation to the different obligations and regimes to which they are held accountable. In turn, this stresses the need for planners to be offered more support in coping with the ambivalences that this gives rise to, and in shaping a sense of professional self in the context of multiple contradictory pressures.

At this stage, having provided an answer to the overarching problematic that the thesis has investigated, and outlined the contribution made, it is therefore possible to identify certain considerations for the wider planning community, and particularly the profession.

Supporting identity work: implications for the planning profession

Whilst the thesis was not intended to generate any particular set of recommendations or conclusions for policy and practice, certain themes have stood out and are worth drawing attention to.

First of all, successfully governing planning's *professional* cultures (changing local planning cultures, or governance cultures would involve a much wider effort) requires a greater attentiveness to the burden changes authored at the national level impose on those at lower levels. In particular, a greater sensitivity to the range of different obligations/regimes of accountability to which planning has been made subject may prove beneficial. This requires an understanding of the power that these obligations carry to regulate planning cultures, and planners' identities, shaping certain subject positions and blocking others. It also entails recognition of the continued power of the statutory system to structure planners' horizons, and the need for more than mere exhortation to overcome this.

In addition, a more positive and sympathetic understanding of public sector planners as committed public servants struggling to achieve the best in difficult circumstances may produce more realistic expectations. At present there remains a tendency at the national level to describe planners as barriers to essential modernisation, lacking key skills and attitudes. Whilst this may be true at times it

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was not apparent in the case studies (though see the discussion of the limitations in approach below). This culture of criticism risks reproducing the long-standing tendency to ascribe high expectations to "the planner", and prevents debate about whether such expectations are reasonable.

The frustrations of managing the gap between rhetoric and reality led planners to cultivate a certain ironic, and even cynical distance between their practice, the values of spatial planning, and their own personal/ professional commitment to the job. This distance was, however, not always easy to manage. The salience of "distancing practices", as strategies for coping with these frustrations, was therefore marked. In the context of sustained concern about morale within the profession this suggests that a greater attentiveness to how public sector planners manage the distance between espoused values and values in use may be productive. In this context, the normative promises of spatial planning have a deeply ambiguous function. They must be considered, in part, an ideological claim to professional legitimacy that remains distant from actual (and arguably even possible) practices (cf. Hague, 1984; Reade, 1987). As such they are also the cause of considerable frustration for planners, generating a troubling distance between rhetoric and practice. They must also be considered, however, to have another possible function, acting as a normative value system, capable of guiding practice in the public interest (however problematically vague that concept must remain) (Evetts, 2003; 2006; Campbell and Marshall, 2003; 2005).

It is to the last of these possibilities that the profession should perhaps focus its energies. Wood's (2003) conception of "inner distance", for example, holds out the possibility of such an ethical orientation. In this way the normative promises of planning professionalism might also play an important role as ethical guidance, and mechanism for coping. The RTPI's (2003a) commitment to continuous professional development suggests an awareness of the need to cultivate reflective practitioners (cf. Schon, 1983). However, in reality the normative promises of spatial planning and the instrumental demands of the new system appear to have limited the appetite and potential for such spaces of ethical/ critical reflection.

By developing the ideal of spatial planning as a point of external, ethical orientation for practice, it may be possible to assist planners in developing an

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ethically concerned *"inner distance"* that can act as both a coping device and a resource for collective learning and improvement (cf. Wood, 2003). This would provide support for planners, but also explore the possibilities for creative agency that may exist between these competing obligations.

The profession's pursuit of spatial planning as a principle for renewal of the professional project has, however, perhaps resulted in a certain blindness to the experience of the rank and file of planners. Though concern about morale has been belatedly acknowledged (Fyson, 2008), more explicit attention to the expectations placed upon planners, and the reality of their capacity to cope is arguably overdue. This suggests a role for the profession in assisting planners to engage in more positive forms of identity work, creating space for ethical debate and deliberation. This could also serve as a resource for bringing the rank and file experience of planning closer to the policy and professional communities, and therefore cultivating a better capacity for policy learning and reflection within the policy network as a whole; opening up proposals to wider scrutiny and an awareness of the tensions and contradictions that are being embedded into, and passed down through, the policy process.

Such a suggestion seems remote from the intensified, instrumental demands of day-to-day survival in the contemporary public sector. As such it echoes the *"exhortative"* body of planning theory (cf. Beauregard, 2005), rather than being capable of speaking directly to planning practice. However, an insistence on such reflection, and the slowing down and making of space that it implies may be one means of insisting on the agency of public sector planners, providing them with the resources to participate in their own subjectification on more positive terms (cf. Foucault, 1982; Gibson-Graham, 2004).

Suitability of the approach

Overall, the approach taken in the thesis has been effective as a means to assess the cultural dimensions of modernisation, uncovering the often submerged politics of the planning policy network and questioning how these have impacted on planners.

Methodologically, the two-stage research design, encompassing work at both the national and local levels, has provided a means of examining public sector planning as a "*peopled process*" (cf. Peck, 2001; 2004; Jones, 2008), and as such a contested, interpretive process (Yanow, 1996; 2000). This lens therefore works to link the framing of modernisation to the lived experience of some of those planners whose practices it has targeted.

It is also, however, important to recognise that there are limitations to the analysis, that must be borne in mind when assessing the work. Indeed, certain of these are particularly significant as they point towards possible directions for further research:

- At the national level, the availability of both key actors to be interviewed and of certain key documents was limited. Though a huge amount of published material was available, and large quantities of minutes and internal debates could also be accessed on-line, there is further historical research required to construct the details of how the planning reform agenda emerged and was understood. In particular, for example the extent of the role of the Treasury remains unclear. This is, in part, an inevitable limitation of attempting to reconstruct such contemporary history.

- Access was also an issue in relation to the case studies as outlined in chapter four above. A greater degree of access, and some ethnographic work within the case study locations may have enrichened understanding of the "backstage story" in both locations. This might also have allowed closer access to specific instances of "identity work", and how planners understood and constructed the challenges they faced "in action". Abram (2003) recognises similar problems with gaining access to local planning authorities, suggesting an issue that may have wider resonance and be worthy of exploration in its own right.

- Equally, it is necessary to be aware that issues of access and trust meant that, in certain cases, it was difficult to get beyond the "official story", and that it might not always have been possible to engage with the full story. It is for this reason that the strength of the two case studies may also vary

somewhat, with the more difficult circumstances in Wokingham making planners more wary of engaging than in Oxford.

- In similar terms the sample of planners interviewed all chose to speak with me, and may therefore have represented either an unusually positive or negative set of viewpoints.

All of these issues, were, as far as possible, accounted for and mitigated within the research design. The mixture of methods adopted at the local level, (including interviews with third parties, observation of public meetings and informal contact with other planners) all suggested that the overall picture was "true" to local feeling in the cases. In addition, however, it is possible to recognise further limitations imposed by the research context, and the approach taken.

In terms of the research context, I have already discussed the issue of access. In addition, however, a further challenge was posed by the difficulty of working within a fluid and ongoing process where change has been a vital element of actors' experiences. In this sense the interviews and observations were very much still photographs, or at best short clips, taken from a much richer film. This is a particular challenge of fieldwork within the "fast policy regime" of the contemporary state (Peck, 2001).

As a result of the approach taken the material presented here represents a very small sample of the wider experience of modernisation at the local level. Wider conclusions can only be drawn from this with caution. This is a product of the research design, but suggests considerable scope for further work to provide a richer set of stories of modernisation (cf. Shaw, 2006).

In related terms the scope of the thesis is limited by its focus on policy planners in traditional local authority settings. Though chosen as those most involved with the new system at the time that the research was conducted, it is necessary to consider that planners in different contexts, faced with a different field of obligations, may have experienced modernisation in quite different terms.

Finally, the work also focuses its attention on planners' interpretations of their work and experiences, their espoused values. Though this is balanced by the

perceptions of other actors and some observation of their values in action, it means that the work is able to offer little sense of the outcomes of the new planning system. This is also a result of the fact that those outcomes remain largely unclear, and will only emerge in time. However, some further, longitudinal analysis, encompassing impressions of success and failure may, in the future, be possible and provide a further dimension to the picture outlined here.

Directions for further research

In recognising these limitations it is also possible to recognise considerable scope for further work.

The thesis was framed, in part, as a response to an acknowledged lack of accounts of how professional planners make sense of their practice in the UK (e.g. Thomas, 1998; Tewdwr-Jones, 2002; Campbell and Marshall, 2001; 2005; Healey, 2005; Shaw, 2006; Demos, 2007). As a result it has sought to explore how planners are governed as actors within the state, and their identities regulated. The two cases have presented examples of the types of identity work that planners have been drawn into as they have sought to make sense of modernisation. There is however, considerable scope for further such work to develop a richer store of such 'practice stories' (Forester, 1999; undated). The conceptual lens of identity regulation and identity work provides one potentially rich means of developing such stories, with identity work understood as a particular genre of practice story.

In particular work could productively seek to map the multiple different contexts in which professional planners now work (Thomas, 1998) and the ways in which they negotiate their professional identities within the very different fields of obligations that these imply. Such contexts might include: development control planning; private sector planning; planning in the "fuzzy spaces" of the contemporary state (cf. Allmendinger and Haughton, 2009); emerging planning cultures post-devolution in different parts of the UK; and planning in different socio-economic contexts, beyond the affluent South-East or in the context of changed economic circumstances since 2007. By "peopling" planning research in this way a richer understanding of the lived experience of planning can be developed that may have wider implications for the framing of the professional project, and the expectations

of future reform initiatives. In the context of ongoing concern for morale and image within the profession a focus on how planners' cope with the dilemmas their work generates also seems overdue.

Conclusions

The thesis set out to explore a period of considerable change for public planning, and planners. It has been a period marked by high hopes, represented by the metaphors of renaissance introduced in chapter 1. Spatial planning has emerged as an attempt to articulate a new ideological ethos on which to ground that planning renaissance.

The planner has been an awkward subject of modernisation, simultaneously cast as both subject and agent of reform. Yet the national level modernisation agenda has occurred at a considerable distance from the realities of planning practice. The thesis has investigated the ways in which modernisation, and in particular the culture change agenda, have targeted the planner and sought to regulate her identity by both problematising certain practices, and promoting others. In so doing, however, it has stressed the tensions and contradictions within the modernisation agenda, within the government, and between the different interests in the planning policy community. The new planning system has therefore been tasked with managing a range of, often contradictory, goals. These have implied different approaches to managing change, and, in turn, different subject positions for planners.

The prospects for the emergence of a new settlement, capable of supporting a more empowered role for planners therefore remain uncertain. The case studies suggest that the impact of change is likely to be highly uneven. They also, however, suggest certain commonalities of experience that point towards the difficulty of realising spatial planning in practice; the limits to planners' agency within local planning cultures; and the struggle that planners have experienced as they navigate the multiple different obligations to which they are subject. These have pushed and pulled planners in different directions, imposing a considerable burden of identity work. The result is an uncertain politics of professionalism and an uncertain identity, negotiated in-between the shifting obligations of practice.

Overall then, the thesis suggests the need for a greater sensitivity within the planning policy, professional and academic communities to the experience of the rank and file of planners. This would help to sensitize the policy network to some of the tensions and contradictions planners are being asked to manage, and to question the recurring expectation that a new planning would emerge if only planners would embrace change.

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