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REGIONAL PLANNING IN THE WEST MIDLANDS REGION - a political-organisational perspective

by

MÁRIO RUI MARTINS

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MÁRIO RUI MARTINS

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The idea of writing this thesis came from a conversation he'd had with Dauber. Dauber had said: 'Your forecasts and appraisals are coming quite strikingly true. How do you do it?' 'It's very simple,' replied Schizophrenic. 'All you have to do is to forecast what is forecastable, and to evaluate things which there is some sense in evaluating.' 'But how do you distinguish the predictable from the unpredictable and the assessable from the unassessable?' asked Dauber. 'I have my own theory for that,' said Schizophrenic. 'Tell me,' Dauber said. 'I'll try,' said Schizophrenic, 'but I warn you that it's a long way from being scientific theory.' 'Not to worry,' said Dauber, 'as long as it's true.'

ALEXANDER ZINOVIEV, in
'THE YAWNING HEIGHTS', p20

SYNOPSIS

This thesis seeks to explore the practice of regional planning in England in recent decades. This form of planning is here defined to mean the management of change at the intraregional level, which is achieved by the public sector through the allocation of resources, the shaping of the physical environment and the influencing of economic and social activity. Regional planning is generally seen as an arm of the Town and Country Planning System although in practice its sphere of influence is much wider. Regional planning presents particularly interesting theoretical and practical problems because the political-admnistrative structure is fragmented at this level with no one single democratic authority with powers to produce and implement policy. Regional planning is, therefore, more than any other form of spatial planning, concerned with the problems of inter-organisational relations. These relations, however, can only be adequately understood with the help of a political dimension of analysis.

Given this perspective this thesis revolves around two major issues. In the first place, the interpretation of the changing fortunes of regional planning in England in recent years, more specifically during the period from the mid 1960s to the early 1980s. This issue is analysed with the help of a detailed case-study of regional planning in the West Midlands region. Secondly, the thesis critically assesses the existing organisational approaches to regional planning in England, and formulates a political-organisational framework for the analysis of regional planning practice. In dealing with these issues a number of more general questions is also considered, namely: the role of the state in modern societies, the relations between state, space and society; and the sociology of organisations and inter-organisational relations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The arguments which are presented in what follows are the outcome of research which has occupied me for the last three years. During this period my feelings about the practical usefulness of the research, and of its subject matter, has gone through several phases. To a certain extent this reflected the mood of the times and the fact that regional planning in England appears to come into and out of fashion in a cyclical way. Bearing in mind that, at the time these remarks are being written, there is an upsurge of interest about regional planning, regional policy and regional admnistration it is, certainly, worth emphasising that it is not the intention of this thesis to make a case for regional planning; certainly in the form it was carried out in the past.

This study was a long time in the writing and the list of people and institutions to which I am indebted is even longer. Abílio Cardoso and Mike Geddes read an early version of chapter I.2. and made several helpful suggestions. David Miller provided me with a sea of information about regional planning developments in the West Midlands region in recent years; he also made several helpful comments on an early version of Part II of the study. Mr. David Routh, Regional Director of the D.O.E. West Midlands regional office, kindly granted access to a number of W.M.E.P.C. files. Although that access was given under the constraints of the Official Secrets Act, the insights into decision-making processes contained in those files proved most helpful. In this respect I must also express my personal gratitude to those individuals (listed in Appendix E) who gave up some hours of their precious time, to discuss problems of which they were very familiar, with someone who was trying to come to grips with issues which, probably, seemed to them obvious.

I am particularly grateful to Mrs. Barbara M. D. Smith who read most of the manuscript, and constantly reminded me of my difficulty in coming to terms with the specificity of some West Midlands situations. She granted me free access to her seemingly endless personal knowledge of the West Midlands planning problems and, most important, always did that with an understanding smile.

As for my financial indebteness I am glad to acknowledge the generous award of grants from the Commissão Permanente INVOTAN Portuguesa and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, for the years 1979-81 and 1979-82 respectively, which facilitated my stay in England during that time. Professor Valente de Oliveira, at the University of Oporto, gave me the necessary departmental support throughout the period of preparation of this thesis. I am also grateful to Mr. Manuel Guimarães and Mrs. A. Alte da Veiga for their help with the drawings and typing respectively.

To my supervisor John Mawson I owe the sort of debt that cannot be easily calculated. He listened endlessely to my ideas and problems, and read every page of the manuscript with care - many of them more than once. Further, he had to put up with the trouble of deciphering, and often correcting, manuscripts which were written in a most dreadful English. It will have to be sufficient for me to say that without him this thesis would, probably, never been finished. The errors that remain are, needless to say, all my own work.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AG - Administration Group
ACC - Association of County Councils
ADC - Association of District Councils
AMA - Association of Metropolitan Authorities
BOC - Birmingham Overspill Committee
BOT - Board of Trade
BL - British Leyland
BSC - British Steel Corporation
CHD - Central Government Department
CPRS - Central Policy Review Staff
CURS - Centre for Urban and Regional Studies
CBI - Confederation of British Industry
CSE - Conference of Socialist Economists
CPRE - Council for the Protection of Rural England
CBC - County Borough Council
CC - County Council
DEA - Department of Economic Affairs
DI - Department of Industry
DOE - Department of Environment
EEC - European Economic Community
EPB - Economic Plannning Board
EPBIU - Economic Planning Board Intelligence Unit
EPC - Economic Planning Council
EIP - Examination in Public
GB - Great Britain
GDP - Gross Domestic Product
HIP - Housing Investment Programme
IDC - Industrial Development Certificate
IMF - International Monetary Fund
INLOGOV- Institute of Local Government Studies
IOR - Institute for Operational Research
IRC - Industrial Reorganisation Corporation
LA - Local Authorities
LG - Local Government
JMSG - Joint Monitoring Steering Group
JTWG - Joint Technical Working Group
MP - Member of Parliament

MBC - Metropolitan Borough Council
MSC - Manpower Services Commission
MNTS - Midlands New Towns Society
MAFF - Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food
MHLG - Ministry of Housing and Local Government
MTCP - Ministry of Town and Country Planning
NEDC - National Economic Development Council
NEDO - National Economic Development Office
NEC - National Exhibition Centre
NRST - Northern Region Strategy Team
NWJPT - North-West Joint Planning Team
OPCS - Office of Population Census and Surveys
OSG - Officers Steering Group
PAG - Planning Advisory Group
QUANGO - Quasi-autonomous National Governmental Organisation
RSA - Regional Studies Association
RWA - Regional Water Authority
RIBA - Royal Institute of British Architects
RICS - Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors
RTPI - Royal Town Planning Institute
STWA - Severn Trent Water Authority
SEEPC - South-East Economic Planning Council
SEJPT - South-East Joint Planning Team
SCLSERP - Standing Conference on London and South-East Regional Planning
SP - Structure Plan
TOP - Technical Officers Panel
TCPA - Town and Country Planning Association
TDS - Town Development Scheme
TUC - Trades Union Congress
TPP - Transport Policy and Programmes
WMCC - West Midlands County Council
WMEPC - West Midlands Economic Planning Council
WMG - West Midlands Group on Post War Reconstruction and Planning
WMPAC - West Midlands Planning Authority Conference
WMRS - West Midlands Regional Study

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

A Statement of Objectives

A striking feature of regional planning in England is that it seems to be the subject of a periodic force. During certain periods regional planning increases in importance and its place among the existing public planning systems appears to be a pre-eminent one. These periods, however, are followed by others during which regional planning almost formally disappears from the field of public planning.

Currently regional planning is going through one period of the latter type or, as Prof. Peter Self puts it:

> *Once upon a time, not so long ago, regional planning was almost a cult term ... Today regional planning is in the doldrums, and to many people (if they think about it at all) it appears as an obscure ritual or administrative luxury*
>
> (Self, 1980, p. 209)

How can this change in fortunes of regional planning be interpreted ? Is it a mere reflection of the substitution of a Conservative government for a Labour one? Has there been a marked decline in the number of those voicing the case for regional planning? The answer to these questions must be in the negative. On the one hand the short-term prospects of regional planning in England became bleak while the previous Labour government was still in power (Manners, 1982; Young, 1982). On the other hand there has been no noticeable desertions among those who have traditionally presented the case for regional planning (Blowers, 1980; Diamond, 1980; Manners, 1982; Self, 1980; Thorburn, 1980; TCPA, 1980). An interpretation of the recent downturn in the fortunes of regional planning needs therefore to look beyond these more obvious elements. Further, it is important to bear in mind that regional planning seems to go in and out of fashion with some regularity in the English case.

Given this perspective this thesis has two major objectives. In the

first place it aims to provide an interpretation of the changing fortunes of regional planning in England in recent years, more specifically during the period from the mid 1960's to the early 1980's. This will be undertaken with the help of a detailed case-study of regional planning in the West Midlands region. Secondly, the thesis is concerned to critically appraise the existing organisational approaches to regional planning in England, and to formulate a political-organisational framework for the analysis of regional planning practice.

In undertaking these tasks it is necessary to take into account a number of more general theoretical problems concerning: the role of the state in modern societies; the relations between state, space and society; and the sociology of organisations and inter-organisational relations. While in a few cases the discussion of these problems threatens to shift the direction of the argument away from its main concerns - the field of regional planning - its inclusion in the main body of the thesis is intended to enrich the more specific arguments.

In the following pages, the main objectives of the thesis are discussed in greater detail and a summary of the overall argument is also provided. The research methodology is outlined in Appendix A.

The interpretation of the changing fortunes of regional planning

The lack of continuity of regional planning in England reflects, in part at least, the fact that, to use the words of an experienced practitioner, *"regional planning has happened in this country more by accident than by intent"*[1].

The contingent nature of regional planning in England is best appreciated by taking into account two elements. Firstly, unlike other forms of public planning, regional planning has never had a statutory basis. Thus, the public executive agencies (local authorities, central government departments,

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(1) - Interview with Mr. Alfred Wood, 12 January 1981

etc.) let alone the private sector, have never been under a statutory obligation to comply with, for example, reccommendations made in regional plans. Secondly, the government structure in England is fragmented at the regional level, with no one single representative authority with responsibilities for producing and implementing policy. This fragmentation of government at the regional level meant, for example, that the follow-up to reccommendations made in regional plans often depended on the consent of those actors and agencies whose behaviour was to be guided by the reccommendations.

Although there is a good deal to be said in its favour, explaining the lack of continuity of regional planning in England in terms of the contingent nature of the activity is, somewhat, tautological. What is necessary to explain is why regional planning has never overcome its contingent nature. In this respect it seems fair to interpret the lack of continuity of regional planning in England as a result of the failure of the activity to live up to the expectations of those actors who could guarentee the continuity of the activity. It is, therefore, important to briefly consider the raison d'être of this situation.

Writing about the concerns of professional planners in the mid 1960's, Waterston (1965) suggested that these appeared to be divided into two main groups: one tending to believe that better planning depended on further improvements to the existing planning instruments; the other tending to feel that the shortcoming of the planning activity reflected the inadequacies of the administrative and political environment within which the activity was carried out. If this dichotomic scheme was now used to classify the views of British planners and academics on the shortcoming of regional planning in England, in recent years, an overwhelming majority would, most probably, opt for the second alternative (e.g. Alden and Morgan, 1974; Cherry, 1980; Glasson, 1978; Self, 1975; Senior, 1974; Stevens, 1976; Wood, 1977).

However, as Thorburn (1980) suggests, this perspective tends to lead to a circular argument. On the one hand it holds that the structure of government

makes it impossible to develop regional planning. On the other hand, planners and academics alike often fail to explain how regional planning would bring benefit if that structure was alterated to permit it. In these circunstances the case for regional planning tends to be argued for on tautological grounds, and the relations between regional planning structures and practice are transformed into 'chicken and egg' type of problems.

The persistent failure of regional planning to live up to expectations is, undoubtly, linked with the weaknesses of the political-administrative machinery in which it has been carried out. But it would be totally wrong not to mention the inadequacy of the procedural doctrines on which it has been based (Hart, Skelcher and Wedgwood-Oppenheim, 1976) and the dubious validity of its philosophical and political foundations (Gillingwater, 1975; Gillingwater and Hart, 1977). More important, perhaps, there has never been real agreement on the content and purpose of regional planning (Waide, 1974) and, linked with this, different actors have had different expectations concerning regional planning (Carter, Friend, Pollard and Yewlett, 1975). The theoretical, institutional and political aspects of regional planning are closely interrelated and should, therefore, not be analysed in isolation from each other. There is, nevertheless, a need to select a starting point for the analysis of the interrelations of the various aspects of regional planning. As much of the blame for the shortcomings of regional planning is attributed to its institutional context, and arrangements, it seems justifiable to explore those interrelations using as a starting point for discussion, analyses and comments which originated in concerns over the institutional dimension of regional planning.

From this perspective much attention has been focussed on two issues:

a) the analysis of the existing institutional framework, assessing its impact on the formulation and 'implementation' of regional planning reccommendations;

b) The consideration of more adequate administrative and political arrangements to carry out regional planning.

Let us briefly consider these two issues in turn.

As noted earlier regional planning has never been covered by statutory powers during the period of analysis; nor has there existed, at the regional level, an integrated locus of political administration. The multiplicity of agencies responsible for taking actions concerning regional planning matters is reckoned by many authors to have been the major single hindrance to the follow-up into practice of regional planning reccommendations.[2]

More important, perhaps, than the number of agencies involved in regional planning is the distribution of responsibilities between them, in relation to the type of issues tackled by regional planning. This issue constituted the object of a detailed study undertaken by Smith (1972), with particular reference to the West Midlands region. The study started by identifying the various agencies intervening in the regional planning activity, their functional responsibilities and the instruments they commanded in order to discharge their responsibilities. Then, it followed on to point out the various elements impeding , or favouring, the follow-up of reccommendations made in the regional plans. In relation to those elements considered to have harmed the implementation of reccommendations, the study moved on to investigate whether these resulted from the misuse, or failure to use, existing instruments, and the extent to which individual agencies or actors could be blamed for the fact. The use of this methodology allowed Smith (1972) to assess the overall impact of the formal distribution of functional responsibilities, and instruments, among the various agencies upon regional planning practice.

Further to this important, but somewhat dated, assessment of the impact upon the activity of its institutional context, the organisational arrangements for regional planning have been analysed by a number of authors. The complexity of the arrangements, and institutional context, has been discussed

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(2) See, for example, Alden and Morgan (1974), pp. 313-5; Gillingwater (1975), p. 157; Glasson (1978), p. 300; Stevens (1976), p. 53-55; Wright and Young (1975), p. 243.

in some detail by authors such as Alden and Morgan (1974) and Glasson (1978); the analysis of the role played by specific organisations has been made by Clements (1971), Hall (1977), Skelcher (1979), Storer (1971), Young (1982) and others.

In a number of studies, however, the shortcomings of the existing institutional context, and specific arrangements, have been taken for granted, and attention has focussed on designing alternative and, hopefully, more adequate ones. Thus, the discussion of the institutional aspects of regional planning has often been associated with debates concerning regionalisation, that is to say, concerning the structure and the functions of a regional level of political administration. (Kalk, 1971; Lindley, 1982). In these discussions some commentators have favoured action through stronger and more cohesive arms of central government in the regions (e.g. Donnison, 1974; Cherry, 1980; Stevens, 1976); others have thrown their weight behind the creation of elected executive regional authorities, with various degrees of devolved deliberative and executive powers (e.g. Allan, 1974; Blowers, 1980; Self, 1975; Senior, 1974; Watson, 1975). Interestingly enough, none seemed to favour the inter-agency machinery for regional planning which provided the basis for regional planning practice during most of the period under investigation.

From juridical-administrative to a political-organisation approach

Until the early-mid 1970's discussions concerning the institutional dimension of regional planning were dominated by juridical-administrative approaches. By this is meant approaches that tend to concentrate on the formal aspects of intra and inter-agencies relationships (e.g. formal dsitribution of functional responsibilities and hiererchical relations of command) to the detriment of the informal relations of influence and exchange. The search for the best institutional framework for regional planning often assumed, that the existance of hiererchical command structures would be enough to secure, in the case of conflit; the compliance of the lower levels to the upper levels of the hiererchical pyramid, or to impose effective co-ordination mechanisms.

Associated with this perspective was the idea that the formulation, and follow-up, of regional planning reccommendations was made in accordance with the rational model of decision-making. Thus, in 1972 a DOE publication, setting up guidelines for regional plan preparation, described the process as a sequence of the following stages: Preparatory Stage (Issues Report); Survey and Initial Analysis; Generation of Alternative Strategies; Testing of Alternatives; Evaluation; Selection of Preferred Strategy; Monitoring, Implementation, Research and Review (DOE, 1972).

By the mid 1970's especially after the publication of the seminal work of Friend, Power and Yewlett (1974), this type of approach came under increasing criticism, for two reasons. Firstly, the analysis of the processes through which regional planning reccommendations were formulated, revealed that to any network of formal relations was always attached a network of informal ones which did not, exactly, replicate the former. Given this situation, hiererchical controls could be by-passed by passive disobedience or control over information; and co-ordinating mechanisms, to be effective, depended on the willingness of the different actors to be co-ordinated. Secondly, the methodological framework based on the rational model of decision-making, increasingly appeared to be at odds with an institutional context in which inter-organisational bargainning and exchange seemed to be in the same scale of importance as hiererchical command relations, in the selection of issues to be tackled and the form and contents of the outputs of the activity. The concept of implementation itself appeared inappropriate, when used in relation to recommendations made in regional plans. These recommendations often were phrased in vague terms and addressed at a multiplicity of executive agencies, for whom the recommendations constituted only one of many inputs to be considered in the decision-making (Hart, 1978).

Once it became clear that the institutional context of regional planning could not be treated as a problem of hiererchical ordering, and that the planning process was far from following the rational model of decision-making, a new type of approach was required. Thus, from the mid 1970's onwards, most of

the interesting studies dealing with regional planning from an institutional perspective adopted concepts and constructs derived from the broad field of organisational, and inter-organisational, analysis. Most of these studies originated from research projects sponsored by the DOE and commissioned to researchers at the Institute for Local Government Studies (INLOGOV) and Institute for Operational Research (IOR) in the period 1974 - 1979.[3] Because all the research projects were carried out by a limited number of academics and followed in sequence, they shared a number of theoretical and methodological assumptions, and gave rise to conclusions consistent with each other.

However, as the discussion in Part III of this thesis shows some of the assumptions adopted in those studies were fundamentally unsound. Given this fact the studies do not provide a well-grounded framework upon which the interpretation of the changing fortunes of regional planning might be based. In order to develop such an interpretation it is, therefore, necessary to formulate an alternative framework for analysis.

The interpretation of the changing fortunes of regional planning in England from an institutional perspective and the development of a political-organisational framework for the analysis of regional planning practice constitute, as noted earlier, the two major objectives of this thesis.

Summary of the argument

The actual structure of the argument, chapter by chapter, is outlined below.

(3) The various research projects are reported by Wedgwood-Oppenheim, Hart and Cobley (1975); Carter, Friend, Power and Yewlett (1975); Hart, Skelcher and Wedgwood-Oppenheim (1976); Friend, Carter and Norris (1978) and Hart, Hickling, Norris and Skelcher (1980) respectively. Extra material based on those reports include Hart, Skelcher and Wedgwood-Oppenheim (1978) and Skelcher (1979, 1982)

PART I - THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Regional planning is a form of state activity directly concerned with geographical space. However it is concerned with geographic space not as an end in itself but simply as a means to reach the social totality. State, and social totality form, therefore, a trilogy whose interrelations it is necessary to theorise prior to any analysis of regional planning. Part I of the study is concerned with this question.

To begin with Chapter I.1 presents an outline of alternative theoretical approaches to the state in modern societies, discusses their pros and cons and, finally, provides an alternative perspective on the problems concerned. The conceptualisation of the relations between state and civil society is singled out as the fundamental variable in differentiating between the various approaches. After analysing different theoretical approaches to these relations the discussion moves on to the formulation of an alternative perspective, based on a dialectic understanding of the relations between state and civil society. The relations between state and civil society have an important spatial dimension and this aspect of the relations is considered in the following chapter of the study.

In fact, Chapter I.2 deals with the interdependences between the spatial organisation of society and state structures and action. After critically reviewing the various forms of conceptualising the role of geographical space in the development of social and political processes the argument moves on to introduce the concept of territory as a basis of social power. In the process of discussion the role played by the modern state in the 'invention', organisation and mental representation of the national territory is emphasised. The point is also made that the state is, itself, structured in territorial terms, and that there are in England two main levels of political-administration. Finally, it is argued that it is in the existance of these two levels that can be found the origins of two types of political conflict. These are identified as localist and central-local territorial conflicts.

Bearing in mind the contents of the two previous sections, Chapter I.3

has two main objectives. In the first place, it aims to present the broad contours of the framework for the analysis of regional planning adopted in this study. For this purpose regional planning is defined as a form of public planning which cuts across, and overlaps with, various policy sectors and the two major levels of political administration in England. The second objective to which this chapter is directed, is to confront theoretical arguments developed in the two previous chapters with the way in which the relations between space, society and state action are dealt with in most regional planning literature. In the light of arguments previously developed, it is argued that the theoretical assumptions built into much of that literature represent a major analytical handicap. Overall this chapter provides the link with the more concrete arguments presented in the following part of the study.

PART II - REGIONAL PLANNING IN THE WEST MIDLANDS REGION

The principal objective of Part II of the thesis is to analyse regional planning developments in the West Midlands in the period from 1964 onwards; with particular emphasis being laid on its political and organisational aspects. While a detailed review of the period until the mid 1960's is provided in Appendix B a short account of events in this period is presented in the Introduction to Part II, in order to set the scene for subsequent chapters.

Against the backcloth provided in the Introduction, Chapter II.1 deals with regional planning developments in the second half of the 1960's. During this period much planning attention was focussed on the high rates of population growth suggested by forecasts and on the problems likely to occur if the projections proved to be correct. Two regional planning documents, the West Midlands - a Regional Study (DEA, 1965) and Patterns of Growth (WMEPC, 1967), were published during this period, but it is apparent that they had little effect on regional planning operational decisions, which were taken in a piece-meal fashion. By the end of the period local authorities in the region decided to call a halt to this state of affairs and to prepare a comprehensive regional

strategy for the region.

Chapter II.2 covers, exactly, the planning developments in the period during which the regional strategy was prepared and which lasted from the late 1960's to the mid 1970's. In the West Midlands this period was marked by the multiplication of often contradictory planning initiatives at the regional, sub--regional and local levels; and by a sucession of misunderstandings, and conflicts, between the main bodies involved in the planning of the region. In 1971 the W.M.P.A.C. published a gloomy Economic Appraisal (WMEPC, 1971) of the region's economic prospects; a document which met with a cold reception both in the region and in Whitehall. In sharp contrast with the WMEPC document, A Developing Strategy for the West Midlands (WMRS, 1971), prepared on behalf of the standing conference of local authorities in the region, was based on optimistic forecasts concerning the region's future growth. After a long period of negociations, the latter document was endorsed by central government to act as a framework for planning developments in the years ahead.

In the event dramatic changes in the overall context in which A Developing Strategy had been produced led to the updating of the strategy earlier than expected. Further, the characteristics of the changes were such that they tended to exacerbate the divergences of opinion existing between the principal participants in the process of regional planning, concerning the problems affecting the region and the best way to tackle them. Chapter II.3 analyses the process of Updating and Rolling Forward of the West Midlands Regional Strategy (JMSG, 1979). and looks at the policy and organisational consequences of the conflicts which developed during that process.

The brief concluding remarks that complete this Part of the thesis attempt to provide a synoptic view of regional planning developments in the West Midlands region in the period from the mid 1960's onwards, emphasising the importance of political and organisational elements in the process. This is the theme developed in more general terms, in Part III of the study.

PART III - REGIONNAL PLANNING AND ORGANISATIONAL ANALYSIS

This Part of the thesis has two major objectives. First of all, it aims to critically assess the rationale and broad conclusions of 'conventional' organisational approaches to regional planning. Secondly, it seeks to identify the basis on which an adequate alternative (political-organisational) to those approaches can be established. As byproducts of these tasks the text deals with alternative ways to conceptualise the operation of the state administrative apparatus and presents a critique of the theoretical, methodological and practical shortcomings of conventional organisational, and inter-organisational analysis.

The mechanisms through which the state operates determine, in part at least, what problems are handled, what type of policies are put forward to tackle them and what chances these policies have of being implemented. Given this fact a clear understanding of the mechanisms through which the English political-administrative machinery operates is of crucial importance for the study of regional planning in this country. After briefly presenting Weber's ideal-type of bureaucracy, Chapter III.1 argues that the empirical discovery of the existence of bureaucratic dysfunctions within the political-administrative apparatus, suggested the need to analyse the operation of that machinery with the help of concepts and theories developed in the field of inter-organisational analysis.

The most influential study of regional planning in England from an inter-organisational perspective is due to Friend et.al. (1974). Although that study was not specifically concerned with regional planning, but rather with public planning in general, its theoretical assumptions and conclusions were to significantly influence a whole series of research studies which adopted an inter-organisational approach to regional planning problems. Most of these research studies were part of an extensive research programme on regional planning sponsored by the Department of Enviroment (D.O.E.) during the second half of the 1970's. In Chapter III.2 a detailed analysis is presented of both

the work of Friend et.al. (1974) and of the D.O.E. sponsored research studies.

Chapter III.3 builds on the specific criticisms presented in the previous chapter in order to develop a critique of 'conventional' inter-organisational approaches to regional planning in particular, and 'conventional' organisational analysis in general. This critique comprises three broad dimensions: theoretical, methodological and practical.

Finally, Chapter III.4 establishes the basis of a critical alternative (political-organisational) to the inter-organisational approach to regional planning. This task is undertaken in three consecutive stages: first, the points of criticism levelled at conventional inter-organisational approaches to regional planning are briefly summarised; second, the methodological, theoretical and practical concerns which must preside over an adequate approach are outlined; third, a description is made of the attempt made by Benson (1980) to develop an analytical framework for the comparative study of policy sectors. The presentation of this analytical framework provides the link with the last major part of the study, described below.

PART IV - A POLITICAL-ORGANISATIONAL APPROACH TO REGIONAL PLANNING

This Part of the thesis builds on arguments and conclusions from earlier chapters of the study in order to develop an analytical framework for the study of regional planning. Further, the usefulness of that framework is tested by using it to analyse political and organisational aspects of regional planning in England, especially in the case study region of the West Midlands.

With these objectives in mind Chapter IV.1 opens with a discussion on how regional planning can be characterised in the context of various policy sectors operated by the state. After clarifying this point, the remainder of the chapter is used to present the main elements of a political-organisational framework for the study of regional planning. In the course of the discussion two alternative methods for the study of regional planning practice are identified and an assessment is made of their pros and cons.

In the sequence, Chapter IV.2 initiates the process of detailing, and putting into practice, the analytical framework presented in the previous chapter. Regional planning is characterised as an activity involving, and resulting from, the interaction of a large number of state organisations. After identifying the various types of state organisations involved in regional planning, the analysis moves on to consider their interrelationships, insofar as these concern regional planning practice. Finally, various aspects of the changing institutional context of regional planning in recent years are analysed.

The discussion moves then, to a more specific level and Chapter IV.3 is concerned with the administrative strutures of regional planning in England during the period 1964 - 1980. These structures are considered in two stages: first, the different organisational arragements used during the 1960's to produce regional plans are analysed; second, the tripartite model of regional strategic planning employed in most English regions during the 1970's is considered in some detail.

The next section, Chapter IV.4 shifts the discussion to the political level and provides a preliminary assessment of the role played by different actors in thespecification of regional planning outputs. In order to carry out such a task a detailed classificatory scheme of actors in regional planning is developed; and the point is made that, the role those actors play in regional planning can only be properly evaluated through the consideration of the specific action orientations they adopt vis-à-vis the activity.

Finally, Chapter IV.5 looks at the political dimension of regional planning from a different perspective, that is, through the consideration of various types of power relations and constraints which determine the characteristics of regional planning outputs. Examples from regional planning in the West Midlands are used to illustrate the discussion, which concludes with brief synopsis of the major analytical findings concerning the political dimension of regional planning. This brings the main body of the study to its final section.

CONCLUSION

The concluding chapter of the thesis is used for two different purposes: first, to relate the principal analytical findings of the thesis with the research objectives stated in the Introduction to the study; second, to briefly assess the prospects for regional planning in England.

PART I

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

Regional planning is a form of state activity directly concerned with the spatial 'ordering' of social activities and facilities. Given this fact it would be helpful if regional planning texts clarified the way in whith they conceptualise the relations between state space and society.

Unfortunately most texts dealing with regional planning are strangely silent about the underlying assumptions and theories of the analysis. Thus, a full interpretation of the texts requires a double effort of considering both explicit and implicit elements. However, when this task is undertaken one is bound to agree with Professor Chadwick's statement that:

> *the conceptual basis of regional planning is the Achilles heel of pretty well every book which attempts the subject ... Time would be more fruitfully spent on improving the conceptual basis of regional planning than on refining some esoteric aspects of regional science*
>
> (Chadwick, 1975, p. 332)

Given this perspective it seems that it is necessary not only to make plain the background assumptions and theories adopted in any analysis of regional planning but, also, to develop alternatives to the assumptions and theories which are implicit in most regional planning texts. Part I of this thesis is concerned with precisely these issues.

Chapter I.1. opens with a discussion of various theoretical approaches to the state in modern societies. Bearing in mind the conclusions of this discussion the thesis moves on to the development of an alternative theoretical approach, based on a dialectic understanding of the relations between state and civil society.

The same method of presentation of the argument is adopted in Chapter I.2., which deals with the relations between state (structures and action) and the spatial organisation of societies. In the sequence of a critical review of various theoretical approaches to the relations between space, state and society

a number of concepts required for a proper analysis of those relations is introduced. Finally, these concepts are used to show the importance of the spatial characteristics of the political - admnistrative machinery in the development of certain types of political conflict (localist and central-local territorial conflicts).

The last chapter of this Part of the thesis, Chapter I.3., has two main objectives. First of all, it aims to introduce the broad features of the analytical framework used in the thesis to study regional planning. For this purpose, regional planning is defined by means of a number of procedural and substantive characteristics. The second objective which is sought in this chapter is to critically assess, in the light of the arguments presented in the two previous chapters, the way in which most regional planning texts deal with the relations between space, state and society.

I.1. THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO THE STATE IN MODERN SOCIETIES

The conceptualisation of the modern state in most political thought can be assessed with the help of a dichotomic theoretical classification.[1] At one extreme, the state is thought of as a Subject, with an independent existence and operational autonomy, separated from the rest of the society. At the other extreme, the state is conceptualised as a Thing totally determined by an element (for example, an élite, dominant class) or by the social structure as a whole.[2]

Though starting from very different assumptions and leading to antagonistic political conclusions, these two approaches have one element in common. They both understand state and society as two distinct phenomena maintaining 'relations of externality' (Poulantzas, 1974). As a result of this fact, they also share an inability to take account of different forms assumed by the state, the existence of conflicts within the state and the contradictory totality of state action.

However, it would be incorrect to suggest uniformity in the way different authors, within the same stream of intellectual thought, present their analysis. Considerable discrepancies exist and each current has evolved to cope with previous criticisms. In the following, and oversimplified presentation of the two streams of thought, the relations between state and civil society occupy the core of the analysis. But, as different conceptualisations of these relations generally involve distinct visions of the interdependencies between state and economy, social conflicts and the actions of the state, etc., an

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(1) - The expressions modern state and the state in modern societies are used here to refer to the liberal representative forms of the state in the advanced industrial societies where the capitalist mode of production is dominant.

(2) - By social structure it is meant, here, the whole set of more or less solidified and continuing social relations (economic, political, ideological) specific to a society during a given period of time.

account of the various approaches using the relations between state and civil society as the only discriminant variable would certainly be misleading. Further, as Mingione (1977) justly remarks, the analysis of these relations can be conducted at various levels, ranging from general theoretical and methodological approaches to concrete analysis of specific relations during a limited historical period. The text attempts to cope with these issues by progressively introducing more specific analytical elements. However, it is quite clear that the presentation has a somewhat cryptic style and often takes for granted the knowledge of concepts and arguments which may be not vox populi. Concern with brevity is the basis of this choice, even if it is accepted that what is out of sight sometimes can be out of mind.

I. 1. 1. THE STATE AS A SUBJECT - FROM THE JURIDICAL-POLITICAL TO SOCIAL-EUDAEMONIC LEGITIMATION

The idea of the state as a subject has its origins rooted in the eighteenth and nineteenth century developments of juridical and political thought and its maturity associated with the writings of Hegel and the positivist approach to law.

For Hegel, the state, as incarnated in the political society was the supreme form of Ideas, of Reason. Located above the civil society, its main task was securing the unity of the individual and the universal, the synthesis of the public and the private wills. The other institutions in society are not conflict free: individuals have rights, so do families and other social groups. There is an objective social moral (habits, traditions) and a subjective moral of the individual. Adding to this, individuals have interests and needs which are often conflictual. Without the state, the civil society - named by Hegel in opposition to the political society (State) - wounded by multiple conflicts would inevitably, in the end, disintegrate. The state represents the totality of

society at a higher level which is simultaneously a superior form of Freedom.[3]

Hegel's theory of the state did not emerge in isolation. On the contrary, it was a major synthetic effort of a long tradition of thought and simultaneously a major contributor to the subsequent dominance of the juridical-political conceptualisation of the state, in its ambivalent varieties of the liberal state and of the State-of-Right. The liberal state has as its main function the securing of freedom of the individual. As the second clause of the Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen states:

> *The aim of any political association is the maintenance of the natural and unalienable rights of the individual. These rights are freedom, property and resistance against oppression.**

In the liberal state, individuals as such cannot exercise powers of rule over one another. Further, they must recognise one another as juridically free and equal.

In close connection with this belief is the notion of State-of-Right in which the use of state power is submitted to juridical rules which guarantee the freedom and rights of the citizen against the state itself. What is characteristic of the state-of-right is this limitation of state power for the benefit of the rights of the citizen. This restriction is idealised not as a benevolent concession of the state, but as stemming from the 'natural' rights of the individual pre-existent to the state itself. As conceptualised by the pure theory of law,

> ... *the State is simply the embodiment of the juridical order.*
>
> (Latorre, 1970, p. 161)*

This form of conceptualising the state does not presume any specific process of producing the juridical order and therefore may take for granted any existing one. However, the development of the juridical-political theory of the state is historically linked with the emergence of the representative democracies. It was against the claims of the absolutist monarchy - L'État c'est

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(3) - Lefebvre (1976), pp. 118 - 165, provides a suggestive introduction to Hegel's theory of the state.

moi - that the tradition of juridical legitimation of the state developed. This historically determined claim transformed, therefore, what otherwise could have been a simple juridical justification into a much wider form of legitimation, the representative state. This was based on two major principles:

a) the existence of a set of rules assigning to each element of the political order certain rights and duties - the Constitutional Principle;

b) the election of the elements within the community to whom is attributed the task of supervising the completion of the juridical order - the Democratic Principle.

This juridical-political form of legitimising the state (political order) involved, after the achievement of universal suffrage, every element of the community and henceforward provided the basis for the continual dominance of the doctrine of the representative state.

In its early formulations, however, the doctrine suffered from two major weaknesses. First, the driving force of its legitimacy claim was relatively weak, because it did not evoke a strong substantive ideal but referred instead to purely formal, contentless, considerations of procedural correctness. Second, it did not provide any substantive explanation of the mechanisms through which the state operated. These weaknesses became particularly evident with the growth of the state apparatus and 'state interventionism'.

The liberal state and the state-of-right were products of the nineteenth century and the turn of the century marked perhaps the zenith of these notions. After two world wars, the development of the trade unionist and socialist movements, and the Great Depression of the 1930's, the whole legitimation process was open to query. The doctrine of the liberal state as, apparently, concretised in the nineteenth century ended and the welfare state came into being with its open intervention not only to secure individual freedom but also, and primarily, to guarantee the material standards of living of its citizens. The word security gained a different meaning. It was no longer security against the abuse of power

but security against misery and illness, against the disruptive side-effects of industrial closures and bankruptcies, etc. It was a process of increasing intervention by the state in the private juridical sphere.

This invasion of the private sphere by the state was against the primitive idea of the state-of-right and created the need for a new form of theorising the legitimate role of the state. The answer to this question was developed with an emphasis on 'economic growth', 'prosperity' and 'efficiency'. Though still based on the representative principles, the legitimacy of the state came, increasingly, to be justified through its ability to assist the economic system in producing an ever-increasing flow of goods and services for the consumer. Gehlen (1963) calls this type of legitimation 'social eudaemonic' and argues that it should be added to the three types of political legitimacy discussed by Max Weber (tradition, charisma and legal-rational).

The shift from the representative to the 'social eudaemonic' legitimation can be explored through the consideration of pluralist and neo-pluralist theories of the state. Basically, pluralist theories see the state as an autonomous complex of institutions, politically neutral and capable of adjudicating fairly the struggles of competing social interests in society (Dahl, 1957). The label pluralist is attached to these theories because they understand the power structure of modern western societies as pluralistic on two main grounds. First, economic and political power are institutionally separated. Second, though the various social interests are not equally powerful, the dominant interests can never become all powerful because of crosscutting cleavages in society, the overlapping membership of interest groups, social mobility, etc.

Political power is conceptualised as concentrated on elected representatives and unbiased because of electoral competition, legal constraints and, more fundamentally, the pluralism of the social power structure. In pluralist theories, it is the quality of the political inputs, for example the existence of electoral competition and of the constitutional principle, which is supposed to guarantee the state's neutrality. The operation of the political system is seen

as a process in which individuals and pressure groups transmit specific demands to political parties; parties aggregate these demands, integrate them into a general programme and mobilise support for them; and parliaments and bureaucracies enact them as policies and implement them (Berger, 1981).

For neo-pluralist theorists, the state should be analysed more through the political outputs it produces than by the quality of the inputs which support its action. The basic ideas of the neo-pluralist approach can be summarised as follows. In recent decades modern societies have undergone a number of important changes. To begin with, political ideologies, particularly those which appeared to challenge the existing political order, lost their momentum and this was reflected in a decline of the importance of political parties as ideological groups (Bell, 1961). Further, the number and technical complexity of political demands increased dramatically, and this enhanced the relative importance of the state's administration, particularly its professional side, vis-à-vis the elected component of the state apparatus (Crozier, 1963).

Although undermining the representative state, these developments are not considered, by the neo-pluralist theories, as a threat to the neutrality of the state, or for that matter, of democracy. Because the 'technostructure' which stems from these developments is orientated towards 'public interest' and 'efficiency', the result is that the political neutrality of the state is not put at risk (Galbraith, 1967). Further, these developments are seen, potentially at least, to increase democracy in society. In this context, the concept of democracy is used not in the traditional sense of more power to the people, but rather in terms of distribution of political outputs, for example, more equal distribution of benefits from state action, or less unequal privations to the people.

From the above, oversimplified presentation of the pluralist and neo-pluralist theories, it is evident that, while the former theories rely heavily on the legal-rational form of legitimation of the political order, the second are heavily biased towards the 'social-eudaemonic' legitimacy claim. However, it can

be argued that both theoretical streams amount to little more than a posteriori attempts to rationalise, and legitimise, existing political orders. As Saunders argues in relation to pluralist theories,

> *They are idealised descriptions of particular political systems, serving to elevate every element of those systems into virtues, and to justify what they find by ad hoc rationalisation.*
>
> (Saunders, 1979, p. 156)

They are, therefore, largely tautological. Pluralist states are pluralist because the societies to which they belong are pluralist. The neo-pluralist state is politically neutral because those governing the use of state power are oriented by 'public interest' or 'efficiency' considerations. That the distribution of social power might not be pluralistic (Harrison, 1980; Milliband, 1969) or that the 'action orientations' of the 'technocracy' might be other than the public interest (Dagnaud, 1982) are elements which the theories simply choose to ignore.

I. 1. 2. THE STATE AS A THING: FROM INSTRUMENTALISM TO STRUCTURALIST-MARXISM

If the conceptualisation of the state as a subject is the dominant position within liberal political theory (pluralist and neo-pluralist), Marxist thinking on the state has been dominated by a different flaw. Until very recently, most Marxist authors took for granted the assumption of the state as a thing (machine, instrument) open to discretionary manipulation by the dominant classes in society.

Within Marxist circles the widespread acceptance of this formulation owed very much to the popularity of Ulianov texts and to the dominance of the so-called 'Marxist-Leninist theory'. Both in State and Revolution, and in the lecture delivered at Sverdlov University on The State, Lenin gave a blunt instrumentalist vision of the state as *"a machine for the oppression of one class by another"* (Ulianov, 1965, p. 141). This idea of the state as an instrument, which can be manipulated by no matter what dominant class, was of fundamental importance for the whole Leninist theory of revolution and particularly for his

theorisation of the conquest of state power. It goes without saying that this instrumentalist vision of the state was only possible within a problematic where state and civil society were seen as two distinct realities, permitting a segment of this to manipulate the former at its discretion.

The paralysis in Marxist theory created by the 'Marxist-Leninist' orthodoxy of the III International was so important that, as late as 1942, Sweezy in his celebrated book, The Theory of Capitalist Development, could still argue, without much opposition, that the state is

> ... *an instrument in the hands of the ruling classes for enforcing and guaranteeing the stability of the class structure itself.*
>
> (Sweezy, 1942, p. 342)

In Marxist thought, the instrumentalist vision of the state is linked with a theory of class domination. However, instrumentalist conceptualisations of the state are also compatible with social theories which reject the Marxist antagonistic distinction between bourgeoisie and proletariat. More specifically, they are also associated with theories which posit the existence of a cohesive ruling elite occupying most positions of institutional power, and derive from this fact an ability of this elite to determine public policies (Mills, 1956). In this case, the elite is understood not in connection with the relations of production, as in the Marxist theory of class domination, but is seen as the result of stable patterns of personal interaction associated with relations of friendship, status, professional and educational networks, etc.

These elite theories were developed, initially, in opposition to the Marxist theories of class domination. However, some Marxist theorists considered that they could be used to reinforce the traditional Marxist analysis. In 1969, Milliband, in a book perhaps not surprisingly dedicated to the memory of C. Wright Mills, emphasised that aspect:

> *What the evidence conclusively suggests is that in terms of social origin, education and class situation, the men who have assured all command positions in the state system have largely, and in many cases overwhelmingly, been drawn from the world of business and property, or from the professional middle classes.*
>
> (Milliband, 1973, p. 61)

Despite the continuing dominance of this instrumentalist approach within Marxist circles throughout the 1960's, its main shortcomings were evident a long time ago. The idea of a machine functioning only by repression and purely disregarding the demands of the dominated classes was somewhat incompatible both with the developments of the welfare state and the dominance of forms of social democratic state in many western countries. The initial impetus for the reformulation of the Marxist theory of the state, to take into account these problems, was provided by the 'structuralist' interpretation of Marx's texts developed by Althusser and his team. The major contribution to the process was, however, due to Poulantzas (1968).

The analysis of Poulantzas in Pouvoir Politique et Classes Sociales starts by the concept of the mode of production as a combination of various instances (economic, ideological, etc.) and posits the state as an instance structurally determined by the relations between the various instances within the mode of production. According to him, one of the distinctive elements of the capitalist mode of production is that the articulation of the economic and the political instances is characterised by a specific relative autonomy between these two instances.[5] The specificity of this relative autonomy derives from the fact that, contrary to what happened in previous modes of production, the relations of production in capitalism produce by themselves relations of domination. This happens because in the capitalist mode of production, the worker is devoid not only of the ownership of the means of production but also of control over them. In these circumstances the political instance (the state) does not have, necessarily, to intervene in the process of appropriation of surplus-labour (surplus-value). The state has a relative autonomy from the economic, though this relative autonomy is qualified by Poulantzas (1968). In the capitalist mode of

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(5) - Contrary to what is claimed by many critics (for example, Saunders (1979)) Poulantzas does not see in the 'relative autonomy' of the two instances, per se, the distinctive feature of the capitalist mode of production. What is distinctive is the specific form assumed by that relative autonomy. See Poulantzas (1968), Introduction.

production, the economic is seen not only as determining, in the last instance, the structure of the mode of production (as in other modes of production) but also as having a dominant role in its structuration. Given this perspective, the state is structurally determined to operate so as to guarantee the reproduction of the capital relation. As this is conceptualised as an unequal relation between capitalists and workers, the state can only, in the long-run, operate in favour of the capitalist class as a whole.

Poulantzas is highly critical of both Marxist and non-Marxist instrumentalist theories. In Marxist-instrumentalist theories, he criticises their view of the state as a passive tool in the hands of the dominant classes, in which case the state is seen as having no autonomy whatsoever. In the elite theories, he criticises the idea of a fusion of state-power with the power of a particular social group (élite), in which case the relative autonomy of the state is also totally overlooked. From his perspective, the role of the state is not determined by the free will of the dominant classes, or the power elite, but by the structural relations between instances within the mode of production.

For Poulantzas (1968), the relative autonomy of the state needs to be seen in relation to both the dominant and the dominated classes. The dominant class (capitalist) is composed of several distinct 'fractions' whose short-term economic interests may conflict in relation to particular issues and areas of state action. The state, because of its relative autonomy vis-à-vis the economic instance, (and the dominant classes and class fractions) is able to establish what are the general political interests of the capitalist class as a whole and pursue them, if necessary, against the short-term economic interests of individual fractions of capital. From this perspective, the state can be seen as the level and place of political organisation of the dominant classes in society.

In order to conceptualise the relations between state and the dominated classes, Poulantzas introduces a radical distinction between 'class practices' and 'structures' (state, law, etc.). It is based on the statement of the autonomy of these two levels that he manages to conceptualise the relation between class

struggle and state action. For him, the economic and political struggles of the dominated classes obliges the capitalist state to make economic concessions to the dominated classes. These concessions are seen, however, as structurally determined by the state's necessary function of acting as a factor of cohesion for the different levels of a particular society at a given point in time. Although the limits within which these concessions operate change over time, due to the instability of the balance of class forces in society, these concessions *"cannot, within these limits, alter the basic characteristics of the capitalist state"* (Poulantzas, 1968, p. 209).* Further, these concessions are seen by Poulantzas as contributing to the political domination of the capitalist class as they allow for a strengthening of the legitimacy of the existing political order.

The work of Poulantzas (1968) constitutes, particularly within Marxist circles, an important landmark in the critique of instrumentalist analyses of the state. However, his formulations are marked by a number of important flaws, mainly associated with the use of a structuralist analytical framework. These flaws have been analysed in detail by a number of critics and here it is only necessary to record some of the more fundamental criticisms.[6] First of all, there is the basic antihumanist position of structuralism (Thompson, 1977). Thus, Poulantzas considers individuals or groups, other than classes, as mere *"agents-bearers of structures"* (Poulantzas, 1968, p. 67)*. From this perspective, all analyses of the state which focus on the role of policy-makers and administrators are treated as ideological. As he also dismisses as ideological the instrumentalists' analyses, Poulantzas is left without any point of reference to interpret the processes and forms through which state decisions and actions are prepared and implemented.

The only way out of this theoretical cul-de-sac is the retreat into a sort of functionalist 'grand theory', that is, the adoption of a level of thinking that is beyond verification and falsification and that absolves the

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(6) - Detailed critiques of Poulantzas' early writings were presented, inter alios, by Glucksman (1969), Hindess (1978), Lojkine (1977). Poulantzas (1978) constitutes a fundamental rectification of his early formulations.

analyst from any consideration of concrete power mechanisms (Mills, 1959). Thus, the state in capitalism, and its actions, are seen as representing the political interests of the capitalist class, because that is the dominant class in the society in which the state finds itself. This sort of explanation is, of course, tautological.

An identical problem is associated with the use of the concept of 'relative autonomy' when analysing the relations between the 'economic' and the 'political' instances. The use of this concept allows Poulantzas room for manouevre, not only when analysing the relations between state and dominant classes but also, and more important, when analysing the relations between state and dominated classes. The 'concessions' obtained by the struggles of the dominated classes are conceptualised as contributing to the legitimacy of the political order, and never as a mechanism for its change, and eventual transcendence. This, of course, would be incompatible with the structuralist framework adopted in the analysis. Ruling out this possibility, however, amounts not only to tautology but also to teleology.

As Glucksman (1969) notes, Poulantzas attempts to avoid the strict fatalism of structural-functionalist analysis by introducing the distinction between 'class practices' and 'structures'. However, and partly because the analysis is conducted at an abstract level, this distinction introduces a fundamental indeterminacy in the analysis (Lojkine, 1977). On the one hand, the state is seen as structurally determined by the relations between the various instances within the mode of production. On the other hand, the state is seen as reflecting in its actions the balance of forces, and political strategies, of the classes in confrontation. The reduction of the explanation to the first level would amount to a narrow functionalism which Poulantzas is not prepared to adopt. The consideration of the second level, however, reintroduces in the analysis subjectivist elements (for example, the idea of political strategies in class struggle), which run against the anti-humanism of the broad structuralist framework adopted in the analysis. The problem of conciliating the two levels of

analysis is left unsolved throughout the analysis.

Similar problems confront those authors who, starting from a basic instrumentalist position, attempt to refine their analyses to take into account either the constraints limiting the discretion of state personnel (for example, Milliband, 1977) or the impact of class struggle on the state's decisions and actions (for example, Lojkine, 1977). In both cases, the analyses end up without a theorisation of how to draw a line between constraint and discretion, or action and determinism.[7]

The inability of the instrumentalist and structuralist approaches to provide an appropriate answer to this question calls for a reformulation of the existing approaches.

I. 1. 3. TOWARDS A DIALECTICAL APPROACH

An appropriate conceptualisation of the state in modern societies will have to provide adequate answers to a number of problems that the theoretical approaches discussed in the two previous sections either ignored, or answered in an unacceptable way. These problems concern, inter alia, the relations between social structures, social action and human consciousness; the relations between the state and class relations; the distinction between state power and state apparatus; the interdependences between political hegemony, state legitimacy and state economic interventions and, finally, the issue of the effects of the expansion of state activities and administration. The following pages are occupied with a consideration of these problems.

Social Structures, Social Action and Human Consciousness

As noted in the previous section, for Poulantzas (1968), the structures

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(7) - For a critique of Milliband (1977) and Lojkine (1977), see Saunders (1979), especially pp. 160 - 166. A more detailed consideration of Lojkine's positions can be found in Mingione (1977) and Pendaries (1979).

and functioning of the state in modern societies are seen as structurally determined by the political requirements of overall regulation (maintenance and reproduction) of the capitalist mode of production. Individuals and social groups, other than classes, are considered as mere 'bearers' of the structures of the mode of production. Any approach to the state which uses as explanatory variables the interests and/or action orientations of those who appear to administer it, or attempt to shape its decisions and actions, is dismissed as unsound. From the opposite perspective, instrumentalist analyses understand the structures and actions of the state as determined by the free will of the dominant classes, or the power elite.[8]

By concentrating on social structures to the detriment of social action, or vice versa, these approaches maintain the traditional split between 'the two sociologies' so finely characterised by Dawe (1970). To develop an appropriate understanding of the state, it is necessary to conceptualise in dialectical terms the relations between social structures and social action.

A good starting point for the analysis of this problem is the consideration of the statement which opens the second paragraph of The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte.

> *Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please: they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under given circumstances directly encountered and inherited from the past.*
>
> (Marx, 1978, p. 9)

This often-quoted statement is justly regarded as one of the most concise and elegant formulations of the dialectic relations between social action and social structures. On the one hand, against the 'structuralist' position which posits that structures are uniquely determining and evolve without the action of concrete individuals, it stresses the active role of social actors in the making of social structures. On the other hand, against the 'voluntarist'

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(8) - The same could be said, to a large extent, in relation to 'managerialist' analyses; See Saunders (1979) esp. pp. 166-68.

position that states that there are no limits to the exercise of moral choice, or the operation of critical rationality, it emphasises the influence of social structures on human behaviour. This is viewed as both determined and determining or as Lukes puts it,

> *... a web of possibilities for agents whose nature is both active and structured, to make choices and pursue strategies within given limits, which in consequence expand and contract over time.*
>
> (Lukes, 1977, p. 29)

When these general formulae are used for the analysis of state action they raise the question of the relative importance to be attributed to social action and structured contexts (constraints) in the interpretation of these relations. The answer to this question provided by both the 'structuralist' and the 'voluntarist' positions are theoretically predetermined and wholly clearcut. In the first case, state action is seen as being completely structurally determined. In the second case, the choices of social actors are seen as the major, or even exclusive, point of support for the interpretation of state action.

The adoption of a dialectic approach to the relations between social action and social structures makes the analysis of state action more complex. The relative importance of those two elements can only be assessed empirically, by comparative analysis of similar situations. Indeed, if we accept that the social actors are able, through the choices they make and the strategies they pursue, to alter the structured context in which they operate, than it becomes impossible to define a priori, and once and for all, what the balance between 'constraints' and 'action' might be in the determination of the actions of the state.

Having said this, it is important to clarify what is meant by constraints associated with structured situations (social structures). For this purpose, it is useful to introduce the distinction made by Lukes (1977) between 'structural' and 'rational' constraints. Structural constraints limit the actor's freedom or power to act otherwise by precluding such a possibility. Rational constraints, in turn, do not set objective limits to action. They merely identify the courses of action which, in the light of the wants and beliefs actors have,

they are not prepared to adopt. This distinction between 'structural' and 'rational' constraints emphasises the need to consider the relations between social structures, social action and human consciousness.

For structuralist social theories, as Ciccourel succintly notes,

> *... position in the social structure is the 'best' predictor of the actor's behaviour where the actor's behaviour is indexed by another structural indicator.*
>
> (Ciccourel, 1968, p. 108)

As these theories assume that social structures - i.e. social relations characterised by their endurance, persistence and patterned regularity of occurrence - are independent from people's consciousness, they dismiss the importance of this in the specification of social action.

A dialectical approach to social action rejects this form of determinism. It defines people as meaning creative individuals for whom social action, although produced within constraining social structures, is mediated through people's consciousness. This is not a direct result of the actor's location within social structures. It reflects, rather, the uneven effect of the ideological forms through which people become aware of themselves, the social and natural realities. These ideological forms are, in turn, dependent on the actor's praxis (social action) (Figure 1).[9]

The adoption of a dialectic approach to social action has a number of important implications as far as the theorisation of the state is concerned. First of all, it indicates that the state's action cannot be adequately interpreted only by reference to the social structures or a part of them (for example, economic structures). It is also necessary to take into consideration the action orientations of relevant social actors (individuals, groups) and their motivations. Further, it suggests that social structures, generally speaking, only create 'rational constraints' as far as the determination of the state's

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(9) - On this particular point, see, for example, Habermas (1963) and Giddens (1977), especially pp. 112 -121.

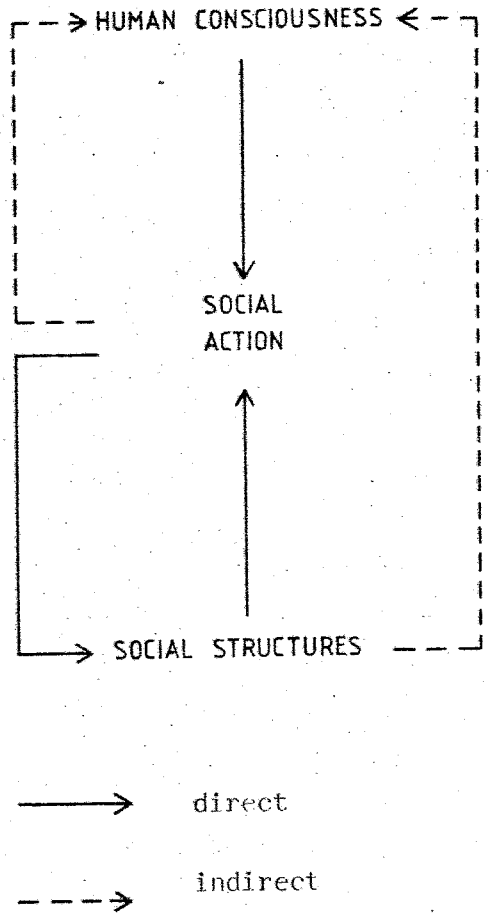

Fig. 1: The Relations Between Human Consciousness, Social Action and Social Structures

actions are concerned. They only provide the material basis giving rise to a whole range of development possibilities which the conflicting forces in society seek to utilise in different ways.[10] Finally, because social structures change as the result of the constant interaction between themselves and social actions, the net outcome of these processes of social conflict - i.e. the state's actions - cannot be the object of a priori theorising. They are, rather, empirical questions requiring concrete analysis of concrete decision-making processes within the state institutions.

State and Class Relations

In his early works, Poulantzas (1968, 1974) uses the term 'power' exclusively to denote 'the ability of a social class to realize its objective interests'. As social classes were primarily defined in relation to their position in the relations of production, this particular understanding of the concept of power has the effect of reducing the study of power to the analysis of the power relations linked with the economic sphere.[11] Further, as the state is characterised as a *"condensate of political relations existing at the level of the relations of production"*, this type of analysis implies that the state has no role other than that determined by class relations.

The above positions contrast sharply with those put forward by authors who, in the Weberian tradition, argue that there is no necessary relationship between economic classes and politics. Thus, both Crouch (1979) and Saunders (1979) reject the idea that the problem of the state is entirely reducible to questions of class relations. Though admitting that in any society divided into classes, the analysis of the state has class implications, Crouch argues that:

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(10) - For an extended development of this basic idea, see Paggi (1979).

(11) - Lukes (1974) provides a good summary and critique of Poulantzas' concept of political power emphasising its functionalist shortcomings and methodological problems. See especially pp. 54 - 56. See also Appendix D below pp. D-2—6.

> *The issues concerning men's access to means of violence, the attempt to concentrate this in a central power and the institutions which are then established to limit and channel that usage are questions in themselves. To assume them to be class questions ab initio involves either definitional tricks or metaphysics; in contrast assume them to have their own social place and then to demonstrate that many of them become enmeshed in account of the class role of the state which is amenable to rational test.*
>
> (Crouch, 1979, p. 39)[12]

The Weberian positions seem, in this particular case, convincing. It must be said, however, that Marx, contrary to Poulantzas (1968), never suggested that all power relations could be derived from the social relations of production, or that these totally fulfil the whole space of social power relations. On the contrary, Marx explicity notes in his economic writings, and particularly in Capital, that power is

> *... only dealt with insofar as Political Economy itself professes to deal with it.*[13]

In his last major work, Poulantzas (1978) substantially revises his early formulations and comes to accept that power relations cannot be reduced to class relations. Further, he explicitly rejects any analysis of the state which concentrates primarily on the relations of production, and only uses the processes of political struggle and domination as deus ex machina elements to be introduced in the analysis in order to account for particular situations and developments, which appear at odds with the patterned regularity associated with the economic structure. Further, he argues that, when approaching the state, it is necessary to give primacy to the historical processes of political struggle and domination which shaped the development of state institutions. Only through this process of theorised, historical analysis of state development is it possible to explain the different forms assumed by different states.[14]

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(12) - It is relevant to note that for Weber (1947) the state in modern societies is characterised as having *"the monopoly of the legitimate use of the means of violence"*.

(13) - Quoted by Thompson (1978), p. 354.

(14) - These arguments are developed in Poulantzas (1978), Part II.

This reformulation of Poulantzas' approach to the state goes a long way towards answering the accusations of structuralism and functionalism levelled at his earlier formulations. Further, it explicitly calls attention to the distinction between state apparatus and state power. This distinction needs to be considered in more detail.

State Power and State Apparatus

Given the sheer size of the organizations which constitute the state apparatus in modern societies, the scant attention paid to their analysis by the theoretical approaches discussed in the two previous sections is clearly unsatisfactory. The major reason for this gap largely derives from the mode of theorisation adopted in those approaches. Functionalist theories of the state, whether structuralist or instrumentalist, are by their very nature concerned primarily with explaining the state (and the state's actions and decisions), in terms of the part it plays in the existence and/or reproduction of the wider society. They tend, therefore, to concentrate on particular manifestations of state power in accordance with their particular way of understanding the relations between state and society. Early Marxist versions of the instrumentalist thesis, for example, focus almost exclusively on the repressive aspects of state power while the contemporary French authors who subscribe to the 'state monopoly capitalism' thesis virtually exclude from their analysis considerations related to issues other than the various forms ot state economic intervention.[15]

A noticeable exception to this generalised neglect of the problems associated with the state apparatus is, of course, to be found in the work of Weber. For Weber (1947), the legitimacy of the political order in modern societies is seen as resting, increasingly and necessarily, in a particular form of

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(15) - For a summary of the developments of the 'state monopoly capitalism' thesis, see Fairley (1979).

organization and operation of the state apparatus - bureaucracy. Given this perspective, it is obvious that Weber had to attribute similar importance to the analysis of the state apparatus as to the analysis of the state power.

Even if one does not adhere to the details of Weber's political sociology, it is not difficult to agree with him in attributing theoretical relevance to the analysis of the state apparatus. In fact, as Hirst notes:

> *First and foremost the state exists, it is a definite apparatus to be confronted, and not a function .... Outside specific institutional forms state power does not exist: institutions represent the means of its existence and exercise.*
>
> (Hirst, 1977, pp. 152 - 153)

The consideration of the state apparatus in any approach to the state is important, not just because everything that is done by the state is done through the state apparatus. There are a number of other reasons why that consideration is of crucial importance. First of all, the state, as a web of institutions,

> *... concentrates the supreme rule-making, rule-applying, rule-adjudicating, rule-enforcing and rule-defending functions of (a given) society.*
>
> (Therborn, 1980, p. 195)

These rules are important not only to establish the stuctural characteristics of the state apparatus but also to understand the form and content of state power. Offe develops this point particularly well:

> *The formal rules that give structure and continuity to the operation of the state apparatus are not merely instrumental procedures designed to carry out or implement political goals, or to solve social problems. They do determine themselves, in a hidden and unexplicit way, what potential goals are and what problems have the chance to come up on the agenda of the political system .... Every time a state deals with a problem in its environment, it deals with a problem of itself, that is its internal mode of operation.*
>
> (Offe, 1975, p. 135)[16]

Secondly, the state is far from being the monolithic and monocratic type

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(16) - For a similar analysis, see Perez-Diaz (1978), especially pp. 92 - 98.

of organization, with absolute control of the top over the base, suggested by Weber's ideal-type of bureaucracy. On the contrary, it is constituted by a large number of incompletely co-ordinated organisations which tend to develop conflicting organizational objectives, rules of functioning, etc. In this circumstance, the understanding of the particular 'organizational division of labour' within the state apparatus is of crucial importance when analysing complex areas of public policy-making (Bogason, 1978).

Thirdly, associated with the modern state apparatus are large state bureaucracies which tend to develop their own interests, action orientations, etc.[17] Finally, insofar as the state apparatus appears as an institution (web of institutions), separated from the civil society, there is a need for it to have a legitimation of its own, particularly as it assumes the monopoly of all legitimate violence in society.

Political Hegemony and State Legitimacy

Legitimacy means that there are good arguments for a political order's claims to be recognised as right and just. In both the Weberian and Frankfurt traditions, as Therborn (1980) notes, the focus on the production and maintenance of legitimacy stems from an unwarranted rationalist assumption that the ruled do not rebel only, or mainly, because they consider the rule of their rulers to be justified.[18]

Until recently, Marxist approaches to the state tended to ignore the issue of legitimacy. Adopting a vision of the state as the 'instrument' of the dominant classes, they tended to reduce the state to organised class violence. In an influential article published in La Pensée, Althusser (1970) dealt with the

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(17) - This is a phenomenon explictly acknowledged by Marx (1978), p. 124.

(18) - In a recent text, Habermas emphasises that

Legitimation always requires the convincing of those submitted to power.

(Habermas, 1979, p. 181)

issue by introducing a distinction between repressive and ideological state apparatuses; the former using mainly repression and the second based on the transmission of the ideology of the dominant classes. The role of the capitalist state was then considered as the sum of the functions of these two apparatuses, which together provided for the reproduction of the existing mode of production. This idea of the state as repression and ideology finds a somewhat surprising echo in the recent work of Therborn (1980) who characterises the mechanisms of reproduction of society as a combination of economic constraint, violence and ideological excommunication.[19]

However, the idea of the state as repression and ideology should be dismissed on a number of accounts. First of all, it posits an absolute antagonism between the functioning of the repressive and ideological state apparatuses, which disregards the extent to which coercion and ideological inculcation are interlinked. Further, it is unable to embrace, without resorting to spurious definitional and theoretical tricks, all forms of state action. The increasing economic role of the state can hardly be allocated to one or other type of state apparatuses. Moreover, if state action is merely understood as repression and ideology, the role of the state would be merely negative and the legitimation of the political order would be attempted at an idealistic level, without any material positive basis for the dominated groups to accept the ruler's dominance.[20]

The origins of the theorisation of the state as repression plus ideology are generally traced back to the writings of Gramsci (for example,

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(19) - Therborn's analyses are much more complex than this particular passage (Therborn, 1980, pp. 171 - 179) suggests. There are, however, throughout the book a number of apparent contradictions which derive, in part at least, from the fact that the volume, as the author notes, *"is a collection of essays rather than a book divided into chapters"* (Therborn, 1980, p. 12).

(20) - On these points, see Foucault (1975) and Poulantzas (1978). Althusser's extension of the ideological state apparatuses to include almost the whole ideological sphere has also been vehemently attacked by Lefebvre (1973) and Thompson (1978) as an attempt to reconstruct 'stalinism' at the level of theory.

Althusser, (1970), Poulantzas (1965) and Therborn (1980)). To a large extent, however, this genealogy is misleading, as it is based on a distorted interpretation of Gramscian thinking. This fact is not totally surprising. Gramsci uses a similar lexicon to most Marxist authors but he often attributes to a specific word, or expression, a different meaning to the one currently used by the bulk of Marxist texts. The use of Gramsci's texts requires, therefore, an a priori reconstitution of his code of reference. This reconstitution, however, is made particularly difficult by the absence, until very recently, of a comprehensive and chronological edition of his prison notebooks (Gramsci, 1975). Previous editions tended to contain in the same chapter, or even page, notes written on different occasions which led, not surprisingly, to evident inconsistencies, and gave support to alternative interpretations.[21] It seems therefore worthwhile making the point that the following presentation of Gramsci's approach to the state follows very closely the interpretations of Bobbio (1968) and Piotte (1970).

For Gramsci, the concept of state is linked with his generative concept of the intellectual and his two main functions in society: the function of direction (hegemony) and the function of domination; the first corresponding to the sphere of civil society, the second to the state (strictu sensum). The function of domination is characterised by the use (or potential use) of coercion and the imposition of sets of social norms of behaviour. The function of direction, or hegemony, is the process by which the dominant classes obtain the agreement, adhesion or support, of the other classes to their domination. In other words, it is the process by which domination is transformed into authority. The concept of hegemony, central to Gramsci's political thinking, requires further clarification.

In his early writings, Marx retains the Hegelian distinction between political and civil society, this being

> ... *the whole material intercourse of individuals within a definite stage of the development of productive forces.*
>
> (Marx, 1950, Vol. 1, p. 76)

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(21) - For a fine account of the controversies around Gramsci's texts, see Mouffe (1979).

In later works, that distinction is substituted by the topological metaphor of structure-superstructure:

> *The sum of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness.*
>
> (Marx, 1950, Vol. 1, p. 506)

For Marx, therefore, civil society corresponds to what he labels economic structure (or infrastructure) of society and the political society (the state) is seen as an element integrating the superstructures.

For Gramsci, both civil society and the state belong to the superstructure of society:

> *What we can do, for the moment, is to fix two major superstructural levels: the one that can be called 'civil society' constituted by the ensemble of organisms called 'private' and that of 'political society' or 'the State'.*
>
> (Gramsci, 1975, Vol. 3, p. 9)*

Agreeing with Marx that civil society is the true source and theatre of all history, the shift of civil society from the infrastructural to the superstructural could also represent a move towards an idealistic theory of domination. However, Gramsci was quite aware of this trap. For him, the achievement of political hegemony within civil society is only possible when based on objective elements. The explanation of this position is adequately made in two phases. Firstly, it is necessary to explain the shift from an infrastructural to a superstructural form of hegemony. Secondly, the process through which class hegemony can be achieved should be elucidated.

To clarify the first problem, it is appropriate to note that, for Gramsci, the interpretation of the well known passage of the Preface of a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, where Marx claims that conflicts within the relations of production are understood at the level of 'ideological forms', could only be interpreted as meaning that

> *... it is not the economic structure which directly determines political action, but it is the interpretation of it and of the*

so-called laws which rule its development.[22]

Gramsci's political theory is rooted in the level of social consciousness and rejects any type of logical or deterministic explanation of society's development. As noted earlier, this position seems convincing (see above pp. 30-5)

The second question is also solved by Gramsci in a creative fashion. He clearly understood that 'stable' social relations could not be based exclusively on the practice, or by the threat of use, of coercion. Following Machiavelli, he recognised that for a group to conquer, and maintain, hegemony in society it should be able to convince the others that it represents the best possible guarantee for the defence of the interests of the dominated groups. This could not be achieved only by ideological mystification. To secure hegemony, the dominating group must present itself as the creator of more favourable conditions for the development of the whole society and the motive force able to mobilise all 'national' resources. For this, it must accept that although its interests generally prevail, there is a constant interplay between the satisfaction of its interests and the satisfaction of the interests of the subordinated groups. This situation could only be avoided, in part at least, in authoritarian political régimes, not subject to the constraints of representative political democracy.

In this respect, it is important to stress that the representative form of the state is by no means the natural format of the capitalist state. Lindblom (1977), for example, in his survey of the world's political-economic systems, is forced to recognise that liberal representative forms of the state, in societies dominated by the capitalist mode of production, are mainly restricted to the

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(22) - Quoted by Bobbio (1968), p. 33. That passage of the Preface of a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy is as follows:

> *In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensible and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces ... (but there are also) legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophical, in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out.*
>
> (Marx, 1950, Vol. 1, p. 329)

advanced industrial societies of western Europe and North America. Further, it is necessary to agree with Mingione (1977) that even in these cases, the representative state is the result of:

a) initially, of the political necessity of the bourgeoisie to involve the large masses of the population in the struggle against the feudal aristocracy and the absolute state;

b) later, of the strength of the labour movement, and other democratic forces (for example, movements in favour of universal suffrage), and the necessity to institutionalise class conflicts.[23]

Also, for specific historical reasons, the development of the representative state was associated with the expansion of state economic functions. The first phases of capitalism were underlined by periodical crisis leading to huge numbers of bankruptcies, massive unemployment and redundancies. This crisis corresponded to periods of capital restructuring, through the use of more advanced technologies, in which the less competitive individual capitals were put out of business, and so were the people involved.

It is obvious that these economic crises also generated crises of hegemony. If huge numbers of workers became unemployed, without being provided with the minimum requirements for material existence, it would be increasingly difficult for the dominant classes to convince the dominated classes of their ability to secure the 'overall interests' of society. Therefore economic crises were also political and ideological crises, with reflections at all levels of society. It was the need to face the conflicts created by economic crisis which opened the door for state interventionism and the welfare state (Gough, 1979). These developments, however, were not unproblematic.

The increasing state intervention in the operation of the economic system undermined its traditional basis for legitimacy, which derived from the

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(23) - These arguments are developed, at length, by Poggi (1978).

institutional separation of the public and private spheres and the handling of state tasks only through legislation and impersonal rule-application (Therborn, 1980). This created a requirement for a new form of state legitimation which was developed on the basis of 'social eudaemonic' principles (see above, p.22).This new form of state legitimation, however, created a basic contradiction concerning state economic intervention. On the one hand, these interventions stemmed from the attempt to avoid the more negative effects associated with economic crisis (large or small). On the other hand, however,

> ... *for the welfare state securing a smooth run of the economy (became) a necessary condition of legitimacy.*
>
> (Habermas, 1979, p. 194)

This contradiction needs to be considered in greater detail.

The Contradictions of the Modern State

The problem of state interventionism in the economy must be seen not only in quantitative but also, and fundamentally, in qualitative terms. It results not only in an increase of state expenditure leading, eventually, to fiscal crisis (O'Connor, 1973), but, more significantly, it gives rise to a restructuring of the state's form of economic intervention. Offe (1975) is particularly articulate on this matter.

Basically, the argument developed by Offe is that the increase in state economic functions is associated with a move from an allocative to a productive mode of intervention. The allocative mode of state intervention corresponds to the authoritative allocation by the state of resources (roads, compulsory education, police) over which it has traditionally exercised control. Expenditure on these items is financed by taxation and national insurance contributions and its distribution reflects, within the limits of the existing legislation and impersonal rule-application, the balance of

> *manifest interest and power relationships that become apparent in the process of politics and power conflicts.*
>
> (Offe, 1975, p. 132)

He then moves on to argue that the failure of these forms of intervention to avoid economic crisis, and the political effects associated with those, has resulted in an increasingly large additional productive mode of state operation. In relation to this, the state takes over from the private sphere, in part or totally, responsibility for the supply of elements such as energy, communications, housing, health, basic intermediate products (for example, steel), and so on. As the outcomes of the conventional political process are not, necessarily, supportive of these developments, Offe claims that they can only be explained by reference to state-generated rules of decision. From this perspective, he concludes, to repeat, that

> *... everytime a state deals with a problem in its environment, it deals with a problem of itself, that is, its internal mode of operation.*
>
> (Offe, 1975, p. 135)

These arguments have a number of similarities with those developed by authors such as Pahl (1977) and Winkler (1977). They differ, however, in a fundamental aspect. While Winkler characterises these developments as having already produced *"an economic system of private ownership and state control"* (Winkler, 1977, p. 48), and Pahl adds that

> *... the state manages everyday life less for the support of private capital and more for the independent purposes of the state ....*
>
> (Pahl, 1977, p. 161)

the analysis developed by Offe suggests that relations between state and private capital are much more complex than that which these authors appear to imply.[24]

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(24) - Crouch (1979) argues that the analysis of Winkler suffers from two major shortcomings: a) it ignores the fact that the regulation of labour in the interests of private capital has been an important aspect of most of the developments he describes; b) it leaves poorly theorised the relations between capital and state. Further to this, Saunders (1981), after discussing the empirical evidence related to Pahl and Winkler's arguments, concludes that they

> *... may be rejected, both on the grounds of internal inconsistency and on all available evidence.*
>
> (Saunders, 1981, p. 263)

According to Offe and Ronge (1975), the relations between the state and private capital in modern capitalist societies can be conceptualised as follows. In these societies, most of the overall productive capital is in private hands and those who own the means of production retain the right to invest, or not, according to the conditions for making profits. In this situation, the state can attempt to influence investment decisions (for example, through subsidies, taxation exemptions, etc.) but cannot organise production according to its own political criteria. However, the state depends indirectly - through the mechanisms of taxation and dependence on the capital markets - on the volume of private accumulation. Since the state depends on a process of accumulation which is beyond its powers to organise, every occupant of state power is basically interested in promoting those conditions most conducive to accumulation. This derives from the institutional self-interest of the state's personnel which is conditioned by the fact that the state has not the power to control (rather than influence) the flow of those resources which are indispensable for the use of state power. In these circumstances, the material content of state action is largely dependent on the

> *course and further requirements of the accumulation process*
>
> (Offe and Ronge, 1975, p. 140)

In summary, the broad conclusion of this argument is that increasing state economic interventionism, instead of giving rise to state control of private capital decisions, entails, rather, an increased dependence of the state on capital.

Poulantzas (1978) derives from these relations between state and the accumulation process the basic weaknesses of state planning in capitalist societies. Because the state cannot organise the productive process, its interventions are, in most cases, a posteriori actions dealing mainly with the consequences and symptoms of breakdowns in the process of accumulation. When it resorts to a priori actions, they are generally restricted to the provision of the broad incentives to the accumulation process, which are either lacking in specificity or are clearly misguided (for example, training policies preparing

workers for the jobs of the past). Further, because its resources depend on the smooth running of the accumulation process, there is a tendency, particularly evident in situations of economic difficulties, to increase forms of expenditure which help the accumulation process to the detriment of more 'social' forms of public expenditure (health, arts, etc.). Thus, in those situations in which forms of social expenditure need to be increased there is paradoxically the tendency for them to be cutback. Possible outcomes of these developments are not only a legitimation crisis of the state (Habermas, 1976) but, more generally, an hegemony crisis as the dominant classes are thwarted in their ability to secure 'public interest' (material standards of living of the population).

Crouch (1979) presents a good account of these problems, though from a slightly different perspective from that developed here, in his attempt to develop a general theory of the responsiveness of the state to different class interests in liberal democracies. The core of his argument, which is in basic agreement with Offe and Ronge (1975), is that in order to respond to popular demands for material progress, the state has to guarantee economic success, entailling dependence on capitalist interests. This basic dependence is made manifest by the arrow moving from bottom right to top left in the diagram with which he illustrates his analyses (Figure 2). In these circumstances, even when the interests of labour prevail in the polyarchic - democratic political - system in relation to a particular issue, or sets of issues, this is not necessarily translated into state actions which favour the interests of labour.

Further, he argues that quite apart from this type of 'structural means of influence', the interests of capital will also generally be favoured through the operation of the political system (polyarchic means of influence) and the dominant orientation of the state's personnel (elite means of influence). These two latter types of state bias derive from the superior ability of capital to organise interest groups and use propaganda in its favour; and from the fact that the state's personnel tend to rely more easily on business advice than in other forms of interest representation, due to their basic dependence on economic success

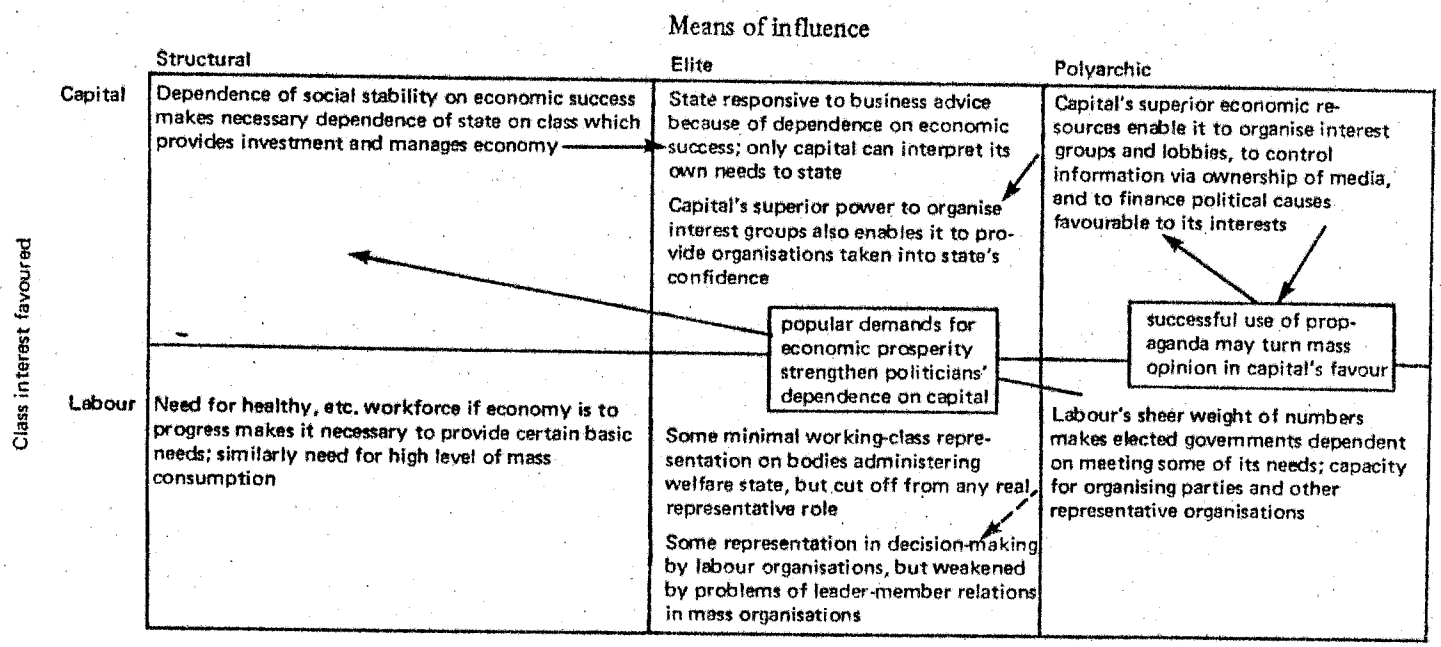

Fig. 2: The Responsiveness of the State to Different Class Interests
(source: Crouch (1979), Fig. 1.1)

(see Figure 2).

On top of the important contributions it makes to the question of how and why state action tends to favour capitalist interests, the work of Crouch provides, arguably by default, valuable indications of the circumstances, and policy areas, in which interests other than those of capital are likely to prevail in the determination of state outputs. Thus it seems plausible to assume that periods of stable, and relatively rapid, economic growth provide favourable conditions for the development of state policies shaped by interests other than capital. The fact that the development of the welfare state, in Britain as in other countries, coincided with a period of prolonged economic growth is, in this particular respect, more than a matter of coincidence (Jessop, 1980). Similarly, state actions which per se do not favour the interests of capital accumulation, but are not antagonistic to these, have a greater chance of being implemented than actions which directly challenge the mechanisms of capital accumulation. It is in this context that the development of a number of areas of state intervention can be understood. Public provision of housing (but not building by public firms), health services, education, etc. only indirectly affect the accumulation process - through increased taxation and the use of public expenditure which might otherwise be used to promote private accumulation. Thus, they have more chance of being carried out than the nationalisation of profitable large firms, or the introduction of worker participation in industrial management.[25]

Finally, it also seems justifiable to assume that areas of state action which are perceived as being of marginal importance and/or totally unrelated to the economic process of accumulation are those in relation to which interests, other than those of capital, are more likely to shape state action. What remains

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(25) - Esping-Anderson et al (1976) made an important initial attempt to theorise the relations between areas of state intervention and the likelihood of state actions favourable to labour interests. Neither their arguments nor those presented in this thesis should be interpreted as meaning that these areas of state policy correspond to voluntary concessions made by capital. They are the product of successful social struggles and in the absence of these, or in the case of their defeat, there is a great likelihood of these areas being reprivatised.

to be sorted out is the nature of these interests and action orientations and how they shape state decisions and actions.

I. 1. 4. SUMMARY

The main argument developed in this chapter is that it is both possible, and necessary, to support concrete analysis dealing with the state in modern societies on a number of premises which:

- reject a structural, or economic, determinism concerning state actions whilst, simultaneously, avoiding voluntaristic explanations for the behaviour of political decision-makers;
- recognise that the analysis of the state cannot be reduced to the analysis of state power whilst, at the same time, recognising that the state apparatus cannot be studied as a web of institutions insulated from the domain of social conflicts;
- emphasise that political domination is not achieved exclusively through the state; rather that it is associated with a much wider range of asymmetrical social relations, relations of production included;
- understand the broad field of state activities as intrinsically fragmented and contradictory, but recognise that there are fundamental biases in the operation of such a state;
- stress that state decisions and actions may favour different social interests, depending on the concrete circumstances in which those outputs are determined and on the basic issues they relate to.

The importance of these premises will become clear as the thesis proceeds; indeed, some of them act as starting points for the following discussion about the relations between state, space and society.

I. 2. SPACE, STATE AND SOCIETY

The role of space in the development of social and political processes is often neglected. Space is considered a mere geographical support of things and relations and thought of as having no impact on how social actors interact, or on how they settle their disputes and conflicts. This perspective is profoundly unsatisfactory and once adopted, it becomes difficult to adequately understand social and political phenomena.

The development of a more satisfactory approach to the role of space in social and political processes involves answering a number of questions. First, how should the relations between space and society be conceptualized? Second, is there such a thing as a territorial basis of power? Third, what are the relations between space and state? Finally, is it possible to talk about territorial conflicts and in what circunstances? The remainder of this chapter briefly considers these questions.

I. 2. 1. CONCEPTUALIZING SOCIAL SPACE

In his first major work, Harvey argues that the concept of space is a 'multidimensional' concept in the sense that it

> ... *has a different meaning according to cultural background, perceptual ability and scientific purpose.*
>
> (Harvey, 1969, p. 197)

This 'multidimensional' view of the concept is now generally accepted as providing the most adequate starting point for spatial analyses (Holt-Jensen, 1981).

The adoption of this perspective has two main consequences as far as theoretical analysis is concerned. On the one hand, it suggests that different concepts of space may be appropriate for different theoretical purposes. On the other hand, it imposes the necessity of specifying in each and every particular

analysis the meaning with which the concept is being used. In this thesis, the concept of space is used in relation to geographical space and the societies existing therein. More specifically, it is used in relation to spaces permeated by social relations, that is, social spaces (Lefebvre, 1979).

Defining social space in terms of the relationships between geographical space and society immediately poses the problem of how to conceptualize the relations between space and human (social) action. This basic problem has been tackled in a number of different ways which can be organized around four broad perspectives: environmental determinism; space as a reflection of societies; space as a product and material support of social relations; and, finally, the dialectics of space and society.

Environmental Determinism

In its most radical formulations, the 'environmental determinism' thesis corresponds to the idea that the patterns, and processes, of social organization can be explained as consequences of natural conditions (Becklert, 1976). This basic idea has a logical corollary which states that the design of a perfect environment might substantially solve all social problems. It was this latter idea which provided the rationale for the 'garden city' movement and the major work of its best known theorist (Howard, 1898).

'Environmental determinism' is characteristic of the second half of the nineteenth century and as an extreme thesis is dead. It would be wrong, however, to completely dismiss its impact on more recent, theoretical and practical developments. At a theoretical level, as Anderson (1978) shows, there is still a tendency among certain analysts to attribute problems of social deprivation and poverty to the characteristics of the areas (material resources, ethnicity of population, etc.) where these phenomena are experienced. As far as social practices are concerned, Glass (1959) convincingly argues that a particular form of 'environmental determinism' (directly borrowed from Howard (1898)) was responsible for the 'anti-urban animus' of town planning in Britain after the

Second World War.[26]

Space as a reflection of societies

The rejection of the structural determinism implicit in the 'environmental determinism' thesis led a number of authors to fall into a voluntarist and 'historicist' trap. Thus Lefebvre, in some of his early formulations, argues that social space

> *... is the result of a history that must be conceived as the work of social agents or actors, collective subjects operating by successive thrusts ... from their inter-actions, their strategies, their successes and defeats, result the qualities and 'properties' of urban space.*
>
> (Lefebvre, 1970, p. 171)*

These formulations, as Castells justly remarks, run

> *... the very great risk of imagining space as a white page on which the actions of groups and institutions are inscribed, without encountering any other obstacle than the trace of past generations.*
>
> (Castells, 1977, p. 118)

It is well known that Lefebvre, in later works, substantially modified his early formulations, in part at least, to avoid this shortcoming. The author has analysed, in detail, these developments elsewhere (Martins, 1982). Here it is only necessary to emphasise that it is not enough to conceptualize social space as the mere reflection of social relations in geographical space. If it is correct to say that there is (tendentially, at least) no space outside social relations, it is also similarly correct to state that social relations can only be adequately conceptualized in relation to the space which provides material support for their existence. Social space is therefore both the product and the basis of support of social relations or, as Lipietz phrases it,

> *Society recreates its space on the basis of a concrete space inherited from the past.*
>
> (Lipietz, 1977, p. 22)*

From this perspective, space is both a product of social relations and an

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(26) - This argument is developed in Part IV of this thesis (see below pp. 490-8)

objective constraint on ongoing social processes. The relations between space and society are, therefore, seen as bidirectional.

Space as a Product and Material Support of Social Relations

Conceptualizing social space as both a product of, and a constraint on, social relations provided an effective antidote against both 'structuralist' and 'historicist' theorisations. It is obvious, however, that the strength of the approach depends very much on the way societies are conceptualized. In the hands of many Marxist analysts, this basically sound approach soon devolved into an economicist understanding of social space. How did this reductionism develop?

For Castells,

> *Any social form (for example, space) may be understood in terms of the historical articulation of several modes of production.*
>
> (Castells, 1977, p. 125)

The broad idea underlying this formulation, which is fully developed by Lipietz (1977), is that to each mode of production is associated a specific spatiality (pattern of spatial organisation) resulting from the particular relations existing between the different instances of that mode of production. Each society is, at any given point in time, an articulation of several modes of production and its space can be seen as the articulation of the spatialities corresponding to the various modes of production present.[27]

It must be made clear, at this stage, that the articulation of different modes of production is not seen in static terms. Rather it is seen as a process of interaction between unequally developed modes of production, during which the dominant mode tendentially subordinates the dominated modes to its rules of operation and spatialities. Further, it must be emphasised that neither Castells (1977) nor Lipietz (1977) reduce the concept of mode of production to the economic sphere. With a good command of 'Althusserean Marxism', both authors

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(27) - For a development of this argument, see Lipietz (1977), especially pp. 19 - 25.

stress that the concept of mode of production refers to a particular matrix of combinations of the fundamental instances of the social structure, namely the economic, the politico-institutional and the ideological.[28] In the development of their analysis, however, they tend to concentrate on the impact of the economic instance on the structuration of the social space.

Other Marxist authors are less cautious in their use of the concepts developed by Althusser and his team. Thus Jensen-Butler, after arguing that geographical space cannot be accorded any independent role or existence, adds that spatial patterns should be considered

> ... *as a consequence of changes in the process of accumulation.*
>
> (Jensen-Butler, 1979, p. 7)

In a similar vein, Lapple and van Hoogstraten (1980) attempt to 'derive' spatial inequalities under capitalism from what they consider to be the 'immanent laws of capitalist production'.

It would be foolish to dismiss this type of approach as totally wrong and/or irrelevant. For example, recent analysis developed by, among others, Dunford et al (1982), Massey (1978, 1979), Perrons (1979) and Sanchez (1981) prove beyond any reasonable doubt that theoretical approaches, which focus on the changing characteristics of the accumulation process under capitalism, can provide important insights into the underlying causes of spatial patterns of development. However, it is important to stress that they cannot provide an adequate basis for the conceptualization of social space as a whole. This inability derives from a number of inbuilt weaknesses which are analysed in the following paragraphs.

The Dialectics of Space and Society

A basic weakness of the type of approach referred to in the previous paragraphs is that it attributes overriding, if not exclusive, importance to the concept of mode of production in its attempt to conceptualise social space. The

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(28) - See Castells (1977), p. 125 and Lipietz (1977), pp. 21 - 22.

danger associated with this perspective, as Urry (1981) notes, is that the mode of production tends, in these circumstances, to be viewed as providing the explanation of a too wide a range of empirical phenomena. Most, if not all, of the appearances of each social formation are seen as expressions of its underlying social structure and, in such circumstances, the distinction between social structure and social action becomes blurred. The analysis, in these conditions, cannot avoid resorting to 'structuralist' arguments in order to explain particular phenomena.

The emphasis on the economic sphere, when conceptualising social space as a whole, amounts to the substitution of an economic determinism for a structural determinism. The economic instance is transformed into the omni-present and determining feature of social organisations. This constitutes a theoretical retrogression when compared with structuralist analysis. Against this perspective, it must be stressed that the social totality cannot be reduced to the economic sphere and that

> *... the reduction of aesthetics, of the social and of the mental to the economic was a disastrous error which a few 'Marxists' tend to perpetuate.*
>
> (Lefebvre, 1978, p. 292)*

More generally, as the above quotation already suggests, both the 'structuralist' and the 'economicist' analyses implicitly accept that spatial organisations are indistinguishable from the formation of their mental image. Or, in other words, they postulate a homomorphism between the space of representations (social space) and the representation of space (its mental image). This is a view which Marx himself explicity rejected when analysing the role of French smallholding peasants in the socio-political conjuncture leading to the 18th. Brumaire.[29] Further, it the is a view which the development of 'behavioural geography' has proved to be utterly misconceived.[30]

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(29) - See Marx (1978), specially pp. 125 - 127.

(30) - See Holt-Jensen (1981), p. 71 - 72.

It is now possible to conceptualize social space as doubly produced. First, the space is transformed ('produced') by the social formation through an evolving spatial organisation of the social relations. Second, it is produced as each social formation develops a specific mental representation of space in association with the domain of social practices.[31] The question which remains to be answered is how is social space produced? The answer is aptly provided by Lefebvre:

> *Space is political ... if it appears neutral ... it is because it has already been the object of past strategies (power relations) which are not always perceptible. Space is politically produced on the basis of historical and natural elements.*
>
> (Lefebvre, 1972, p. 187)*

The adoption of this perspective means that it is necessary to consider the relations between space and power. This is the object of the following section.

I. 2. 2. TERRITORIAL BASIS OF POWER

Lefebvre's characterisation of social space as political appears to add little to the idea of space as a social product. In fact, if social space is a 'product' of societies where relations of power are ubiquitous (Foucault, 1975), then it is hardly surprising that these type of relations provide a major input to the ongoing process of spatial organisation. Defining social space as political involves, however, something more than its mere characterisation as a 'product', and geographical basis of support, of power relations. It involves considering space as an instrument of power relations. In order to clarify the above statement, it is convenient to introduce the concept of territoriality. This concept was originally used in relation to studies of animal behaviour and, in this context, Howard (1920) defines it

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(31) - It would be possible in this respect to talk about a spatial 'discourse' in the sense with which this latter term is used by Foucault. See Sheridan (1980).

> *... as the characteristic behaviour adopted by an animal for taking possession of a given territory and defending it against other members of its own species.*[32]

In spite of the suggestion made by Laborit (1971) that human territoriality derives from the 'reptilean part' of the human brain, it is certainly convenient to redefine the concept to exclusively take into account the issue of human (social) territoriality.

Soja (1971) provides a useful working definition of territoriality as

> *... a behavioural phenomena associated with the organization of space into spheres of influence or clearly demonstrated territories which are made distinct and considered at least partially exclusive by their occupants or definers.*
>
> (Soja, 1971, p. 19)

For Soja, one of the most straightforward illustrations of the concept of territoriality is to be found in the idea of private property. Without disagreeing with Soja, it seems important to qualify his statement. Firstly, the 'behaviouralist' formulation adopted by Soja has individualistic connotations which appear unduly restrictive insofar as territoriality is associated not only with individual social actors but also, and fundamentally, with collective social actors (institutions in particular). Secondly, territoriality does not refer primarily to the relation between social actor and territory. It is rather a 'triangular relation' (Girard, 1971) in the sense that the relation with the territory is a relation which mediates subsequent relations between social actors. This aspect is stressed in the definition of territoriality provided by Sack, which uses the concept to denote

> *... the attempt to affect, influence, or control actions and interactions (of people, things and relationships, etc.) by asserting and attempting to enforce control over a specific geographical area. This area is the territory.*
>
> (Sack, 1981, p. 55)

This definition emphasises the instrumental nature of space in territorial relations. In these relations, the control over a given space is

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(32) - Quoted by Raffestin (1980), p. 143.

important insofar as it allows certain social actors to establish a position of dominance in their relations with other social actors. Territorial relations are therefore always political, as they involve a conflict (overt, covert or latent) over the control of a territory. These conflicts, it is important to emphasise, are not conflicts about space but rather about the things, issues and relationships which happen in space. Territoriality creates a sense of spatial identity and exclusivity (for example, nationalism); it establishes different conditions of access (rules of access) to things and relationships within a territory. Territorial conflicts are social conflicts (conflicts between social actors) and not conflicts between 'spaces'. Only the fact that they are mediated by territoriality suggests this to be the case.

Territoriality, therefore, can be interpreted as a strategy for the exercise of power. But in what conditions is territoriality a more effective way to exercise power? Broadly speaking, territoriality is of the utmost importance in relation to situations and processes in which the potential complexity of power relations is so large as to make problematic, for a particular social actor, the direct exercise of power over each and every other antagonistic social actor. In these circumstances, the exercise of control over a given space may, in part at least, allow an indirect exercise of power.

It is in the light of this argument that it is possible to fully understand the idea put forward by Lourau (1974) that territoriality constitutes a privileged form of the exercise of institutional power. Institutions are, as Duverger (1972) notes, models of relationships which serve as patterns for concrete relations which, in these circumstances, tend to be stable, lasting and cohesive. *"No institution without a space"* wrote Lourau (1974, p. 131), emphasising with this slogan the basic idea that institutions are always associated with the spaces which they use and shape - for example, the enterprise and the factory, the family and the 'home' - allocating to the different actors involved in their functioning distinct places within its institutional space. Within the limits of the factory walls, the authority of the enterprise

management structure is presupposed. It is not associated with any particular relation but covers all possible conflicts.[33] Institutional power, over and above everything else, is territorial in character.

The same basic argument can be used in relation to the most complex of all institutions (or web of institutions) - the State. In this case, however, not only is state power a complex form of territorial power but the state itself should be considered as a territorial institution (web of institutions). But this is to anticipate arguments which will be developed in the following section.

I. 2. 3. STATE AND TERRITORY

In most modern political thinking, the concept of territory is almost automatically associated with the idea of the state. In this association, territory is seen either as one of the three constitutional elements of the state (the other two being population and self-government), or as the geographical domain of validity of the norms issued by the state. This form of conceptualizing the relations between state and territory is, as set out in Alliès's (1980) masterly argument, unsatisfactory. According to that author, territory was 'invented' by the modern state and it is continuously reproduced by the political administrative system.

This basic idea bears a striking resemblance to the arguments developed by Lefebvre (1978) for whom the complex relations between space and the modern state must be seen, historically, as encompassing three dimensions: the production of political space - the national territory; the organisation of social space and, finally, the creation/occupation of a mental space associated with the social representations of the state.[34] The analysis now moves to consider these

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(33) - This formulation neglects, for the sake of simplicity, the extent to which trade union organisations (yet another institution!) may challenge the authority of management.

(34) - See Lefebvre (1978), specially pp. 258 - 263.

three dimensions.

The Invention of the Territory (National)[35]

In most Western European countries, the early stages of development of capitalism occurred within a social space previously shaped, in part at least, by feudal social relations of production and domination. The characteristics of these relations involved the constant fettering of the workers to the suzerain's land. As the dominant productive activity - agriculture - relied also on another immobile productive factor - land -, production had a very precise territorial basis. Further, it was not only the labourers (peasants) who were tied down to a territorial basis but also the fruits of their labour. These were firstly collected in the suzerain's barns and only afterwards exchanged.

Coupled with this, political power was organised in a hierarchical continuum and the space, divided amongst the different suzerains, was dominated only by the top of the pyramid - the monarch - through the suzerain's mediation. As a result of the labourers' immobility and the hierarchification of political power, there were favourable conditions for the maintenance of linguistic dialects, traditions and customary laws. The social space of 'feudalism' (social formations when the feudal mode of production was dominant) was, therefore, a fragmented and hierarchised one, in which the relative fluidity of 'external' frontiers was coupled with a multiplicity of 'internal' spatial constraints (Raffestin, 1980).[36]

The development of capitalist social relations required a different social space. In this case, the social relations of domination are not external to the process of production, as in the feudal social relations of production,

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(35) - The following paragraphs draw heavily on Martins (1982).

(36) - The characterisation of the 'feudal spatial matrix' made by Poulantzas as *"continuous, homogeneous, symmetric, reversible and socially open"* (Poulantzas, 1978, pp. 96 - 98)* seems, in part at least, erroneous. The problem in this respect is that Poulantzas seems to rely excessively on the characteristics of the productive process to the detriment of political considerations.

but are themselves partially contained in the capital relation. They are produced anywhere this develops. The workers must be free from any chains, territorial ones included, and available wherever necessary for capitalist production. The full exchangeability of commodities also imposes the elimination of 'internal' spatial constraints to trade.

The disintegration of feudal social relations of production and the simultaneous development of industrial capitalism involved, in the initial stages, a massive process of deterritorialization, both of the labour force and production; liberating these from past territorial constraints (Deleuze and Guattari, 1972). It was for the state to promote the reterritorialization of the social actors, of production and commodity flows according to the requirements of the new social relations.

This process of reterritorialization involved a number of dimensions. Firstly, a further extension of the private ownership of land, thus completing the process of 'liberating' the workers from any territorial constraints. Secondly, the creation of a relatively homogeneous spatial market in which the exchange of commodities was made according to a single system of rules. This not only required the removal of traditional constraints to the mobility of labour and goods but also the implementation of a single legal framework for the whole spatial market. Thirdly, the closure of the 'external' frontiers in order to create a supply of labour adequate to the expansion of industrial production. As Friedman and Weaver note in relation to the U.S. case,

> *... as long as the frontier beckoned, a subservient proletariat was unlikely to occur.*
>
> (Friedman and Weaver, 1979, p. 23)[37]

Last but not least, it was necessary to create a territorial political mechanism able to enforce the three early conditions. Thus, the triumph of capitalism was associated with the development of an apparatus of territorial administration and

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(37) - The same, of course, can be said in relation to the phenomenon of Vagabondage so characteristic of the feudal period. See Loschak (1978) especially pp. 170 - 180.

this, in turn, was supported by a strong centralist ideology.

In the context of the nineteenth century, this centralist ideology assumed the form of 'nationalism'. The territorial character of the modern state derives from this historical encounter between state and nation. The nation is territorialised by and through the state administrative apparatus (Alliès, 1980). In this context, the 'national territory' is something more than geographical space limited by 'national' political boundaries. It is space produced and organised by the power of the nation-state. Fragmented by the social and technical division of labour and the uneven distribution of social powers, the territory of modern states regains its homogeneity, at a second level of analysis, through the state. As Poulantzas notes,

> *The state homogeneises the territory but is itself formed during and through that process.*
>
> (Poulantzas, 1978, p. 101)*

Modern state and national territory are, therefore, two inseparable concepts.

The Organisation of the National Territory

The developments described in the previous paragraphs were associated with the emergence of the capitalist mode of production. But capitalism became the dominant mode of production in advanced industrial societies. It aimed to absorb all non-capitalist social relations of production. This could not be achieved solely within the limits of industrial premises, even with the fragmentation ad absurdum of the labour process. Neither could it be accomplished through the simple reproduction of the potential labour force through consumption. It required the normalisation of human beings through the internalisation of the dominant social relations of production (Poulantzas, 1978). In short, this required the extension of capitalist relations in order to recover every single moment of everyday life. It goes without saying that it involved the tendential occupation of the whole social space by capitalism. How was this possible? Firstly, by the destruction (or marginalisation) of non-capitalist spaces and

activities; secondly, through the organisation of both private and public consumption by means of advertising and state bureaucracy; thirdly, by extending its control to non-productive sectors, and submitting them to the profit rule: leisure, arts, information, architecture, urbanism, etc. Space as a whole became both a product and an instrument for the reproduction of the relations of production.

For Lefebvre (1978), the space of advanced capitalism can be considered as:

a) homogeneous - allowing the exchangeability of places and times according to a unique criterion (money); this imposes the need for a powerful homogenising force, as space is at a first level of analysis;

b) fragmented - in countless 'plots', to be bought and sold, and used for countless functions; these fragments within the homogeneous whole are;

c) hierarchised - according to their relations with centres (of power, wealth, information, etc.) and peripheries; there are de-luxe residential estates and slums, luxury clubs and working class pubs, public green spaces and private parks, university campuses and industrial premises, intellectual and manual work.

Social space became a collection of ghettoes. Those of the elite, of the bourgeoisie, of the intellectuals, of the immigrant workers, etc. These ghettos are not juxtaposed, they are hierarchical, spatially representing the economic and social hierarchy, dominant and subordinated sectors.

(Lefebvre, 1978, pp. 309 - 310)*

To be stable, this total ghettoisation of social space requires the intervention of a normalising force without which it would be impossible for the constrained individuals to recognise, accept and assume their roles in society, and their places in social space. The organisation of social space is a major task of the modern state which: allocates things to spaces and spaces to things; hierarchises places according to the dominant sets of social power relations and

secures the unity and coherence of the whole territory (Loschak, 1978).

From the previous formulations, two questions emerge which deserve further consideration. First, why has the state to assume such a crucial role in organising social space (the national territory)? Second, by what means and how does the state organise social space (national territory)?

The answer to the first question encompasses two complementary elements. First of all, the modern state played (as noted above) a crucial role in the formation of the national territory and this process included, in itself, a (re)-organisation of social space. However, this process corresponded to a period of transition between social formations dominated by different modes of production (feudal and capitalist), and it might be expected that the consolidation of the capitalist mode of production would allow capital to become a major force in organising social space. The consideration of why this was not the case corresponds to the second element of the answer.

In the absence of substantial state economic intervention, the regulation of capitalist production is assured by the law of value imposed by means of the market exchange of goods. This regulation is far from securing the harmonious functioning of the economic system; economic problems and crises are inbuilt features of the market system and are themselves important elements in the regulation process. State economic intervention provides further instruments for the regulation of the system; it complements rather than opposes the regulation through the market system. It is the combination of these mechanisms (law of value + state economic interventions) which regulates the insertion of individual capitals in the process of reproduction of the whole social capital. The individual capitals which are not able to compete in the economic market, and/or do not manage to secure sufficient state economic aid, are thrown out of business.

The question which concerns us here is slightly different. It relates to the process of localization of individual capitals in the overall social space. Is there a 'law of value over space', that is, a law which regulates the

localization of individual capitals in the social space?

The answer to this question must, as Lipietz (1977) demonstrates, lie in the negative. Neither in its early phases nor in its subsequent stages has capitalism provided a mechanism of regulation of the contradiction 'social/individual' as far as the spatial features of the productive process are concerned. In fact, as Holland (1976) convincingly argues, neo-classical economic theorists only managed to present a vague semblance of spatial equilibrium in their analyses by basing them in totally unrealistic premises. In these circumstances, it is obvious that the state had to assume a crucial role in the organisation of social space.[38]

The above argument should not be understood as meaning that private decisions and actions, of individuals and institutions (for example, firms) play no role in the organisation of social space. Only that these decisions and actions take place within a framework laid down by the state. This enjoys an almost monopolistic position in terms of devising strategies for the organisation of the national territory. Further, it directly controls a substantial share of the investments having a determinant role in the organisation of social space (communications, energy, public services, etc.). Finally, it translates these choices into regulations and schemes (for example, location controls, structure and local plans) which private decision-makers have, generally, to comply with.[39]

These considerations bring the analysis to the second question outlined above. Are these state interventions totally divorced from capital requirements or, alternatively, do they respond more or less automatically to these? This dichotomy is misleading. On the one hand, to take only one example, state investment in infrastructure provides the whole social capital with the necessary 'general external conditions' for its reproduction whilst,

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(38) - This argument is developed in great length by Lipietz (1977), pp. 104 - 134.

(39) - The fact that in certain cases powerful actors are able to bend the rules (cf. Holland (1976), Simmie (1981)) does not alter the general state of affairs.

simultaneously, reducing the costs of private production by 'socialising' part of them. In this sense, as Hocreitere (1978), Lipietz (1977) and Lojkine (1977) note, state spatial interventions have a close connection with capital.

On the other hand, however, due to the lack of a 'law of value over space', there is no such thing as 'the spatial requirements of capital'. Only individual capitals have, in specific situations, spatial requirements.[40] Given this fact, state spatial interventions cannot be attributed to a single 'form of rationality' (Habermas, 1976). They do not derive, exclusively, from the basic requirements of the socio-economic system. As Roux (1980) argues, they are also the result of the effects, on relevant state agents, of ideological models concerning notions such as 'development', 'modernity', 'adequate environment', etc. State spatial interventions are therefore particularly prone to influences from 'environmental determinist' arguments. In the British case, as Allison (1978) stresses, the importance of this element appears to be very important.

The fact that the state assumes a crucial role in the organisation of social space means that it also plays a determinant role in 'solving' social problems associated with 'unequal development'. Among others, Massey (1979) and Pahl (1975) argue that the quest for absolute spatial equality is futile, due to the unique character of every location, and the unevenness in distribution of natural resources. However, within a unified political whole ('nation-state'), the need to maintain political hegemony and state legitimacy requires that 'spatial disparities' should not get out of hand. This fact gives rise to various forms of state action to deal with these problems. It is with this meaning that regional policies in France (Dulong, 1978; Lipietz, 1977), Italy (Mingione, 1981) and the United Kingdom (Dunford et al, 1982) were interpreted as instrumental in the attempt to secure political hegemony.[41]

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(40) - Even in this case, the behavioural school of industrial location has convincingly shown that spatial preferences of private decision-makers do not always coincide with the spatial requirements of their individual capitals. See, for example, Hamilton (1978).

(41) - With a number of modifications, the same basic argument can be used to explain the development of the Economic Communities' regional policy. See, for example, Martins and Mawson (1980).

From a slightly different perspective, Dreyfus (1974) argues that the spatial allocation of public services and facilites constitutes a powerful instrument in the legitimation of state intervention.

It needs to be emphasised, at this stage, that the various forms of state spatial intervention do not totally solve the problems associated with 'spatial disparities'. Given that space is intrinsically unequal, this is totally impossible. What state spatial intervention does is to 'manage' disparities and contradictions. This is, itself, a contradictory process.

State and Representation

The basic contradiction affecting the state's spatial intervention lies between the technical ability to produce and organise the development of social space on a large scale and the constraints imposed by the private ownership of land. This contradiction, which is the spatial expression of the overall contradiction between the development of productive forces and the existing relations of production, is visible at each and every scale where territorial planning is confronted with the private ownership of land, and the multiple and contradictory interests involved. It needs to be stressed that private ownership of land predates capitalist social relations and that, therefore, this contradiction cannot be blamed on the capitalist mode of production. Indeed, Lipietz (1974) argues that private ownership of land constitutes a hindrance to the development of capitalism.

A second contradiction associated with the state's spatial intervention, is that the state has to develop its own rules and schemes of intervention in anticipation of changes in society. This means that the state has to make investments (for example, roads, growth centres) which often do not produce the results expected. This leads to situations of 'rationality crisis' as far as the state's internal mode of operation is concerned (Habermas, 1976, Szelenyi, 1981).

Finally, the fact that the state plays an increasingly important role in the organisation of social space,but is unable to totally overcome both the

original problems and the contradictions in its mode of operation, transforms the 'contradictions of space' into political contradictions. Urban social movements and regionalist movements, to give only two examples, direct their struggle not against capitalist social relations, at least directly, but against the state. As Lefebvre notes:

> *If space as a whole has become the place where reproduction of the relations of production is located, it has also become the terrain for a vast confrontation.*
>
> (Lefebvre, 1973, p. 83)*

I. 2. 4. STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

For the sake of simplicity, the analysis has so far referred to the 'State' and 'State administrative apparatus' always in relation to the boundaries of the 'national territory'. This simplification is, however, quite misleading and it is necessary to put the record straight in this respect.

In England, as in other European countries, there is a long tradition of local bodies having the authority to raise revenues from, and making expenditure on behalf of, the population living within the boundaries of the territories over which they have political jurisdiction. These local authorities predate, in many cases, the emergence of the modern state. They were, however, substantially affected by the development of the latter. In the case of England, the Local Government Act of 1888 replaced local government based on local custom by local government based on statute laid down by Parliament. The passing of this Act is widely seen as constituting the first step in the creation of a comprehensive pattern of directly elected multi-functional local authorities for the whole of England (and Wales) (Stanyer, 1976). This pattern has subsequently been modified by other Acts of Parliament, the last major change being introduced by the Local Government Act 1972.

Given this perspective, it is obvious that although local authorities had independent existence prior to the emergence of the modern state, the

existing local government system has to be seen in relation to the latter. On the one hand, local authorities are an integral part of the state. On the other hand, however, they maintain an independent political status as they are elected by, and operate on behalf of, local electorates associated with their areas of spatial jurisdiction (territories). How, in these circumstances, should the relations between state and local government be conceptualised? To answer this question, it is useful to introduce the notion of the 'local state'. This notion has only recently gained political and academic currency, largely as a result of the discussions around the seminal work of Cockburn (1977). It therefore seems justified to introduce the notion through a brief consideration of her work, as far as this relates to the notion in question.[42]

For Cockburn, local government must be seen as *"a key part of the state in capitalist society"* (Cockburn, 1977, p. 41). In the light of what was said earlier, concerning the role of Parliament in shaping the modern pattern of local government in England, this view seems appropriate. However, Cockburn pushes the argument much further when she claims that:

> *Our local councils don't spring from some ancient right of self-government but are, and under capitalism have always been one aspect of national government which in turn is part of the state.*
>
> (Cockburn, 1977, p. 2)

This position appears untenable on two accounts. Firstly, it neglects the fact that forms of local government predated the development of the modern state. The latter substantially modified the responsibilities and spatial patterns of local government but did not create a pattern of local government ex nihilo. Secondly, it overlooks the fact that, under British constitutional law, the structures and responsibilities of both local and central government derive from legislation passed by Parliament. Local government depends upon central government only insofar as legislation so establishes it (Bains, 1979).[43]

(42) - The work of Cockburn (1977) had a number of specific objectives namely explaining the development of, and relationships between, 'corporate management' and 'community development' in local government using as a case study the London Borough of Lambeth.

(43) - This point is presented in greater length below, see Part IV, pp.379-81)

It is the failure of Cockburn to fully appreciate the implications of this fact that severely weakens the strength of her argument concerning the relationship between the state and local government.

Contrary to what Boddy (1980), Dearlove (1979) and Etherington (1979) suggest, Cockburn does not equate the 'local state' with the 'state at the local level'. In fact, she explicitly states that the latter includes not only the local state (elected local authorities) but also courts of law, local offices of central government departments and public corporations (for example, the post office), local health authorities, etc., and she concludes:

> ... *together these local agencies make up the state at local level.*
>
> (Cockburn, 1977, p. 46)

In spite of the recognition of the multiplicity of the state, she goes on to argue that

> ... *the state preserves a basic unity. All its parts work fundamentally as one.*
>
> (Cockburn, 1977, p. 47)

This formulation denies the local state any political specificity vis-à-vis the state as a whole.

This fact becomes particularly evident in her functional-instrumentalist theorisation of the state. This is defined in terms of its perceived role of securing conditions favourable to capital accumulation by contributing to both capital production and reproduction. In this context, the functions of the local state are seen as relating primarily to reproduction, both of the labour force and of the capitalist social relations of production (through repression and ideology). For Cockburn, the only distinction that can be made between 'local state' and 'state' is in terms of relative functional specialization.

Broadbent (1977) and Saunders (1979, 1981) similarly attempt to distinguish between 'state' and 'local state' in terms of functional specialization. For these purposes, they both start from O'Connor's (1973) three categories of public expenditure: social expenses (expenditure designed to

protect the social formation from social disruption); social investment (expenditure in the production-related sectors of the economic system); and social consumption (expenditure contributing to the maintenance and reproduction of the labour force). Then, by combining O'Connor's typology of public expenditure with the patterns of activity and expenditure of local authorities they both conclude that these are mainly concerned with the 'social consumption' aspect. This conclusion differs from that of Cockburn mainly in the terminology used.

In one major respect, however, the analysis of Saunders differs from those put forward by Broadbent and Cockburn. Broadbent is in total agreement with Cockburn when he argues that *"the local state is an agent of central government"* (Broadbent, 1977, p. 138). On the contrary, Saunders, after recognising that many functions of the local state are performed in conjunction with other levels of government and administration, and that many are financed mainly through central government, argues that

> *... nevertheless ... local authorities in Britain retain a considerable degree of autonomy in respect of most of these functions.*
>
> (Saunders, 1979, p. 148)

However, he does not attempt to theorise this autonomy (used by Saunders in the sense of discretion) as he suggests that this is *"an empirical rather than a theoretical question"* (Saunders, 1979, p. 196).

In spite of their differences, the works of the three above authors share a number of shortcomings. The presentation and subsequent discussion of these analytical flaws provides a convenient way to introduce a more adequate approach to the relationships between the state and local government.

An initial, and arguably basic, shortcoming of the approaches is that they do not really discuss the specificity of the local state in theoretical terms. As Boddy (1980) notes, these analyses are developed largely by applying pre-existing theories of the state to the analysis of local government, identifying the activities discharged (in terms of expenditure) by local authorities and from this deriving the <u>functional</u> specificity of the local state.

This type of approach is not particularly surprising in the work of Cockburn. Her conceptualisation of the state draws to a considerable extent on the work of Poulantzas (1968) and this explicitly denies the possibility of fragmentation of state power.[45] In the case of Saunders, however, the failure to come to terms with the problem is surprising. His adhesion to the basic principles of Weberian political sociology should have given him more theoretical freedom than the functionalist-'Marxism' on which Cockburn's work found theoretical support. His neglect of the problem has no theoretical justification and constitutes a major flaw in the whole of his argument.

A second and closely related, shortcoming of these analyses, is that they theorise the local state almost exclusively through the functions it performs in the context of the wider society. The fact, for example, that the 'local state' is associated with a bureaucratic apparatus which has an independent existence from the civil service and can, therefore, generate its own rules of internal operation and 'institutional self-interests' is completely overlooked. Here, yet again, the position of Saunders is particularly surprising; not only because Weberian political sociology traditionally attributes primary importance to the role and effects of bureaucracy, but also because Saunders (1979) himself provides a ferocious critique of functionalist theories of the state and functionalist analyses in general. The disclaimers provided by Saunders that the adoption of

> *O'Connor's typology does not ... imply any endorsement of his theoretical position....*
>
> (Saunders, 1981, p. 250)

do not appear particularly convincing in this respect.

A third, and more specific, shortcoming of these analyses concerns the

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(45) - *"There is no question of there being separate pieces of the state"* (Poulantzas, 1968, p. 312)*. Poulantzas' theorisation of the state as a *"Condensate of class relations"* makes it theoretically impossible to give any theoretical specificity to the 'local state' as classes are defined through their insertion in the relations of production and those cannot be analysed at the local level. For a critique of Poulantzas (1968), see above, pp. 28-30.

way in which they establish the functional specificity of the local state. In the case of Saunders.

> *... social consumption policies are (seen as) the characteristic responsibility of local government.*
>
> (Saunders, 1981, p. 265)

For Cockburn, it is the dominant contribution of the local state to the reproduction of capitalism which gives it functional specificity. These formulations have intrinsic problems. The separation of social consumption, social investment and social expenses is largely arbitrary since, as Saunders himself recognises, the process of production presupposes consumption and vice versa. Further, as Lefebvre (1973) shows, the process of reproduction of the relations of production cannot be reduced to ideology and repression; it embraces the productive sphere as well. It is in the sphere of the relations of production (which include in themselves relations of domination) that political hegemony is mainly achieved. Moreover, functionalist analyses are by their very nature static, while the functions of the state in general, and the local state in particular, change significantly over time. As Boddy and Barret (1980) show, local authorities are increasingly involved in contributing to capitalist production through industrial and economic development policies and expenditures, a fact which both Cockburn and Saunders are forced to recognise in passing.[46]

A fourth problem with these analyses is that they attempt to establish the specificity of the local state without the benefit of a serious consideration of the issues involved in intergovernmental relations in general, and central-local government relations in particular. In this respect, it is important to note that an increasingly large share of local service delivery occurs within the framework of centrally formulated, and monitored, sectoral planning. (See below, Part IV, pp. 394-8). In these circumstances, even if 'top-down' models of policy implementation are rejected on the grounds that they do not provide an adequate framework for the conceptualisation of the implementation process (Hill, 1979),

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(46) - Cockburn (1977), p. 52, note 16 and Saunders (1981), pp. 264 - 265.

it is obvious that an analysis which is based on the mere consideration of the level at which services are discharged, and expenditures made, is simply not adequate. The existence of more than one territorial level of political-administration helps make state decisions and actions divisible into geographical and temporal stages. Thus, it is possible for a policy decision to be adopted at one level and implemented at another. Similarly, it is possible for decisions to be adopted at one level (for example, central government) with the explicit aim of acting as guides for decisions to be taken at another level (for example, local). An illustration of this latter situation occurs in the relations between regional plans and structure plans (see below, pp. 381-4).

A final shortcoming of these analyses is that they do not attribute any theoretical political specificity to the local state. However, a number of state outputs (policy decisions and actions) are decided at the local level, even if subject to a number of constraints imposed by central government. Further, the 'inequality of the national social-formation over space' (Buci-Glucksman, 1969) creates the possibility that the interests of the dominant social group in the locality may differ from those of the dominant political social group at the national level. More specifically, the party political composition of certain local authorities may be substantially different from that of Parliament, giving rise to conflicts of policy priorities and orientations. It seems, therefore, that sufficient grounds exist on which to assert the political specificity of the local state. This issue can be enlarged upon with the consideration of some questions concerning the relations between the local state and political conflicts.

A number of authors have suggested that the local state is more responsive to popular and working-class demands than the state as a whole (for example, Cawson, 1978; Corrigan, 1979; Dearlove, 1979; Markusen, 1976). The interpretation put forward for this perceived higher responsiveness vary from author to author. Cawson (1978) suggests that this fact relates to a hypothetical higher degree of openness of the local state when compared with the central

political-administrative system, and to the greater pluralism of the local political system when compared with the national one. For Corrigan, in turn, the main factor seems to be that the consciousness of the great mass of working people is around local issues and resulting from this fact,

> *... it is in the sphere of locality that the working class as a class has some possibility of a mass politics.*
>
> (Corrigan, 1979, p. 209)

Finally, Dearlove argues that the high degree of local government responsiveness to working-class demands derives, in part at least, from the fact that the local state poses a *"particular problem for the representation of business interests"* (Dearlove, 1979, p. 234). The problem is that, partly due to the processes of concentration and centralisation of capital, big business is largely absent from the council chambers. Although a number of the responsibilities of local authorities (for example, rates issue, planning controls) are of significant importance to major economic firms, they seem to have little influence over the decisions of certain local authorities. As Dearlove puts it, big business is *"virtually disenfranchised"*.

This idea of the local state having a greater degree of responsiveness to working class, and popular demands, need not go unchallenged. Lojkine (1977), for example, argues that the existence of local government may be seen as functional in maintaining the vulnerability of fragmented local authorities to the demands and pressures exerted by big capital, namely in terms of locational controls and provision of infrastructure. The present situation of local authorities seeking to outbid each other for the existing supply of mobile industrial investment in the United Kingdom appears to offer some empirical support to this idea.[47]

Other authors consider the political specificity of the local state in more general terms, namely by relating the existence of representative local

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(47) - See Financial Times of 27 April 1982, supplement on 'Regional Development', pp. I - VIII.

government with the issues of political hegemony and state legitimacy (for example, Chevallier, 1978; Dear, 1981; McKenzie, 1979).[48] For these authors, however, the existence of representative local government should be seen as potentially contradictory. On the one hand, the existence of representative local government creates an elaborate buffer zone between state and civil society which:

a) conceals the real processes of power and influence involved in public decision making, namely by reducing political contradictions in the social-formation to central-local government conflicts - obfuscation of conflicts;

b) shifts conflicts over important state outputs to the local level freeing, temporarily at least, the state as a whole from political responsibility over these matters - conflict diversification.

As Dear notes:

> *This may occur irrespective of the actual responsibility for a given state output, because it is at the local level that the output becomes manifest.*
>
> (Dear, 1981, p. 193)

These aspects are especially important at a time when cuts in public expenditure tend to weaken the legitimacy of the state. By transferring responsibility to the local state, it is apparently at this level that legitimacy will be weakened.

On the other hand, in order for the local state to perform these roles, it must also have the ability to strive for and guarantee certain 'local' interests. Without this its ability and 'representativeness' would immediately be at stake. This ability, however, inhibits the political feasibility of substantially extending central control over local government and, given the 'inequality of the social-formation over space', increases the chances of territorial conflicts between political administrative units. It is in this sense that the existence of the local representative state is, potentially at least,

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(48) - Dunleavy (1980) provides a good summary of the relations between broad political theories and analyses of the political specificity of representative local government.

associated with an increasingly contradictory functioning of the state as a whole.

In broad terms, the existence of a representative local state can give rise to two main types of political territorial conflicts: localist ('parochial') and central-local conflicts.[49] Localist conflicts can be characterised as territorial conflicts in which two or more local government units compete between themselves for control over a given space, which is usually smaller than the territories of the units involved in that process. Conflicts associated with attempts by a local authority to expand its boundaries, or concerning applications of one local authority to develop land (space) in the territory of another are both examples of localist conflicts. Although space (land) appears to be the object of these conflicts, it is now clear that space (territory) merely provides the basis for the conflicts; the real object of conflict being the assertion of control over the things, relationships, processes, etc., occurring within that space (territory).

Central-local conflicts may, in turn, be defined as territorial conflicts in which the central and local political-administrative levels dispute between themselves the authority to specify particular state outputs over space. In these situations, it is not so much the overall control over a certain area which is at stake, but rather the authority to segment and hierarchise decisions and actions which have different impacts over space. In their extreme form, these conflicts are associated with the question of whether specific state outputs should be authoritatively decided by central government or by local authorities. More often, however, central-local conflicts relate to disputes over the levels of discretion local authorities have, or should have, when making certain policy decisions, over the nature and strength of central government controls over their action and, more specifically, about the local effects of public decisions and actions taken at a central level. Conflicts about the definition of areas

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(49) - This formulation assumes that there is no intermediate level of government (region) between the central and the local levels. However, there may be more than one local level of political administration as in the case of England.

eligible for regional policy assistance or concerning the extent to which central government should be able to modify structure plans presented for approval by local authorities, are both examples of central-local territorial conflicts.

How can the state attempt to solve the 'rationality' problems associated with these forms of territorial conflicts? One obvious way is to develop a mechanism for the spatial co-ordination of the state's activities over space at a scale inbetween the 'local' and the 'state' levels. Regional planning is, in part at least, the visible dimension of that mechanism. But this is to anticipate arguments developed in the following chapter.

I. 2. 5. SUMMARY

There are no passive elements in the relations between space and society. On the one hand, the spatial organisation of societies is, in part, a result of the characteristics of the processes of social development. On the other hand, however, these processes are themselves influenced by the natural conditions (e.g. climate, relief) and past transformations of those natural spaces. The relationships between space and society are, therefore, bidirectional and currently it seems only possible to talk about social spaces, that is to say, spaces permeated by social relations.

Insofar as the spatial organisation of societies is the result of social relations of power, social space can be seen as politically produced. However, social space is, in itself, an instrument and basis of power relations - 'territorial power'. This type of power relations is particularly important in relation to the exercise of institutional power. In this respect the most complex of all social institutions - the state - is heavily involved in the production and organisation of the social space under its jurisdiction - the 'national territory'.

However, the role of the state in the organisation of the national territory is not unproblematic. In most modern states there is more than one

level of political-admnistration and the functional and political specificity of the various levels gives rise to particular conflicts in the relations between different units of the state apparatus. This creates the need for mechanisms of regulation of these conflicts. Regional planning is, from this perspective, one of the mechanisms through which these conflicts are regulated. This aspect is developed in the following chapter.

I. 3. REGIONAL PLANNING: A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS (I)

In the previous chapter, it was suggested that regional planning constitutes, in part at least, a mechanism for the regulation of political-territorial conflicts. The main aim of this chapter is to substantiate this suggestion, and draw the implications of this fact for the analisys of regional planning as a form of state activity.

The expression 'regional planning' has been used in so many different ways by various analysts such that it has never commanded a clear and unambiguous meaning. A brief discussion of the way in which the concept of regional planning will be used in this thesis is, therefore, necessary before proceeding further.

I. 3. 1. REGIONAL PLANNING: ELEMENTS OF DEFINITION

Until comparatively recently, the expression 'regional planning' encompassed, in most texts, two distinct types of state activity. On the one hand, it referred to a form of state activity concerned with the 'ordering' of activities and facilities within regions. On the other hand, it designated a form of state activity concerned with the allocation of resources between regions. The first type of activity is now commonly known as 'regional-local planning' (Hall, 1970, 1975), 'intraregional planning' (Gillingwater, 1975; Glasson, 1978) or, in plain words, 'regional planning' (Choguill, 1977). The second type of activity is, in turn, called 'national-regional planning' (Hall, 1970, 1975), 'interregional planning' (Gillingwater, 1975; Glasson, 1978), 'regional economic policy' (Armstrong and Taylor, 1979) or, simply, 'regional policy' (Maclennan and Parr, 1979).

The distinction between the two types of activities should be understood in positive rather than normative terms. It refers to an empirically visible distinction between state activities - for example, in terms of policy

instruments and administrative structures involved - and should not be seen as prescribing a separation between them. On the contrary, these two forms of state activity are best seen in relation to each other and through the common attempt to steer and manage the process of socio-economic change. Having said this, it is relevant to state that this thesis is mainly concerned with the former type of state activity referred to above. This will henceforth be designated simply as regional planning.

It is now important to enlarge on the extremely brief definition of regional planning given above. The first issue deserving consideration in this respect concerns the meaning of the word 'planning' as used in the expression 'regional planning'. In its most general sense, planning means to

> ... *take thought to determine an action or a series of actions beforehand.*
>
> (Hall, 1970, p. 1)

This minimum definition of planning is not very helpful, in practical terms, since, in this sense, almost any sphere of life, private or social, can be planned and is planned to some degree. To go beyond this general definition means, however, plunging into a sea of competing definitions associated with a variety of planning theories (Faludi, 1973, 1973a; Gillingwater, 1975).

In a recent paper, Healey et al (1981) argue that from looking at the range of definitions of planning, four broad different elements of definition can be identified. Planning may be:

> (1) *an activity of a particular type (such as rational procedures for the identification and selection of policy alternatives);*
>
> (2) *an activity undertaken by a particular type of institution, such as government (as opposed to the market);*
>
> (3) *an activity involving the guidance/regulation of particular classes of events and objects (as in the regulation of land use);*
>
> (4) *an activity undertaken by people who consider themselves to be planners or to be undertaking planning (the subjective 'planning is what a planner does', and the objective 'planning is what people I recognise as planners do').*
>
> (Healey et al, 1981, p. 25)

These four elements, however, do not seem equally helpful when

establishing a working definition of planning to be used in relation to the notion of regional planning. For example, associating planning with an activity of a particular type is problematic since, as Thomas (1979) argues, the procedural characteristics of planning vary according to the social structures and processes to which the planning activity relates. In the context of this thesis, planning is defined as the domain of processes through which state institutions, encompassing various policy sectors and levels of government, attempt to regulate and guide sets of events and decide on future action. Regional planning, therefore, is firmly associated with what is known as 'public planning'.[50]

Defining regional planning as a form of 'public planning' is correct but insufficient. A second element ot the definition of regional planning which is important to emphasise is that regional planning is explicitly concerned with social space: with the spatial distribution, and relationships, of activities and facilities within regions. Regional planning is concerned not with the planning ('ordering') of geographical space per se, but rather with the planning of activities and facilities in space at a regional scale. In this respect, it must be clearly understood that even in the situations where regional planning appears to be merely concerned with the planning of land uses, this constitutes a means to an end. Regional planning attempts to steer and manage the process of socio-economic change within regions through the planning and control of geographical space. Only with this meaning is it possible to accept the equation made by Hall (1975) between 'regional' and 'spatial' planning. Using concepts introduced in the previous chapter, it is possible to define regional planning as a form of 'territorial planning', that is, as a process through which the state attempts to organise the social space under its political jurisdiction - its territory.

A further aspect which is necessary to clarify in the definition of regional planning concerns the meaning with which the implicit concept of region is used in the definition. It must be made clear that it refers neither to an

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(50) - Cf. the definition of public planning developed by Gillingwater (1975), especially Chapters 2 - 4.

objective reality nor to an intermediate level of political-administration (between central and local governments). On the one hand, and in spite of a few noticeable exceptions (for example, Friedman and Weaver, 1979), there is now a general agreement that the concept of region is a mental construct that finds no counterpart in reality (Hilhorst, 1980). On the other hand, in the English case, an integrated regional level of political-administration has never existed (Keating and Rhodes, 1982). In the definition of regional planning, the concept of region is a mental construct associated with a scale of political space: a scale which is greater than a single local authority and smaller than the state. More specifically, in English regional planning practice, the term 'region' is commonly associated with the eight economic planning regions created in 1965, based on aggregation of county councils (Figure 3).[51]

Finally, contrary to what some authors (for example, Alden and Morgan, 1974 and Watson, 1975) suggest, regional planning in the English case cannot be equated with public planning within a region. If this idea was incorporated in the definition of regional planning, it would be necessary to conclude that regional planning has never existed in the English case. As a form of public planning, regional planning in England can only be analysed with reference to the central and local levels of political-administration. Further, it is best seen as part of the complex set of relations of power affecting state decisions and actions within, and between, central and local political administrations and their agencies.

Bearing in mind the above points of clarification, it is now possible to define regional planning as a type of public planning (state activity) which is specifically concerned with social space; with the 'ordering' of activities and facilities in space at a scale greater than a single local authority and

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(51) - These regions were slightly altered by the reorganisation of local government introduced by the Local Government Act 1972. Figure 3 is based on the local government pattern after that Act came into effect. This definition of region excludes, therefore, from the specific empirical field of regional planning the subregional studies of the late 1960's reviewed by Cowling and Steeley (1973).

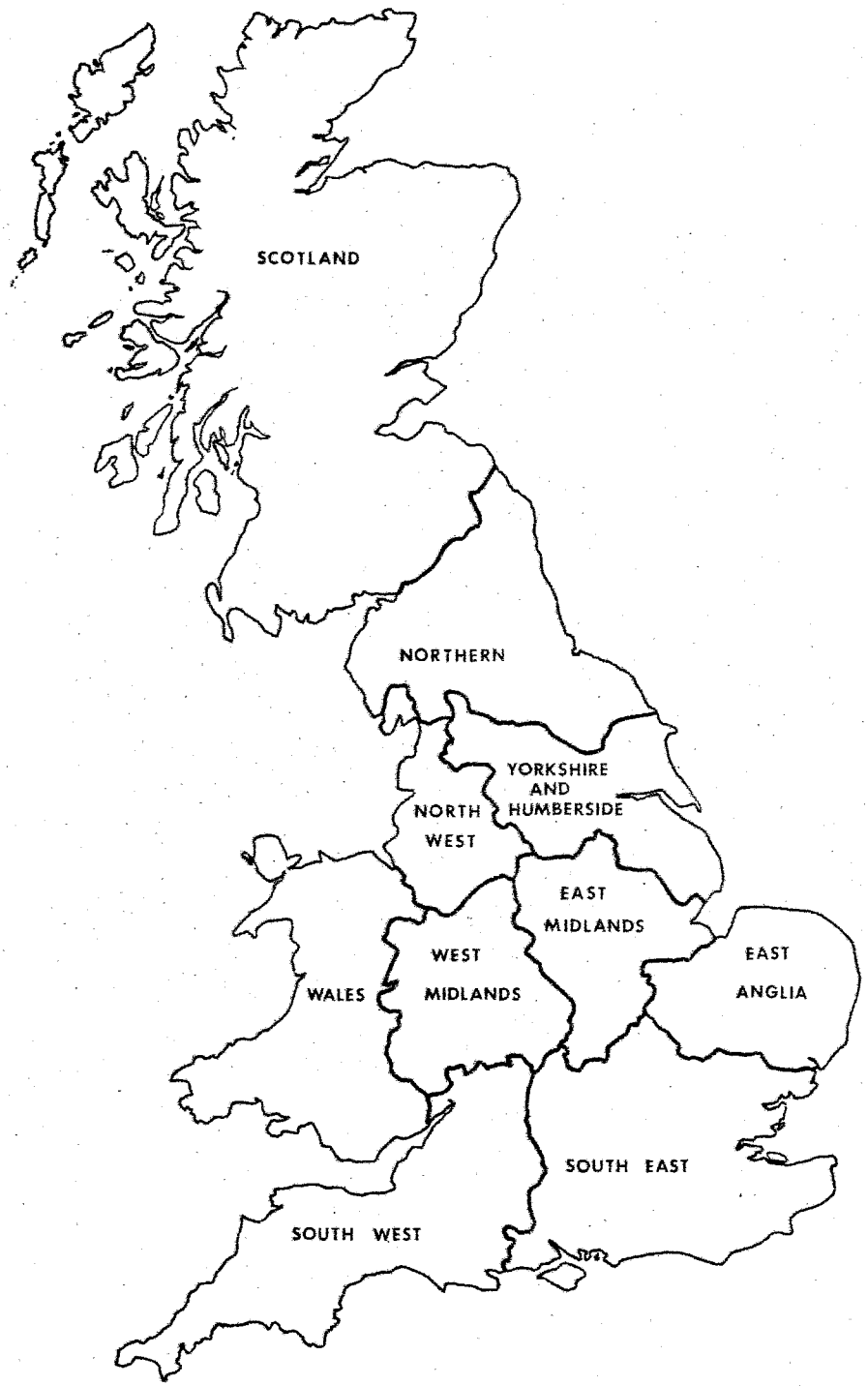

Fig. 3: The Economic Planning Regions in England

smaller than the state.

I. 3. 2. REGIONAL PLANNING AS A TRIDIMENSIONAL AND CONTINUOUS STATE ACTIVITY

Until the early to mid 1960's, regional planning, like other forms of territorial planning (for example, urban planning) was seen as an activity concerned, mainly, with the production of plans. These were supposed to provide a detailed picture of some desired end-state (blueprint) to be achieved over a specified number of years (Hall, 1975). The definition in the plan of priorities, relating specific objectives with resources, and policy instruments, created the necessary guidelines upon which the desired end-state was to be secured.

The validity of this conventional view of regional planning rested on two broad assumptions. First, the existence of a firm and stable agreement on the end-state to be achieved, involving not only absolute consensus on goals but also consistency of preferences among the relevant decision-makers. This excluded by fiat the possibility of any substantial conflicts between decision-makers and entailed their being considered as perfectly rational creatures, taking decisions on the basis of perfect information and using an invariant hierarchy of preferences. Second, the ability of the public authorities (state administrative apparatuses) to exercise perfect control over the evolution of the situations and processes which constituted the subject-matter of the planning exercise. This embraced a perfect knowledge of the relations between controls and effects, unlimited availability of policy instruments and, what is more important, unrestricted discretion in their use.

Such assumptions were unable to sustain a confrontation with reality. Assumptions of perfect rationality were increasingly disputed both in their crude evaluation of people's behaviour and requirements of perfect information. The assumption of a conflict-free decision making process rested, also, on social theories of doubtful validity (Bailey, 1975; Simmie, 1974). Moreover, the limits imposed on state action by the social structure of modern capitalist societies

resulted in a constant and increasingly significant gap between the planned reality and the real evolution of social processes.

The recognition of these issues and the subsequent response involved various developments. First of all regional planning become increasingly concerned with the notion of flexibility and the need to cater for uncertainties of various types (for example, imperfect information, changing hierarchies of preferences). Further, there was a refinement in the theorisation of the regional planning methodology and of the relations between planning and social change. These changes were associated with the increasing popularity of the rational choice paradigm of decision-making and of the systems approach to planning (Chadwick, 1971; Faludi, 1973; McLaughlin, 1969).

The net effect of these changes was to shift the focus of attention from the blueprint end-state to the intermediate decision-making processes through which the plans are prepared. This emphasis on decision-making processes was subsequently reinforced by increasing importance being attributed to the decisions which are taken in relation to recommendations made in regional plans (Carter et al, 1975).

Both the blueprint and the decision-making approaches to regional planning stress the importance of specific aspects of the planning activity. The common error of both is that, when emphasising particular aspects of the activity they, simultaneously, ignore the remaining elements.

Regional planning should be seen as a tri-dimensional continuous activity, the elements of which are kept in constant interaction. Public authorities take operational decisions on a daily basis, some of which follow from specific recommendations made in regional plans, or in relation to issues which might have been the object of recommendations in those plans. By this is meant issues which fall within the accepted domain of the regional planning activity at a given point in time.

Regional plans, in turn, arise as a result of formalised processes of intense individual and institutional interaction during which a wide range of

areas of policy choice are explored and decided upon. These decision-making processes, regional planning processes, are shaped, within a given set of constraints, by the relations of power between the various social actors involved in the processes (individuals, groups, institutions).

The pattern of relations between these three dimensions of the regional planning activity is a complex one and the study of each in isolation from the others is likely to give rise to errors of interpretation. This can be illustrated by reference to the relations between regional plans and operational decisions. Although regional plans constitute a privileged point of reference when making operational decisions, these decisions do not necessarily comply with their recommendations. This would only occur in situations where the regional planning system had perfect control over the development of social change. Furthermore, planning recommendations are always open to different interpretations and the need to grant the regional plan a fair degree of flexibility inevitably increases the range of possible alternative interpretations.

From a different perspective, however, operational decisions are meaningless if not related to a frame of reference. The fact that operational decisions are sometimes taken which by-pass, or confront, existing regional planning recommendations and, apparently, without an explicit framework of reference, does not mean that they are taken at random. In these cases, an implicit framework substitutes the explicit one (regional plan). Regional plans, operational decisions and the regional planning process will, therefore, have to be considered in their interrelations, if an adequate understanding of regional planning is to be achieved. Further they have to be seen in relation to the whole set of public planning systems and policy actions.

I. 3. 3. WHY REGIONAL PLANNING?

The question which now needs to be considered is why does the state engage in the activity of regional planning?

The development of the modern state in western Europe was marked by

the dominance of a strong centralist ideology associated with the state's 'invention' and subsequent organisation of the national territory (see above, pp.62-4) The dominance of this centralist ideology was still evident on the eve of World War Two. In the aftermath of the armed conflict, centralism continued to be the mot d'ordre in association with two broad social phenomena. First, during the two decades which followed the end of the hostilities, the objective of economic growth enjoyed an undisputed primacy in most Western states. 'Centralism' was seen, in this context, as a logical requirement of the efforts of economic growth (Arndt, 1978). Second, the development of the 'welfare state', with its emphasis on a universal 'national minimum' to which every citizen was entitled, tended also to reinforce the dominance of centralist ideologies (Scase, 1980).

In Britain, as in other western European countries, centralist ideologies came under increasing criticism from the early 1960's onwards. The immediate cause for this outburst of criticism was the growing concern about the evident uneven spatial distribution of economic growth. This situation was seen in negative terms, not only because of the social problems it generated but also because it made the management of the economy difficult, thereby reducing the rate of national economic growth. Diminishing spatial economic disparities (especially in terms of unemployment rates) was considered a precondition for greater flexibility in the application of macroeconomic instruments and this, in turn, was seen as instrumental as a device for enhancing the growth performance of the country's economy (NEDC, 1963).

Concerns about the poor rate of growth of the British economy were a major theme of political discussion in the early 1960's (Stewart, 1977). This discussion generated a widespread interest in the French experience of indicative economic planning (Leruez, 1975). In the particular case of Britain, due to the relative severity of spatial economic imbalances, it was widely held that any comprehensive type of planning had to include a spatial dimension (Roll, 1966).

Simultaneously with these developments there was also a growing criticism of the perceived shortcomings of the local government structure in

England. Robson (1968) summarises these criticisms along three main lines: first, local authorities were often too small to provide an adequate base for existing municipal services; second, the fragmentation of local government precluded effective performance of services which required large areas for administration or planning; third, the overall pattern of local authorities no longer corresponded to the contemporary style of work and life. The division between town and country, embedded in the political division between shire counties and county boroughs, was seen as creating needless planning conflicts, at a time when increasing personal mobility had generated an ever larger interdependence between town and country. Increased personal mobility and the continuing expansion of the larger cities meant that the traditional problems of urban planning had overrun the boundaries of individual local authorities and hence required solutions at a scale larger than the existing local government boundaries.

It was the convergence of these two complementary but separate arguments which dramatically increased the appeal of regional planning in Britain (as in many other European states) in the early 1960's (Lindley, 1982). Further, this sympathy towards regional planning led to a revival of interest in regionalisation, that is, in the creation of a regional level of administration (Keating, 1982). It can therefore be said that in Britain, as in other European countries,

> *... the modern region is largely a byproduct of state interventionism, of national and local planning.*
>
> (Gilli, 1974, p. 28)*[52]

In the context of these arguments, the rationale for regional planning rested on a number of assumptions. First, that regional planning had a superior ability to directly engage certain types of problems and issues affecting areas encompassing several units of local government, for example problems of social groups experiencing social, economic or political dis-advantage in certain areas

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(52) - *"La region moderne est fille de l'interventionnisme, de la planification et de l'aménagement du territoire".*

within a region. Second, that because of its particular abilities, regional planning might aid the functioning, and improve the performance of other planning systems, namely those operated by central and local governments and their agencies (Alden and Morgan, 1974). Third, that regional planning could help in bringing together physical planning and regional economic policy. Fourth, that regional planning could help in improving the spatial co-ordination between various functionally defined areas of public policy (Peterson, 1966).

Thus, regional planning was conceived from the start as a multisectoral and multilevel form of public planning.

I. 3. 4. REGIONAL PLANNING AS MULTISECTORAL AND MULTILEVEL PUBLIC PLANNING

The definition of regional planning presented earlier in this chapter (Section I. 3.1) stressed the fact that regional planning, as a form of state activity, is concerned with the control of activities and facilities in space. Further, it emphasised that the scale at which regional planning operates is one in which no integrated level of political-administration exists in the English case. The consideration of these two aspects is of crucial importance for any analysis of regional planning.

The state administrative apparatus can be seen as divided into a series of clusters of organizations. These organizations interact with each other to form functionally oriented networks of organizations in association with empirically distinct public policy sectors (Benson, 1980). Each policy sector (industry, foreign affairs, housing, etc.) develops its internal rules of functioning, supported by specific theories and doctrines which are often contradictory. Further, the functioning of each organisation, and policy-sector, is influenced by the action orientations adopted by the 'dominant coalition' (Cyert and March, 1963) of 'political administrators' (Heclo and Wildavsky, 1981).

Benson (1975) identifies four basic action orientations of political administrators. These are:

a) the fulfilment of programme requirements, i.e. the maintenance of order and effectiveness in established programmes;

b) the maintenance of a clear domain of high social importance, i.e. a domain of action characterised by exclusiveness and/or autonomy and/or dominance;

c) the maintenance of orderly, reliable patterns of resource flow to the organisation;

d) the extended application and defence of the agency's paradigm, i.e. the agency's way of doing things (definition of problems and tasks, techniques of intervention, etc.).

These action orientations, in pursuit of what Leach (1980) calls 'organisational interests', do not cover the whole possible range of action orientations. By adopting these forms of behaviour, political administrators would, indirectly, enhance their positions in terms of authority, power, status, career prospects, etc. In some cases, however, the behaviour of agency administrators is better explained by reference to professional or individual ideologies, philanthropic values, etc.

This multiplicity of action orientations, and the existence of organisational interests, which are basically self protective, gives rise to contradictions between policy sectors. Bureaucrats concerned with environmental conservation are likely to oppose industrial developments imposing a great deal of environmental disruption; free-trade arrangements supported by trade agencies may be resisted by industry departments, etc. Public policy-making is, in these circumstances, best seen as a complex of contradictory and limited decisions developed within a highly fragmented state apparatus (Hanf and Scharpf, 1978).

Regional planning occupies, in this context, a peculiar position. On the one hand, its concerns are with issues which constitute the subject matter of a number of policy sectors. In this sense, regional planning cuts across the boundaries of a number of functionally defined policy sectors (housing, industry, etc.). On the other hand, regional planning considers these issues from a

different perspective than that adopted by those policy sectors. Regional planning analyses these problems from a spatially oriented rather than a functionally oriented perspective.

Though primarily dealing with the organisation of social space, regional planning interacts with the functionally oriented policy sectors, and associated planning systems, giving rise to further types of contradictions. For example, the need to increase industrial productivity may well suggest state action favouring restructuring and reorganisation of branches of industry, including selective closures, investment, etc. Because of the uneven distribution of production, these actions are likely to hit some geographical areas while other areas may benefit from them. Certain state agency administrators are, in these circumstances, likely to adopt a territorial perspective in examining the problems as against a functional one. This, in turn, may create conflicts between technocratic (functionally oriented) and topocratic (spatially oriented) groups of state agents (Beer, 1978). Sectoral-regional relations and conflicts should, therefore, be seen as adding to intersectoral relations and conflicts.

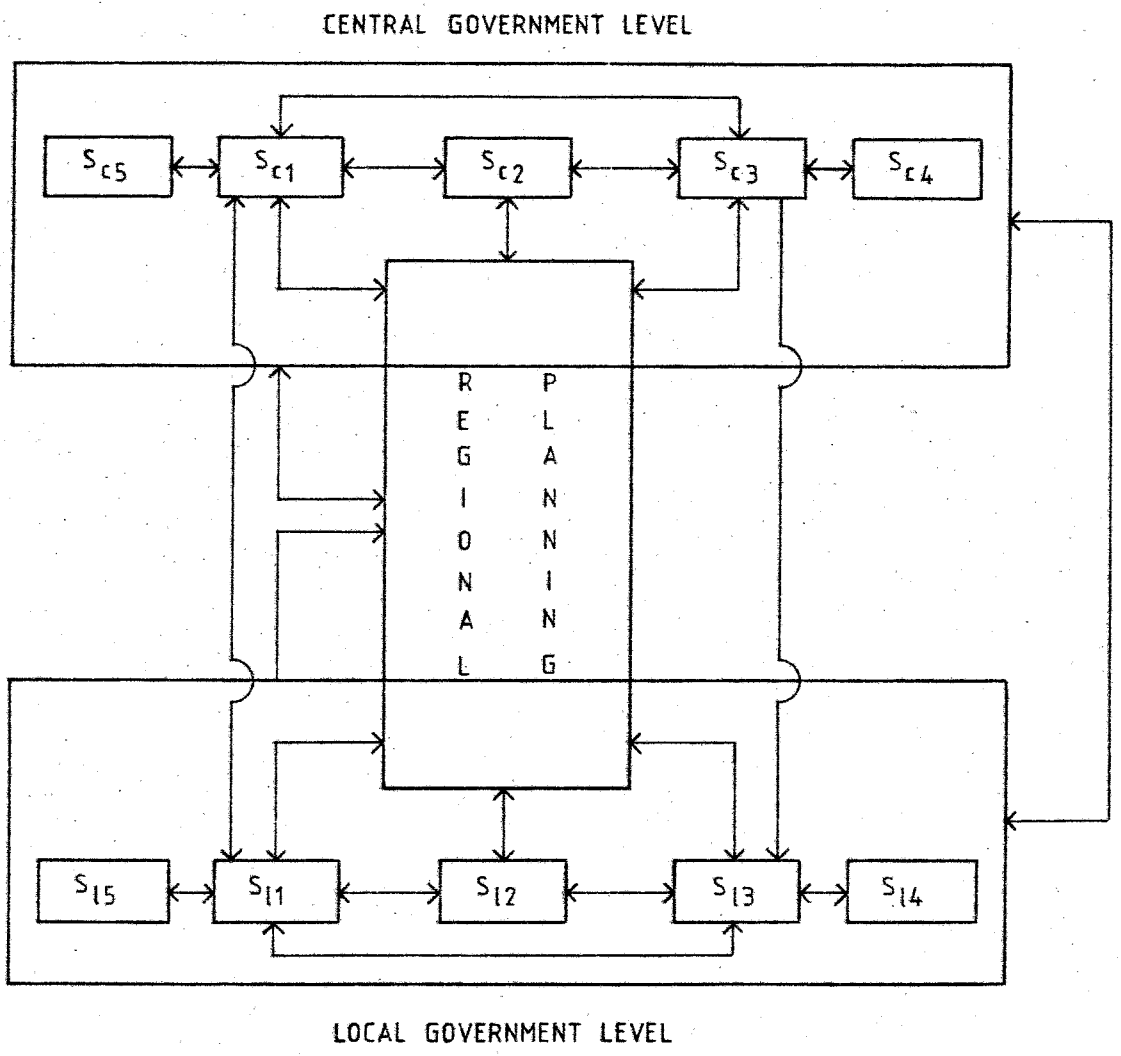
Besides cutting across a number of policy sectors, regional planning acts as a bridge between the two main levels of political administration. In the absence of a regional level of government, regional planning is responsible, in part at least, for integrating the regional level into the political administrative system from the point of view of planning. Regional planning is required to translate central decisions and policies to the regional level and, simultaneously, to integrate into a coherent whole, decision and policies of local authorities within the region. More important, regional planning is supposed to achieve a compatibility between these two processes.

The simultaneous fulfilment of the above requirements is, undoubtedly, problematic. To begin with, there is a difference in the scale through which phenomena are analysed. Unemployment rates, or housing deprivation, may well present two different patterns depending on whether they are analysed at a local

or a national scale, as the inner city syndrome clearly suggests. Similarly, a given, and localised problem (for example, inner city problems) is likely to present itself in quite different colours to neighbouring local authorities, depending on whether, or not, those local authorities are affected by the problem. Thus the appreciation of the same problem from different levels of political-administration, or from different local authorities, may well give rise to interpretations and subsequent decisions which are not easily reconciliable. Localist and central-local territorial conflicts are, therefore, likely to be added to the two previous broad types of conflict. Though, as direct relationships exist between the central and local levels of political administration, both in general terms (for example, local government finance) and in relation to individual policy sectors, regional planning can well be short-circuited whenever it is unable to fulfill its regulatory role. The fact that the regional planning has to compete with other mechanisms of regulation of central local relations clearly weakens its ability as a regulatory device.

Regional planning must therefore be seen as a multisectoral and multi-level type of public planning. On the one hand regional planning is concerned with issues otherwise dealt with by various policy sectors organised at the two major levels of political admnistration, thereby providing a bridge between policy sectors and between central and local governments. On the other hand regional planning parallels central-local government relations both within individual policy-sectors and the two levels of political-admnistration as a whole (see Figure 4). In these circumstances its relative importance within the whole range of public planning systems will vary according to the relative importance of two main variables: the role of spatial (regional) considerations in the processes of policy formation both within and between individual policy sectors and, more specifically, the ability of the regional level to act as a privileged scale for the resolution of conflicts associated with the functioning of the state administrative apparatuses.

These conflicts are <u>internal</u> to the state apparatuses only at a first



S_{ci} organisation of policy sector i at central level

S_{lj} organisation of policy sector j at local level

$\longleftrightarrow$ functional link

Fig. 4: Regional Planning as a Multisectoral and Multilevel Form of State Activity

level of analysis. A number of these conflicts can certainly be interpreted with reference to psycho-sociological motivations of agency administrators, for example, attempts to obtain privileges for their organisations as a way of magnifying their own importance.[53] Others, however, can only be interpreted with reference to the relations between state and civil society. Thus, central-local and localist conflicts should be seen as political conflicts deriving, in part at least, from the different representative base of the two levels of political-administration, or of different local authorities. Similarly, some intersectoral (interorganizational) conflicts can, also, only be adequately interpreted by referring to the process of differential *"interiorisation of social conflicts by the state administrative apparatuses"*. (Grémion, 1976, p. 331).* The argument in this respect is that, as state agencies become identified with the organised interests associated with their domain of operation, conflicts between organised social interests are transposed to the interior of the state apparatuses, where they assume the form of interorganisational or intersectoral conflicts.[54]

There is, therefore, a need to locate the study of regional planning problems, and conflicts, into a double set of dialectical relations. These are, on the one hand, the unity-diversity dialectical relations associated with the complex operation of the state administrative apparatuses and, on the other hand, the dialectical relations between state and civil society.[55]

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(53) - A number of interorganisational conflicts with psycho-sociological causes are discussed by Gremion (1976), and Hanf and Scharpf (1978).

(54) - This phenomenun was considered by Stewart (1958) as one of the inevitable effects on government of the operation of pressure groups. Offe (1981) discusses this problem in some detail in relation to the problems of 'corporatism' in West Germany. Offe's use of the expression corporatism corresponds to Schmitter's (1977) idea of 'state corporatism'.

(55) - For a similar perspective, see Mazères (1978, 1978a).

I. 3. 5. Regional Planning - Alternative Theoretical Foundations

The broad features of the analytical framework presented in the preceding sections of this chapter are, in a more or less explicit way, supported by the conclusions of the theoretical discussions expounded in the two previous chapters. For example, in the analytical framework, space is understood as a basis, and object, of political conflicts; state action is related to the existence of organizational and political conflicts; and the state apparatus is seen as functionally and politically fragmented into policy-sectors and levels of political admnistration. Alternative ways of conceptualising the role of the state in modern societies and the role of space in political and social processes will, naturally, give rise to different approaches to regional planning.

However, as noted earlier, the theoretical foundation of regional planning literature is hardly one of its stronger elements. For example, the recent theoretical debates concerning the role of the state in urban planning (e.g. Kirk, 1980; Saunders, 1979, 1981; Simmie, 1981) and regional policy (e.g. Morgan, 1981; Dunford, Geddes and Perrons, 1982) have no parallel as far as regional planning is concerned. Apparently, most regional planning texts appear to ignore this sort of problem. In practice what they do is simply to endorse one particular perspective on these problems and then to incorporate that perspective in their analyses, mostly in an implicit way. It is worth illustrating this point by reference to the theorisation of the state.

A crucial assumption inbuilt in most regional planning literature is that society can be conceptualised as a social system in which there is a broad agreement on the goals settled for future social development. This view, most obviously associated with the systems approach to planning (e.g. Chadwick, 1971; Hilhorst, 1971; McLoughlin, 1969), does provide for the existence of conflict in society (some types of conflicts at least) but its main assumptions are based on equilibrium concerns. For instance, McLoughlin introducing his systems approach to planning, defines social reality as

a self-regulating ecosystem constantly tending for a state of

equilibrium labelled ecological climax

(McLoughlin, 1969, p.6)

From this perspective planning in general, and regional planning in particular, is seen as an activity through which a society induces change in itself. This, as Alden and Morgan put it:

involves the application of scientific knowledge in order to solve the problems and achieve the goals of (the) social system

(Alden and Morgan, 1974, pp. 1 - 2)

Thus, the state is seen as a regulating mechanism acting to carry through the social system's goals. For example Glasson defines the role of regional development agencies as attempting to influence

the process of development in a beneficial way (towards higher positions on the value continua) for a region

(Glasson, 1978, p. 33)

The adoption of these formulations excludes, in theoretical terms, the political dimension from regional planning and reduces it to a mere technical function, in which the role of the state (planning) is merely to achieve general goals common to the whole of the social system. This perspective has been the object of much, and justified, criticism because of its implicit consensus view of social order and change on the one hand (e.g. Bailey, 1975; Simmie, 1974), and its reliance on the rational model of decision making on the other (e.g. Gillingwater, 1975; Hart, Skelcher and Wedgwood-Oppenheim, 1976).

The rejection of the systems approach to planning allowed for the introduction of a political dimension in regional planning analysis. Given the dominance of pluralist analysis in anglo-saxon 'political science' literature until recently, it is not surprising that the political dimension of regional planning was introduced in accordance with pluralist analyses of the political process and of the role of the state in modern societies. For example, Gillingwater (1975) in his ambitious attempt to provide regional planning with a solid theoretical base, adopted a pluralist approach to the state based on Crick (1964). He conceptualised the role of the state vis-à-vis the political process

as one of balancing and reconciliation of conflicting interests. This vision of the state as a neutral mechanism standing outside the political process is theoretically unacceptable for reasons which were developed earlier in this thesis (see above, pp. 23-4).

In anglo-saxon 'political science' literature the most vigourous challange to pluralist analysis of the state was mounted by élite theories. This general situation has a clear parallel in the particular case of regional planning analysis. For example, in their mammoth analysis of the containment of urban England, Hall et al (1973) suggest that planning policies were dominated by a political élite constituted by middle-upper class interests in the shire counties. In a similar mood researchers from the Rowntree Research Unit (1974) claimed that regional planning in the North-East of England had consistently been defined by an unified regional élite, which used regional organisations and policies as instruments to enhance its own interests.

The criticisms levelled earlier in this thesis at instrumentalist analyses of the state (see above, pp.24-6) can be used ipsis verbis in relation to the above formulations. In the particular case of regional planning, however, instrumentalist analysis of the state based on élite theories have a more clear flaw as they tend to yield somewhat contradictory conclusions when applied to different English regions. Hall (1980) explains away this problem in typical fashion

> *Planning policies in Britain since 1945 have been dominated by an unholly alliance between two unlikely bed-fellows, both committed to non-growth and non-dynamism: the Labour machines in the North and in Scotland, dedicated to the preservation of traditional industrial structures and traditional industrial cities; and the Tory machines in the shire counties, dedicated to the preservation of their traditional way of life*
>
> (Hall, 1980, p. 256)

Surprisingly enough Marxist authors have, by and large, remained aloof from debates about regional planning. In one of the few contributions from a marxist viewpoint Geddes (1978) argues, tentatively, that the creation, in the mid 1960s, of the system of Regional Economic Planning Councils and Boards (REPCs

and REPBs) should be seen as an attempt to bypass local power structures by a territorial central state apparatus more functional to the class interests represented by the central state. For other marxist commentators, however, the creation of this machinery is best understood in relation to changes in the mechanisms of interest representation and intermediation and, more specifically, the development of corporatism in Britain (Conference of Socialist Economists, 1979; Jessop, 1980).

These two approaches are not incompatible. They are, however, too general to provide an adequate basis for the understanding of the role of the state in regional planning. Further, the abolition by the current conservative government of the REPCs creates a total vacuum as far as regional planning is concerned from these perspectives.

From this short account of alternative approaches to the state in regional planning literature, it is clear that there is some foundation to the claim made in the opening paragraphs of this part of the thesis, that the theoretical basis of regional planning is the achilles heel of much literature in the subject. The discussion in the two previous chapters, as well as the analytical framework developed in this chapter, suggests that further work in this area needs to be based on more solid theoretical foundations.

I. 3. 6. SUMMARY

Regional Planning needs to be considered as a form of public planning concerned with the organisation of social space within regions. It is a continuous state activity which encompasses operational decisions, regional plans and the decision-making processes through which those plans are prepared. Regional planning is not associated with a single policy-sector nor with a unique level of political-administration; rather, it is multisectoral and multilevel in character. As a form of state activity, regional planning cannot be analysed only by looking at the internal mechanisms of operation of the state administrative apparatus; it

is also necessary to consider the activity in the context of the dialectical relationships between state and civil society.

Regional planning should, therefore, be analysed with the help of a framework constituted by two broad sets of dialectical relations. At a first level of analysis, regional planning relates to the broad set of unity-diversity dialectical relations which are associated with the operation of any complex social mechanism. Relations, and conflicts, between policy sectors (decisions and structures), between state agents and between levels of political administration, can all be considered as related to the effects of these unity-diversity contradictions, as it affects the internal operation of the state apparatuses. At a second level of analysis, however, regional planning needs to be seen in relation to the broad dialectical relations established between state and civil society. Regional planning is one of the processes through which the state attempts to organise the social space under its jurisdiction. Further, regional planning has to be seen in relation to the social conflicts which maintain, reproduce and transform the existing social order (Figure 5).

Having outlined the broad contours of the analytical framework through which regional planning practice should be approached, it is important to initiate the process of making that framework operational. For this purpose Part II of the study analyses regional planning developments in the West Midlands region focussing, mainly, on the period from the mid - 1960s onwards.

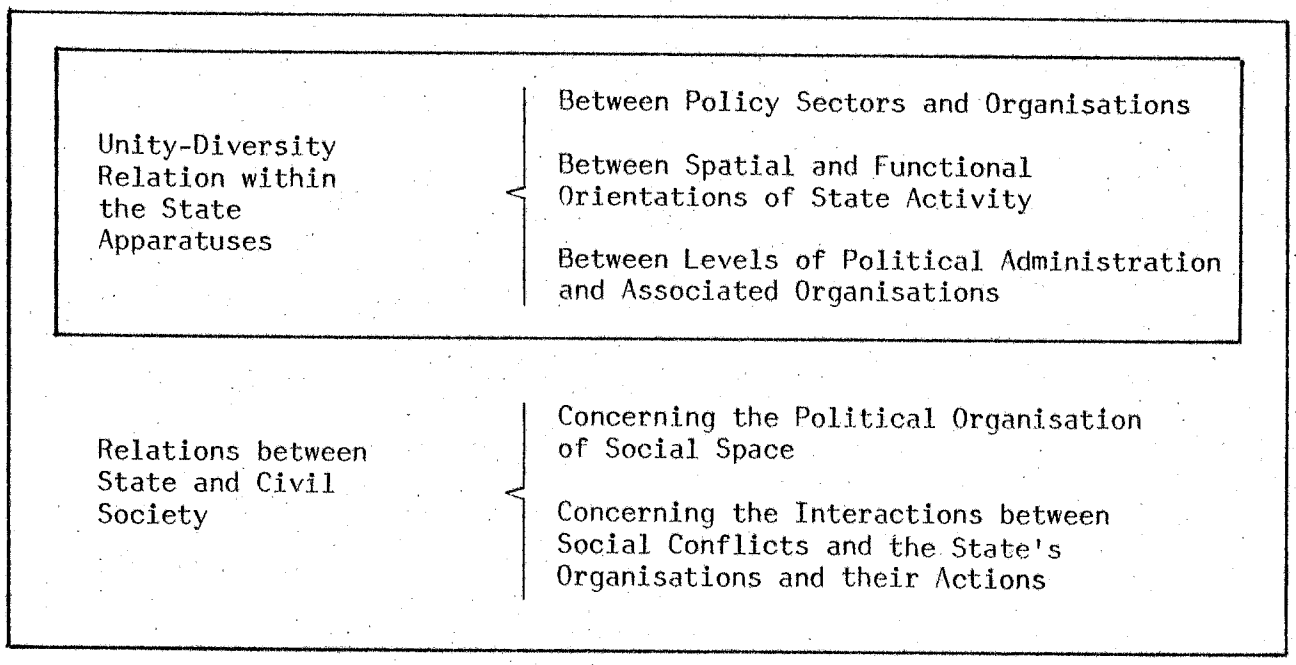

Fig 5: Regional Planning - a framework for analysis (I)

INTRODUCTION

The principal aim of this Part of the thesis is to present a review of the major features of regional planning in the West Midlands in the period from 1964 onwards, with particular emphasis on its political and organisational dimensions.

For the purposes of this study the expression West Midlands refers to the New Standard Region embracing the West Midlands Metropolitan County and the shire counties of Hereford and Worcester, Salop, Staffordshire and Warwickshire[1] (Fig. 6). The region is dominated by the Birmingham - Black Country conurbation the sphere of influence of which extends well beyond the administrative boundaries of the metropolitan county to incorporate a significant proportion of the region's demographic and economic assets. This domination, however, has not resulted in a complete polarisation between the conurbation and the rest of the region.

The North Staffordshire sub-region, centered on Stoke - on - Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme, with its industrial heritage of 'pits and pots', has traditionally been an area with an unique character of its own in the regional context, possessing longstanding problems of outmigration, urban dereliction and industrial decline. The inclusion of this area in the West Midlands region is a reflection of the strong links the Southern part of Staffordshire has with the region's central conurbation, although Staffordshire county as a whole has ties not only with the region's central conurbation but also with the Merseyside and Manchester conurbation.

Similarly at the western edge of the region, between the Severn and the Welsh border there is an area which also claims a sub- regional identity. While this locality has a relatively prosperous agricultural base it nevertheless faces all the usual problems of sparsely populated rural areas outside the commuting

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(1) - Prior to the Local Government Act of 1972 the region comprised the counties of Herefordshire, Salop, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestshire, with the conurbation lying partly in each of the last three of these.

PART II

REGIONAL PLANNING IN
THE WEST MIDLANDS REGION

Fig. 6: The West Midlands - local authorities boundaries after 1974

range of a major urban centre, namely: rural depopulation and slow economic growth. The relative weakness of functional linkages with the Birmingham - Black Country conurbation and the major significance of its agricultural sector accounts for the distinctiveness of this area within the regional context.

Conversely the remaining parts of the region are better understood in terms of their relationships with the region's core. In these circumstances, and as the nature and strength of these relationships is itself a result of the evolution of the various component parts of the polarised area, it would be incorrect to draw definitive demarcation lines either for the external boundaries of this area as a whole or for any of its constituent parts. Historically the demographic and economic dynamism of the Birmingham-Black Country conurbation has led to an expansion of its area of influence with the Coventry agglomeration providing a countermagnet for the Eastern part of the region's periphery. However, this bipolar centrifugal expansion was considerably reduced during the last decade due to a combination of market trends and planning decisions.

Given the above perspective on the region's structure the emphasis of the following chapters on the relations between the region's core and its sphere of influence is hardly surprising. Further, this emphasis is also justified by the particular characteristics of the regional planning practice in the West Midlands. This has consistently stressed the importance of the conurbation's problems, often with the counterpart of insufficient attention being paid to the remaining sub-regional issues. But this is to anticipate.

Regional Planning in the West Midlands - the period up to the mid - 1960s

Regional planning developments in the West Midlands in the period until the mid 1960s are reviewed in detail in Appendix B below. Here, only a short account of events is provided, in order to set the scene for subsequent chapters covering the period from the mid 1960s onwards.

The foundations of British regional planning were laid down in a number of Royal Comission Reports published during or immediately after the end of World War II. In the favourable political and ideological context which followed the end of the hostilities these reports were rapidly translated into a remarkable burst of planning legislation and practice (Hall, 1975). The West Midlands was not insensitive to these developments. In 1948 a local pressure group published Conurbation a planning survey of the Birmingham-Black Country conurbation (West Midland Group, 1948). Also in the same year central government disclosed the West Midlands Plan, a report prepared by a team headed by Prof. Patrick Abercrombie and Mr. Herbert Jackson which covered the area comprising the shire counties of Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestshire which at that time, of course, included the conurbation area (Fig. 7).

Although the two documents covered areas quite different in size this difference was of minor practical consequences. In fact both documents concentrated very much on the problems of a small number of areas within the conurbation where pressures on space were considered to be too great. In pratical terms this meant the formulation of planning proposals which sought to relieve these pressures and prevent their recurrence. Both documents dealt with this problem by calling for an immediate halt to migration into the region's core and suggesting a policy of urban containment. They differed, however, in the proposals they made for achieving this policy objective.

The West Midland Group (W.M.G.) argued that although there was urban congestion in certain areas of the conurbation this should not be seen as a densely populated and continuously built-up area as the overall density of population did not exceed 12.1 persons per acre and 'undeveloped' land, open spaces and derelict land represented almost two thirds of its total area. On the basis of these figures the W.M.G. suggested that the planning problems facing the conurbation could be solved within the limits of its present area. For this purpose, they continued, what was required was an energetic policy of urban redevelopment and control within the conurbation involving preservation of the

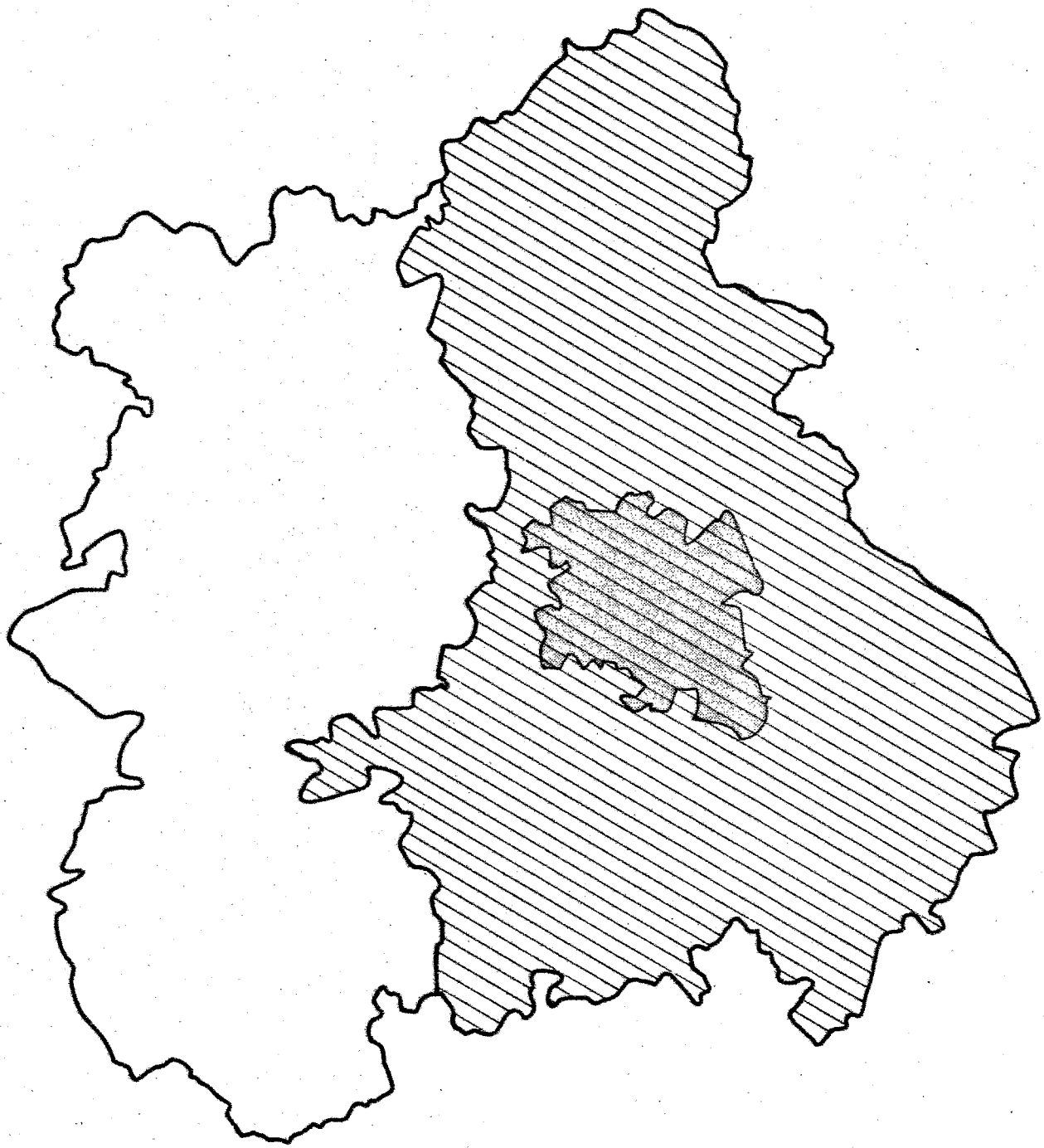

Fig. 7: Areas Covered by Conurbation and the West Midlands Plan

unspoiled places, reclamation of derelict land and restoration of misused land. More specifically they suggest, as an operational target, the constitution of an:

> *archipelago of urban settlements isolate from its neighbours and set in green, open land, from which all developments other than for agriculture or amenity is rigidly excluded*
>
> (W.M.G., 1948, p. 200).

The realisation of this pattern of development, based on the preservation of those green wedges existing within and on the marginal land of the conurbation, would involve, according to its proponents:

a) for the Black Country - the development of a continuous network of strips of open land, and

b) for Birmingham - the splitting of the central core of urban development by the introduction of open spaces.

Together with an extensive programme of landscape improvement, derelict land reclamation and urban redevelopment, the W.M.G. argued that this pattern of development would provide for better living conditions within the conurbation without causing major upheavals in the distribution of population.

The West Midlands Plan concurred with the W.M.G. in accepting that as a whole the conurbation had enough room to accommodate the existing population and even a slight increase in this. However, the Plan did not press for the redevelopment strategy suggested in Conurbation for two reasons. Firstly, it considered unfeasible, in both financial and political terms, the W.M.G. proposals for treatment of vacant and derelict land. Secondly, its population forecasts were considerably more substantial than those put forward by the W.M.G. namely because its authors considered that it would be politically impossible to stop migratory flows into the conurbation for the time being.

Given this perspective the West Midlands Plan argued that urban containment had to be complemented by a policy of planned overspill of some 150,000 people to locations well away from the conurbation during the next 14 years. To deal with this overspill population the Plan did not suggest, unlike

the Greater London Plan prepared some years earlier by a team also headed hy Prof. Abercrombie, the creation of New Towns, but rather the expansion of a large number of existing small towns. This was to be complemented by the creation of a Green Belt which would halt urban sprawl and assure access to open countryside for the conurbation population.

But the differences between Conurbation and the West Midlands Plan were not restricted to different proposals on how to deal with problems of urban congestion in certain areas of the conurbation. They differed also, for exemple, in their approach to the conurbation's industrial prospects and the best way to manage it. The W.M.G. argued for the spatial redistribution of industry within the conurbation along the major road lines, and for the redevelopment and rejuvenation of existing industry, through the introduction of new branches of production within already existing industrial sectors. However, reflecting the views of the local business community, a strong case was made against the entry into the conurbation of "*large self-contained factories, or of factories owned by large self-contained firms*" (W.M.G., 1948, p. 135). Finally they rejected any attempt at enforced relocation of industry away from the conurbation. The West Midlands Plan, in turn, argued that the W.M.G. proposals were unacceptable on the grounds that the international trading position of the United Kingdom was rapidly deteriorating and that any export led expansion would result in pressures for growth in the West Midlands. It was in the interests of the country as a whole that such growth should be accommodated, the Plan concluded.

It is now worth presenting a brief assessment of the two documents. Conurbation presented in the physical planning field a set ofhighly flexible and imaginative proposals. Further, it constituted a coherent whole with policy proposals in the industrial sphere which fitted very well with the suggested physical redevelopment of the urban core. However, the proposals were embedded in an overall political attempt to protect the existing local business community from the perceived disruptive interference of large firms foreign to the area, or

the imposition of state controls on the location of the existing industry.

In contrast the West Midlands Plan was less imaginative, flexible and internally coherent but had neverthless a greater degree of understanding of the political context in which it was prepared. On the one hand it was an attempt to apply the 'best prescription' of regional planning at the time (urban containment and overspill backed by a Green Belt). On the other hand it recognised that the application of this prescription to the region had to take into account the important industrial role of the region in the national context. The compatibilisation of these two principles proved, however, difficult and the Plan was characterised by a fundamental ambiguity in this regard.

In the event the West Midlands Plan was endorsed by Government with minor, but politically significant alterations. One of the proposals made in the Plan which was not endorsed by central government concerned the creation of a single planning authority covering the whole of the conurbation. The rejection of this proposal, which was vehemently attacked by the conurbation local authorities, meant that the achievement of the objectives of the Plan was made dependent on the goodwill and coordinated efforts of a large number of local authorities.

If the major objectives of the West Midlands Plan were to be achieved it was necessary to attain an annual planned overspill of population from the conurbation of some 10,000 people during over a fifteen-year period. This meant the relocation of population in self-contained urban developments far afield from the conurbation and located within the administrative jurisdiction of a different local authority from the one from which the dislocated population had moved. For the strategy to be successful in social terms it was clearly understood that a complementary movement of employment opportunities was required. This was rooted in a wider belief that people would be happier in small, well--planned towns with work near at hand than in large and congested towns or in commutter settlements miles from their workplaces.

As the West Midlands Plans did not suggest the creation of any New Town in the region the planned overspill of population was to be entirely achieved through the planned expansion of existing small towns. The legislative backing for this process was provided by the passing of the Town Development Act of 1952 which allowed local authorities to establish between themselves agreements for the creation of Town Development Schemes (T.D.S.s) designed to cater for the overspill of population from one local authority to the other. Central government involvement in these agreements was to be kept to a minimum, and so was central government participation in their implementation.

The passing of this Act seemed to open up the opportunity of a lasting solution to the problems of housing land shortage in some of the conurbation local authorities, Birmingham in particular. In fact, after the end of the hostilities Birmingham City Council had drawn up an ambitious programme of comprehensive urban redevelopment of the inner areas, involving better housing at reduced densities, better community facilities and more open spaces. By the early mid-1950s this programme was in full swing and at current building rates, and densities, all building land inside the city boundaries would be used up within some five years. The possibility of concluding T.D.S. agreements offered what appered to be a realistic chance of maintaining the pace of the redevelopment programme.

However these expectations proved to be overoptimistic. Up to 1961 Birmingham negociated T.D.S.s with no less than 112 local anthorities but only signed agreements with 38. Of these some were as small as to involve only 60 houses in Tutbury Rural District (Staffordshire) and others were as far afield as Weston-Super-Mare in Somerset. By far the most sucessfull results had been achieved in Staffordshire but as a whole the pace of planned overspill was obviously insufficient. In 1961 of the 4,768 houses programmed in T.D.S. only 1,557 had been completed. This figure is best appreciated against the backcloth provided by the 1961 Census results which indicated that during the 1951-1961 period some 80,000 people had 'voluntarily' moved out of Birmingham mainly to

peripheral locations.

The slow progress in securing overspill agreements was the key factor in the decision of Birmingham City Council to press for the designation of a New Town in the region from the mid-1950s onwards. When it became apparent that central government was unwilling to designate any New Town in the region this prompted Birmingham to press for boundary extensions instead. The adoption by the Birmingham City Council of this form of action led, in turn, to a number of bitter planning disputes ending in public enquiries opposing the City Council to conservationist pressure groups and local anthorities in the shire counties of Warwickshire and Worcestshire. An important element in these public enquiries was the fact that, in answer to a Ministerial demand, the shire counties had previously submmited proposals for a statutory Green Belt encircling the conurbation. All Birmingham application for boundary extensions, and subsequent planning development, fell within the area of the proposed Green Belt and this raised basic questions concerning the status of Green Belt controls.

The first planning enquiries were mostly decided against Birmingham Council. In the early 1960s, however, the odds started moving in Birmingham's favour, largely as a result of a change in attitudes of central government towards the region's planning problems and, more generally, towards New Towns. Thus, in May 1962 the Minister for Housing and Local Government announced the designation of a New Town near Dawley, in Salop, with a suggested overspill intake of 60-70,000 people. In the summer of the following year another New Town was designated at Redditch, in Worcestshire, with one third of the designated area within the proposed Green Belt and suggested overspill intake of some 40,000 people. The designation of Redditch New Town was a clear indication that central government was prepared to sympathetically consider proposals for development close-in to the conurbation.

This possibility was immediately exploited by Birmingham City Council which submmited a planning application for a 50,000 people peripheral housing development east of the city, in the proposed Green Belt. Planning permmission

for this development was granted in 1965 and this decision, taken together with the designation of the two New Towns at Dawley and Redditch and two substantial T.D.S.s at Droitwich and Daventry agreed in 1964 went a long way towards meeting Birmingham's demand for overspill locations in the 1960s.

At this point it is worth putting forward some evaluative comments on the experience of regional planning in the West Midlands in the period up to the early 1960s. Firstly, as Gregory (1977) has clearly shown, the Green Belt policy was fairly effective in containing the physical sprawl of the conurbation. Whether this should be considered a positive, or negative, development is, however, a totally different matter. Secondly, the influence of planned overspill on the broad movement of population was quite negligible. Thirdly, as a combined effect of higher than expected population growth, the effective operation of Green Belt controls and the failure of T.D.S.s to get off the ground throughout the 1950s, the population in the conurbation increased by more than 150,000 people in the period 1951-1961. The net effect of the accommodation of this population increase, in the places where it occurred, was to further reduce the green areas within the conurbation, to slow down the rate of slum clearance and push local authorities within the conurbation to high densities, and high-rise council housing programmes. Fourthly, the failure to conclude T.D.S.s contributed to a progressive social-spatial imbalance within the region. The movement of population out of the conurbation, mainly to private sector developments for owner occupation, was biased towards middle and upper income strata of the population leaving behind those who could not afford the costs of home-ownership. In summary, in the period up to the early 1960s, as far as planned developments on a regional scale were concerned the system in practice was all 'containment' and no 'overspill'.

Of course the state of affairs changed dramatically in the early 1960s when the Conservative central government took a more interventionist stance towards the problems of overspill. However, the effects of this change in course would only become apparent later in the decade.

Regional Planning in the West Midlands - the period from the mid - 1960s onwards

The remainding chapters in this Part of the thesis analyse regional planning developments in the West Midlands in the period from the mid 1960s onwards. Chapter II.1 deals with regional planning developments in the second half of the 1960s. The early stages of this period were characterised by two elements. First, planning in general, and regional planning in particular, became almost a cult term in Britain. Second, population forecasts both for the West Midlands, and Britain as a whole, reached an all-time peak. Given these elements much attention was focussed on the problems likely to occur if the projections proved to be correct and on the search for adequate planning solutions to these problems. In practice, however, there was a tendency to adopt ad-hoc solutions to the perceived planning problems without fully assessing its effects on the region's future. Two regional planning documents, the West Midlands - a Regional Study (D.E.A., 1965) and Patterns of Growth (W.M.E.P.C., 1967), were published during this period but it was apparent that they had little effect on regional planning operational decisions, which were taken in a piece-meal fashion by the diverse bodies involved. By the end of the period local authorities in the region were decided to call a halt to this state of affairs and to prepare a comprehensive regional strategy for the region.

Chapter II.2 deals with planning developments in the period from the late 1960s to the mid 1970s. In the West Midlands this period was marked by the multiplication of often contradictory planning initiatives at the regional, sub-regional and local levels, and by a succession of misunderstandings, and conflicts, between the main bodies involved in the planning of the region. The West Midlands Economic Planning Council (W.M.E.P.C.) published An Economic Appraisal (W.M.E.P.C., 1971), a study of the region's economic prospects, in which it was argued that, unless a positive policy of industrial regeneration was adopted, the region's economic outlook was bleak. In sharp contrast with

this A Developing Strategy for the West Midlands (W.M.R.S., 1971) prepared on behalf of the West Midlands Planning Authorities Conference was based on optimistic assumptions and forecasts concerning the region's future growth. In fact, when it became apparent that these assumptions and forecasts were unduly optimistic the planning proposals were substantially modified and, in the end, the approved strategy amounted to little more than a confirmation of overspill schemes already being developed or agreed. In spite of this fact the future of regional planning in the West Midlands looked healthy by the end of this period. The region not only had a regional strategy endorsed by both central government and the W.M.P.A.C. but there was also agreement about organisational arrangements to monitor the progress of the strategy and an explicit commitment to review it in a few years time.

In the event dramatic changes in the overall context in which A Developing Stategy had been produced emphasised the importance of close monitoring and led to the updating of the strategy earlier than expected. Further, the characteristics of the changes were such that they tended to exacerbate the divergences of opinion existing between the principal participants in the process of regional planning concerning the problems affecting the region and the best way to tackle them. Chapter II.3 analyses the process of Updating and Rolling Forward of the West Midlands Regional Stategy (J.M.S.G., 1979). At the end of this process regional planning in the West Midlands, as indeed elsewhere in England, was in a much worse shape than at the beginning of the period. Further, its immediate prospects look rather bleak as the organisational machinery which was responsible for regional planning in the region during this period has now been completely dismantled.

The brief Concluding Remarks that complete this Part of the thesis attempt to provide a synoptic view of regional planning developments in the West Midlands region in the period from the mid 1960s onwards, emphasising the importance of political and organisational elements in the process.

II.1 - THE PLANNING HERITAGE OF THE 1960'S

Throughout the 1950's the regional planning scene in the West Midlands, and indeed elsewhere in England, was dominated by the persistent failure of local authorities to agree on the realisation of Town Development Schemes on a scale commensurate with the population overspill requirements of local authorities in the major urban areas. This led to a sequence of planning disputes between local authorities resulting in public inquiries, a slow down in the rate of slum clearance, etc...

The situation dramatically improved in the early 1960's when the Conservative Government's overall approach to the overspill question underwent a marked change of direction. In fact this change in course was part of a much wider process of political-ideological change in regard to discussions concerning social problems. Most politicians appeared to accept the prognosis made by Bell (1961) concerning 'the end of ideology'. The solution to social problems, it was widely asserted at the time, seemed to depend on the development, and subsequent use, of technical innovations and the expert planning of the future. As the Conservative Party manifesto for the October 1964 general election phrased it:

> *In contemporary politics the argument is not for or against planning. The question is: how is planning to be done?*
>
> (Conservative Party, 1964)

Given this perspective only two problems appear to obstruct the road to the solution of the overspill problem. Firstly, the comparatively slow rate of growth of the U.K. economy and its persistent 'stop-go' cycles. This problem resulted in severe financial constraints for the formulation and operation of public policies. A second difficulty arose from steadily rising population projections (Fig. 8).

Within the framework of financial stringencies created by the first problem, regional planning in the West Midlands throughout the 1960's was mainly concerned with devising solutions to the potencial problems that would arise if

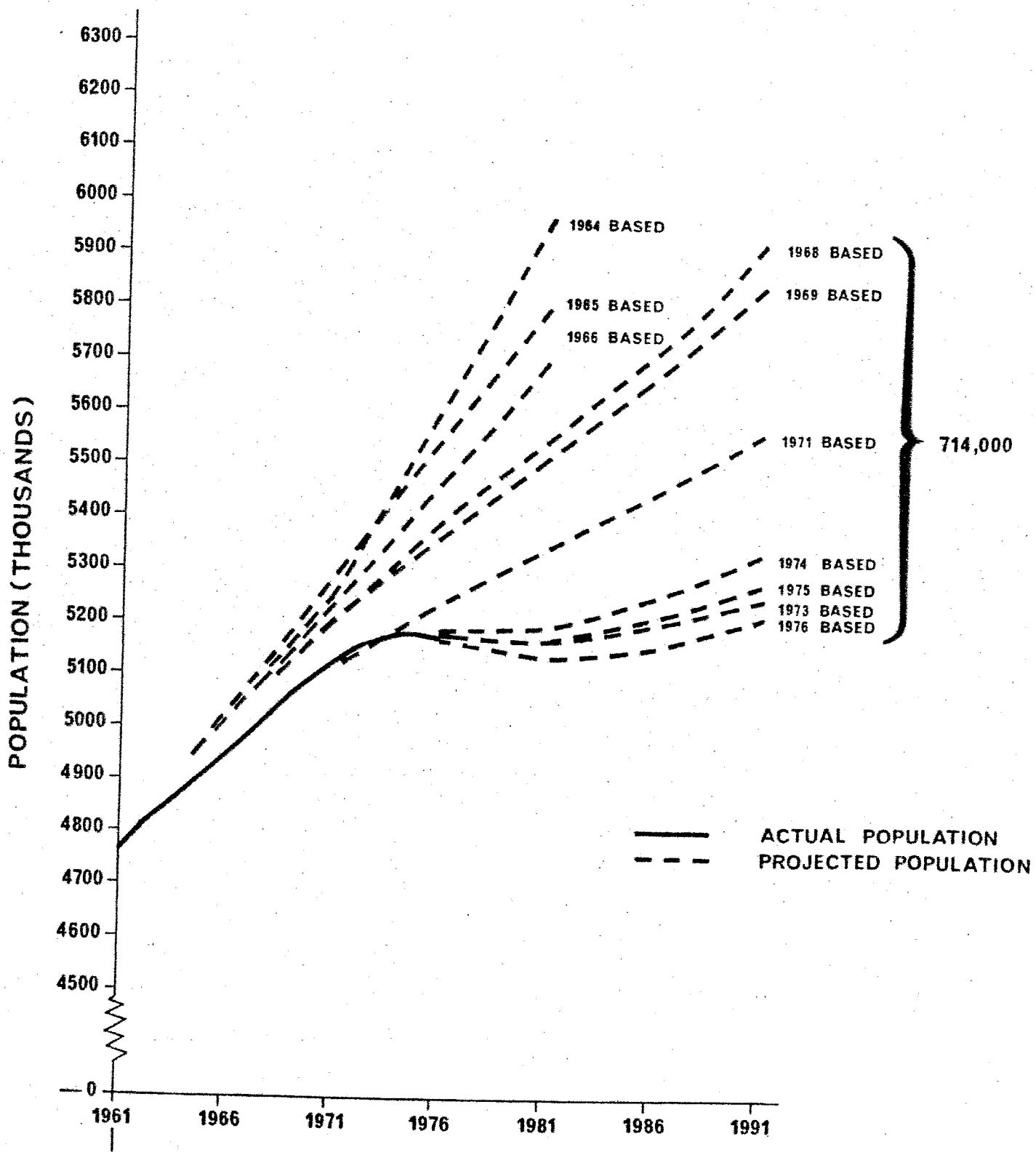

Fig. 8: Population Forecasts in the West Midlands
(source: DOE (1976)

the higher assumptions of population growth proved to be accurate.

II.1.1 - THE CASE FOR PLANNING - RISE AND FALL

In the early 1960's the Conservative government adopted a more sympathetic approach to the idea of state intervention and public planning. Apart from changes in the leadership of the Party - its new leader, Harold MacMillan, had for long been an advocate of state interventionism - and in its overall political-ideological orientation, the single major cause beyond this change in attitude was the increasing importance attributed to the objective of economic growth. In the period 1949 - 1959 the average rate of growth of the U.K. Gross Domestic Product had been less than half of that registered in the neighbouring major European economies (Shanks, 1977).

However, if economic output was to achieve rates of growth comparable with those registered in the major European economies it was held that this had to become the single major objective of government economic policy. This was supposed to imply a more dirigiste state intervention in the allocation of the factors of production, the subordination of short term policies (dealing with the management of the business cycle) to the long term objective of increasing the rate of economic growth and the adoption of some form of public planning (Budd, 1977).

It was within this context that the government decided to create in 1961 a tripartite economic planning machinery, involving both sides of industry and government. The key element in the machinery, the National Economic Development Council (N.E.D.C.), would involve some twenty people taken from Government, employers' organisations and trade unions under the chairmanship of the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The Council defined as its primary initial task the building of a model of the national implications of an annual four per cent rate of growth of the British G.D.P. up to 1966. Two reports both published in 1963 summarised the findings of the exercise (N.E.D.C., 1963a, 1963b). As far as regional planning

was concerned, the more important of the reports was titled Conditions Favourable To Faster Economic Growth (N.E.D.C., 1963b). This report went into considerable detail to explain how the spatial imbalances in the British economy restrained its potential growth capacity. Firstly, the report argued, the expansion of the economy could be boosted by using more fully the resources, namely labour, of the traditionally depressed regions. Secondly, and more important in the long run, the report introduced the so-called 'overheating argument'. In broad terms this suggested that the persistance of significant spatial disequilibria, in unemployment terms, prevented the adoption of clear cut economic policies to deal with the problems of economic growth. If, for exemple, the government acted to rapidly expand demand, this would prove inflationary as shortages of labour in the 'overheated' area (mainly South-East and West Midlands) would almost inevitably lead to increases in wages in those areas. Because of national wage agreements, these would then be passed on to the depressed areas, further eroding their competitive position. Similarly, the argument continued, the use of deflationary measures, when necessary, would tend to have greater effects on the already depressed areas than in other parts of the country. A 'balanced spatial economy' seemed, therefore, of the utmost importance to achieve higher rates of economic growth.

It is against this backcloth that a number of initiatives of the Conservative government have to be assessed. Firstly, the government commissioned and published three regional planning studies for Central Scotland (G.B., 1963), the North East (G.B., 1963c) and the South East of England (M.H.L.G., 1964). The first two argued for a larger share of public expenditure in their regions, and for this to be concentrated in designated areas. The third favoured the creation of 'counter-magnets' to channel development away from the London area. All the reports owed much to the increasing popularity of the concept of 'growth centres'. Indeed the popularity of this concept was partially responsible for a second initiative of the government, the designation of six New Towns in the period 1961 - 1964. Three of them (Skelmersdale in Merseyside,

Livingston in Central Scotland, and Washington in the North-East) were clearly seen as attempts to promote economic growth[2].

A third initiative worth mentioning was the appointment to the Cabinet in 1963 of Lord Hailsham as Minister for the North East with special responsibility for unemployment. This move was paralleled by the creation of the post of Secretary of State for Industry, Trade and Regional Development together with the establishment of a Regional Development Division within the Board of Trade; a clear recognition of the need to take account of relations between regional development and economic growth. Finally, the Government discussed creating Regional Development Agencies. The idea in this respect was to promote and steer regional development by means of a partnership between reorganised local authorities and strong regional arms of central government (Joseph, 1964). Sir Keith Joseph failed, however, to get Cabinet approval for his departmental proposal[3].

The results of these developments were, however, rather meagre. For example, as far as regional planning was concerned, it is certainly fair to say that the various regional planning studies were neither co-ordinated between themselves nor with the attempts at national economic planning.

The Labour Party came to power in October 1964 committed 'to give teeth' to indicative planning and to further increase state interventionism. A substantial section of the election manifesto was used to present 'The Case for Planning' and the Party committed the prospective Labour Government to prepare: a National Plan, Plans for the Regions, a Plan for Stable Prices, a Plan for Tax Reform, etc. (Labour Party, 1964). Influential sections of the Party had absorbed the spirit of the time: technocracy, growthmania, planning[4]. In this they were accompanied by influential pressure groups and senior civil servants

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(2) - See Mackay and Cox (1979), pp. 40 - 41 and 203 - 209.

(3) - See, also, Cullingworth (1979), p. 513.

(4) - See, for exemple, Shanks (1967), pp. 32 - 41 and pp. 108 - 120.

which were to play a major role in shaping the policies of the future Labour government in policy areas as far apart as land values and urban transport[5].

The key element in the Labour government's attempt 'to give teeth' to planning was the creation of the Department of Economic Affairs (D.E.A.). Roll (1964) defined the functions of the new department as the co-ordination of the activities of the economic departments of government so that their decisions were consistent with the achievement, in the longer term, of a faster rate of growth whilst, simultaneously, avoiding inflationary pressures. To emphasise the indicative nature of the planning machinery being introduced no executive functions were allocated to the new department. This constituted a clear retreat from the draft D.E.A. structure which made it responsible, for example, for the planning and allocation of public capital expenditure[6]. Moreover, in order to avoid conflicts with the Treasury's functions, the chairmanship of the N.E.D.C. was transferred to the new Secretary of State for Economic Affairs. From the outset it was clear that the 'teeth' of the new machinery were unlikely to prove very effective.

The first major task allocated to the D.E.A. was to produce the National Plan promised in the election manifesto. Shanks (1977) argues that the whole plan was based on a strategic choice, namely, that the price of continued growth would be the devaluation of sterling. This, however, was never mentioned in the document and it was, certainly, not a view shared at the time either by the Cabinet as a whole or the Prime Minister in particular[7]. Instead when pressures on sterling increased in the summer of 1966 the government response was to introduce, yet again, a heavy deflationary package (cuts in public spending, higher minimum lending rates; a freeze on wages, salaries and

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(5) - See Mackay and Cox (1979), pp. 51 - 55, 85 - 86, 168 - 173.

(6) - See Shanks (1977), pp. 31 - 32.

(7) - For a passionate review of events, see Stewart (1977), pp. 25 - 30 and 51 - -63 in particular.

dividends, etc.) which in practice represented the opposite of everything the National Plan stood for.

The deflationary package of July 1966 was, however, not to prove sufficient to counteract the pressures on sterling. During 1967, the problems were compounded by poor trade figures and a temporary oil embargo imposed by the Arab countries in the aftermath of the Six Day War. With unemployment already high on the political agenda the introduction of a further deflationary package was rejected and sterling was finally devalued 14.3 per cent in relation to the dollar. This, of course, was too late to rescue the National Plan. Indeed the whole idea of national indicative planning was, for all practical purposes, abandoned.

As far as the integration of physical with regional economic planning was concerned, the experience proved to be little more successful. Given that the Labour government appeared initially to be highly committed to comprehensive regional planning it is important to briefly analyse the reasons for this failure. The cornerstone of the machinery of regional economic planning was the Regional Division of the D.E.A.. Its main functions were co-ordinating and approving the various regional plans and ensuring that the regional implications of growth were clearly understood in the domain of physical and industrial planning (Peterson, 1964). The Ministry of Housing and Local Government was, however, to continue in charge of all aspects associated with 'town and country planning'.

In the regions D.E.A. officials were to act as chairmen of the Economic Planning Boards (E.P.B.'s) which brought together the senior officers of all department with regional offices (Board of Trade, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Housing and Local Government, Ministry of Agriculture, etc.). The tasks ascribed to the Boards were:

> *... to prepare the draft plan (or plans) for the region and to co-ordinate the work of the various government departments in implementing the final plan.*

When announcing the creation of the Boards the Secretary of State made it very clear, however, that they would not affect the existing powers and responsibilities of local authorities or existing ministerial responsibilities[8]. The Boards were to be assisted in their work by advisory Economic Planning Councils (E.P.C.'s) formed by individually appointed elements selected by the D.E.A. among local councillors, employers' organisations, trade union leaders, academics, etc... The terms of reference of the Councils were:

a) To assist in the formulation of a regional plan having regard to the best use of the region's resources.

b) To advise on the steps necessary for implementing the regional plan on the basis of information and assessment provided by the Economic Planning Boards.

c) To advise on the regional implications of national economic policies[9].

In March 1966, however, the responsibility for preparing the draft regional plans was transferred from the Boards to the Councils in a move designed to indicate that the Government should no longer be seen as committed to the plan's recommendations (Lindley, 1970). Thus, even before the National Plan was subjected to the devastating crisis of the summer of 1966, the link between national and regional planning was severely weakened.

These developments could hardly have been anticipated in the West Midlands a year earlier. In the summer of 1965 following interdepartmental work initiated under the Conservative government, the D.E.A. published a planning study covering the whole region (D.E.A., 1965).

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(8) - Hansard, Vol. 703, Col. 1829, 30 December 1964.

(9) - Hansard, Vol. 707, Col. 613. 25 February 1965.

II.1.2 - THE WEST MIDLANDS: A REGIONAL STUDY - FINDINGS AND PROPOSALS

The West Midlands: A Regional Study was published in July 1965, only three months after the appointment of the W.M.E.P.C. members. In the preface the Government made it clear that it was not in anyway committed to the study's findings and that any proposals for action made in the report

> *... would have to be considered in the light of the forth coming National Plan and of programmes and policies for the country as a whole.*

In fact the preparation of the Study had been curtailed in order that its findings could be included in the National Plan. As a result of this time constraint the Study was merely a survey and analysis of existing problems, to which some tentative but not cautious solutions were proposed.

The analytical part of the report covered a wide range of issues: demographic patterns and dynamics; the region's economic activities; social and economic infrastructure; public services; organisation of local government, etc.. Its proposals, however, were mainly concerned with the problem of the spatial allocation of housing over the next fifteen years.

The conclusions of the analysis of the region's current problems and past development were very similar to the findings of the study published four years earlier by the M.N.T.S. and the T.C.P.A. (see Appendix B, pp. B-46-48). They suggested an increasing concentration of population and housing on the outskirts of the conurbation, and in the commuter belt around Coventry, and the failure of the strategy of planned overspill away from the conurbation.

For the period up to 1981 the Study forecasted a natural growth in the regional population on some 800,000. On top of this it was considered that immigration would bring somme further 150,000 people to the region, for which accommodation would need to be provided if necessary.[10] The housing implication of these forecasts pointed to the need to build between 275,000 and 325,000 (depending on the migration assumptions) new dwellings in the region up until

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(10) - See D.E.A. (1965b), para. 104 - 108.

1981 simply to cater for extra population. However, on top of this, there was a need to replace existing unfit dwellings - estimated by the Study's authors at 250,000 for the region - and to meet overall housing shortages and overcrowding estimated at 75,000 dwellings. Even without considering immigration the total housing need up to 1981 appeared to be at least 600,000. To magnify the problem this housing need was quite unevenly distributed within the region with more than half of the pressures falling on the conurbation alone (Fig. 9 and Table I).

Generated by	For Replacement	To remedy existing shortage	To cater for population growth	Total
Birmingham conurbation	130	62	148	340
Coventry belt	15	5	42	62
Rest of central division	47	5	48	100
North Staffordshire	40	1	30	71
Rural west	18	2	7	27
	250	75	275	600

TABLE I: *Housing Need in The West Midlands Region 1963 - 1981 (in thousands of dwellings)*

Source: D.E.A. (1965), Table IX.

The problems created by this housing need seemed to fall within three categories. Firstly, there was the question of the capacity of the building industry to satisfy the needs. In this respect there seemed to be no special difficulties as, for instance, in 1964 some 43,000 new houses had been started in the region. Secondly, given that more than half of the housing need was linked to unfit or overcrowded dwellings, the Study suggested that pressure would be concentrated in the public sector. If these pressures were to be met the Study indicated the urgency of the need to reverse the trend of a declining

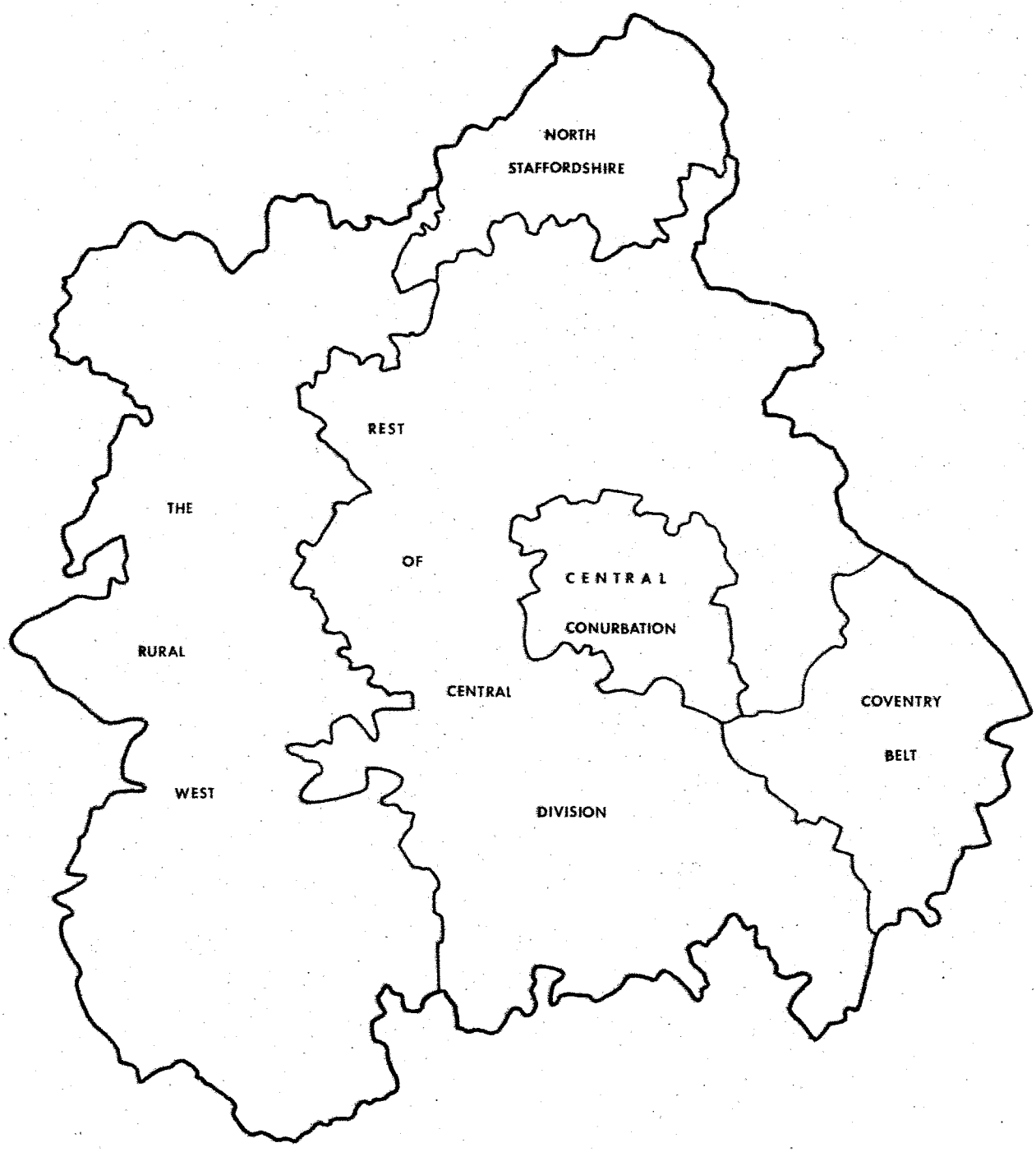

Fig. 9: A Regional Study - sub-regional divisions

(source: DEA (1965), Fig. 3)

share of public housing building in the region (from 80 per cent of the total in 1945 - 1951 to 40 per cent in 1961 - 1965). Without such a reversal pressures would either fail to be dealt with, or would be met into circumstances which would add to the region's existing problems. However, apart from a vague appeal for the creation of additional agencies with special development functions to implement the proposals, the Study offered little in pratical terms to reverse the trend. This latter aspect leads to the final and more critical questions addressed by the Study: that of finding adequate sites for the new housing:

> *The special problem of the West Midlands is in deciding where the... houses are to be built in the public and private sectors alike. Since houses must be related to jobs, and both to a total social organisation, this means considering the region's whole future pattern of land use. And especially in relation to the Birmingham conurbation since it is there that lie both the major economic cause of the region's future growth of population and the major physical element in its backlog of need of dwellings for even the existing population.*
>
> (D.E.A., 1965b, para. 123)

For the authors of the Study this problem was related not to any physical shortage of developable land in the region but rather to the extreme concentration of the housing need in its already congested core, the conurbation. Of the 340,000 building sites required in the conurbation up to 1981 the Study indicated that half would be made available within the conurbation itself, through redevelopment at lower densities of slum areas, development of virgin sites earmarked for housing and clearance and development of derelict land. To allocate the remaining housing land need the Study considered three alternatives:

a) allow the Conurbation to expand outwards;

b) encourage the development of satellite towns and private commuter development; or

c) create self-contained independent centres far afield from the conurbation.[11]

There was little novelty in these alternatives. They had been considered as early as in the 1948 Abercrombie-Jackson West Midlands Plan

(11) - idem., para. 198.

(M.T.C.P., 1948), and all of them were being used to deal with the overspill problem. Constant infilling of the Conurbation and outwards expansion had been the 'bread and butter' of planning during the 1950's. The planning permission for the 50,000 population scheme at Chelmsley Wood (Water Orton) granted in 1964 was the most recent development in this direction. Commuter developments were also already materialising under the form of a number of small Town Development Schemes in Staffordshire (Cannock, Lichfied, Tamworth, etc.). More recently, the designation of Redditch New Town and the agreement for a Town Development Scheme at Droitwich, both in 1962, had pushed these type of developments to the south of the Conurbation. Finally, and as far as self-contained schemes were concerned, the designation of Dawley New Town and the Town Development Scheme agreement at Daventry, both in 1963, were the most significant and recent progress in this field (See Appendix B, pp. B-50-52). Together these recent developments had generated some 60,000 sites, still leaving a housing site deficit of some 110,000.

The Study rejected the idea of further peripheral development of the Conurbation on the grounds that this would increase problems of traffic congestion, and by placing extra pressures on the Conurbation would obstruct both its internal restructuring and the decentralisation of jobs required for the rest of the strategy to succeed. Given this analysis it was suggested that Chelmsley Wood should be the last peripheral project of a sizeable scale and that the inner edge of the Conurbation green belt should be confirmed on the basis of the existing proposals[12].

These were very similar arguments to those used in the Abercrombie-Jackson document seventeen years earlier. However in contrast to the West Midlands Plan emphasis on self-contained developments further afield from the conurbation, the D.E.A. Study stressed the importance of close-in satellite developments. This choice was a logical consequence of the Study's scope and objectives. These were

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(12) - Idem, para. 203

> *...confined to what appears to be the main things which are necessary and practicable in terms of policies and actions specific to the region itself.*
>
> (D.E.A., 1965, p. 180) (My underlining.)

The Study emphasised that industrial location controls and the central government policy of steering 'mobile' employment to Development Areas had, in the past, severely limited the viability of self-contained overspill schemes in the region. As a change in this policy was unlikely to occur in the coming years - on the contrary, it seemed to be operated with increasing firmness - an emphasis on self-contained schemes, the Study concluded, would prove self-defeating.

In contrast, a strategy based on satellite close-in developments seemed to ofter a number of advantages. Firstly, it followed past marked trends and was likely to proceed quickly and could be further expanded if necessary. Secondly, it would provide houses in a commuting range from the conurbation and so avoid the need for people to change jobs. Thirdly, it would minimise the amount of industrial overspill required. Fourthly, and as a consequence of the two previous aspects, it would be the least disruptive of people's lives and of the region's industrial growth prospects. Fifthly, it did not necessarily entail sizeable public projects, as a substancial amount of development would occur by infilling or modest expansion of existing small towns and villages.

Some of these arguments seem to be of a cursory nature. It is difficult to agree, for instance, that commuting does not disrupt people's lives, particularly those who rely on public transport for their commuting. Furthermore, bearing in mind that most commuting would occur by private transport it is far from clear how close-in satellite developments would constitute an improvement in terms of traffic congestion. However, given the context in which the Study was produced, the alternative adopted was undoubtedly the one which created a minimum of policy clashes.

In order to operationalise these strategic choices the Study argued that the four counties surrounding the Conurbation should make available the

143,000 housing sites earmarked for development in their development plans up to 1981. As the local need was estimated as amounting to only 100,000 this would correspond to an excess of 43,000 being made available for overspill purposes. On top of this the Study favoured the expansion of existing Town Development Schemes at Lichfield, Stafford and Tamworth, to accommodate between them a further overspill of some 50,000 people (Fig. 10). A deficit of some 50,000 sites still remained to be covered. However the Study considered that the above schemes would be as much close-in development as it would prudent to resort to.

Whitin the context of the report only one option remained open; the promotion of additional developments far afield from the conurbation. In addition to Dawley New Town already scheduled to receive some 50,000 overspill, the Study suggested the enlargement of Worcester city to receive at least 50,000 overspill population, an identical overspill intake for the Wellington-Oakengates area near Dawley and a sizeable additional development of 50 to 60,000 overspill population intake for the Swynnerton area between Stafford and Stoke-on-Trent. The expansion in the two former locations was considered an opportunity for a westwards expansion, which was necessary in order to accommodate the expected population increases of the 80's and 90's or an eventual substantial immigration during the 70's. Following this line of argument the report recommended a study of the possibilities of building, in the long term, a new regional growth centre in Shropshire, based on Shrewsbury and Dawley, designed to facilitate the westwards dispersal of population and the creation of an eventual axis of national growth developing northwards to the Dee and southwards towards the Severn estuary[13].

The rationale of the strategy followed very closely the line of argument put forward by the Board of Trade in the discussions leading to the designation of Redditch New Town in 1962 (See Appendix B,pp. B-45-46). In this sense the short term proposals of the Study appeared to represent a victory of

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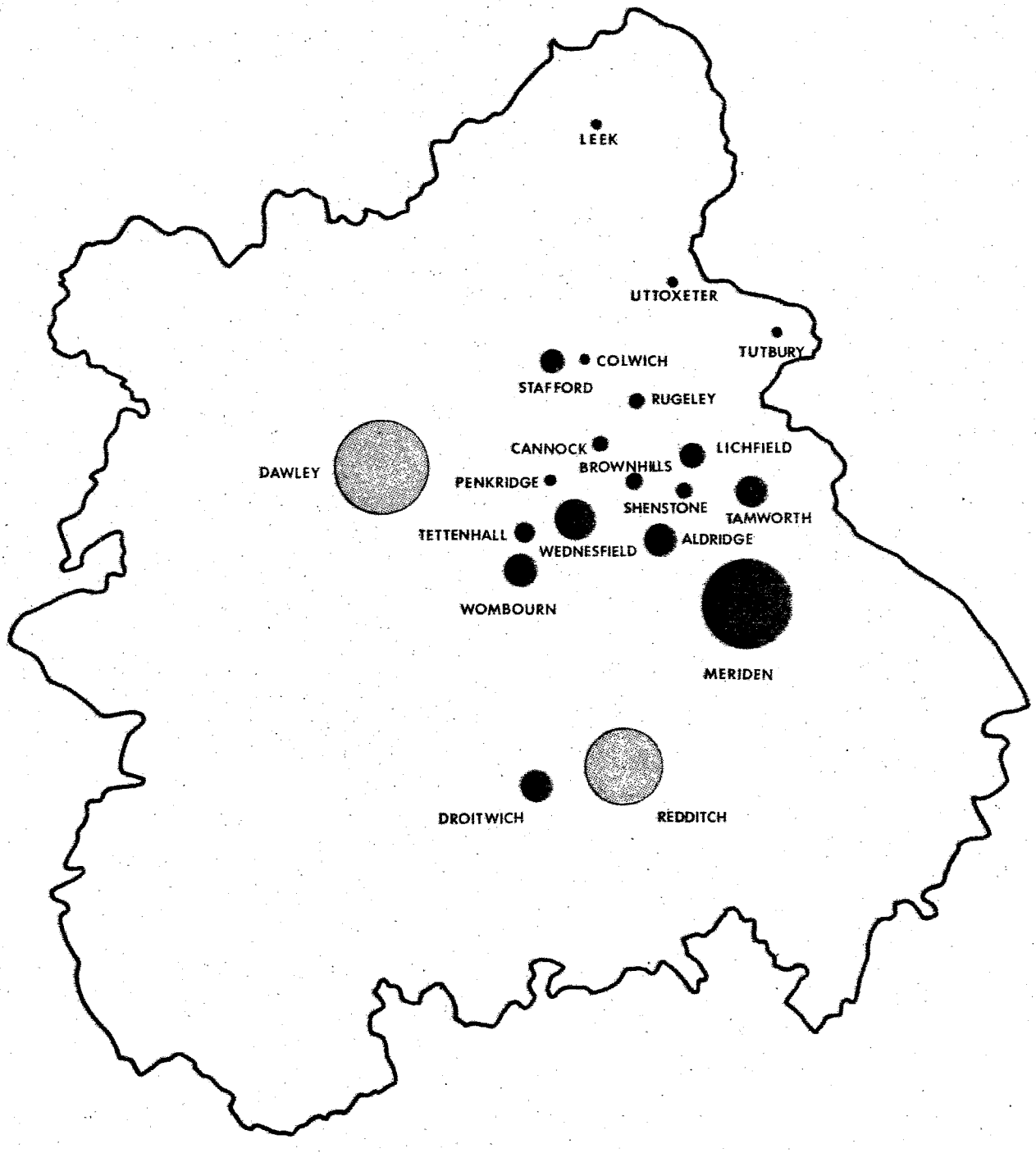
(13) - Idem, para. 210 - 219.



new towns

town development schemes

Fig. 10: A Regional Study - overspill schemes
(source: DEA (1965), Fig 19)

pragmatic economic considerations over the visionary attitude of previous documents. However, the major novelty of the document, the suggestion of a westwards dispersal, and the suggested development of an axis of growth west of the conurbation appeared rather odd. In the light of the proposed layout of the motorway network, and the commitment to British entry to the E.E.C., the location of the suggested axis of growth was of doubtful validity. This was, however, only one of a number of contradictions in the report.

The Study, also paid attention to the housing land problem in the Coventry belt. In the period 1951 - 1964 this area had increased its population by 23.7 per cent, and there was an obvious disagreement between the Quinquennial Reviews of the Coventry City and Warwickshire Development Plans as to the actions required to plan for future growth (see Appendix B,pp. B-52-53). Coventry Council favoured the formulation of a subregional plan in order to create a coherent physical framework in which future growth could be accommodated; the position of Warwickshire was less clear cut. On the one hand, it made a strong defence of the Green Belt policy; on the other hand, it suggested significant increases in the population targets of various Town Maps. The Study suggested that land shortages in the Coventry Belt were more apparent than real and that they stemmed from differences in policy outlook between the Warwickshire County Council and the Coventry City Council. Given this analysis the Study merely referred to the need of these two authorities to come together and formulate a comprehensive sub-regional plan for the area.

So far the review of the Study has concentrated on the issue of spatial allocation of housing. However the Study also contained an interesting discussion of the regional economy and before analysing the events following the publication of the report, it is appropriate to provide a brief summary of that discussion. The Study's overall conclusions on the economic prospects for the region were based on the analysis of four indicators: employment growth, net output per employee, income per head, and family expenditure. The Study pointed out that employment growth in the region, in the period 1953 - 1963 had

increased by 13 per cent. The corresponding figure for Great Britain as a whole had been only 9 per cent. Conversely, in terms of net output per employee, which is a less satisfactory indicator of labour productivity than value added per employee, the region was recording lower than average values in the nine out of the twelve industries listed.

As far as wages were concerned, the Study indicated that these were four per cent above the British average. Finally, the Study noted that the results of the Family Expenditure Survey for 1961 -1963 revealed that the average expenditure of households in the region was thirteen per cent higher than the United Kingdom average. This resulted not only from higher than average income per employee but also from higher activity rates in the region than elsewhere (1.52 persons working per household in the region against a British average of 1.34). Even if allowance was made for the traditional high degree of vertical integration of the region's manufacturing sector, and for the labour intensive nature of some of the overrepresented industrial groups (for exemple, light engineering), the above group of economic indexes was, to say the least, thought provoking. Higher than average wages and personal expenditure coupled with lower net output per employee are, undoubtedly, less than satisfactory statistics.

However, the Study did not take up this line of argument. On the contrary, it argued that it was unlikely that problems would occur in the regional economy in the years ahead. Indeed the Study went on to suggest that the region

> *...would be likely to benefit from a firm continuation of the present policy of steering away some of its employment growth to other places which have an actual or prospective job deficiency.*
>
> (D.E.A., 1965b, para. 98)

The document reflected in this respect contradictions existing between various government departments concerning the overall approach to regional policy[14].

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(14) - See Cullingworth (1979), p. 212.

The M.H.L.G. argued for an equal status being granted to overspill locations and Development Areas. The Department of Trade and the Department of Economic Affairs considered that the prevailing policy of giving second priority to overspill locations outside Development Areas, was most appropriate. Given the existing balance of power within Cabinet the latter alternative prevailed which, probably, explained the tone adopted in the West Midlands Study.

II.1.3 - THE WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL STUDY: RECONSIDERATION OF EVIDENCE

In publishing the report the D.E.A. asked for comments on the findings and proposals contained in the Study. Apart from various reports and comments which appeared in both the local and national press some 55 planning authorities, statutory bodies, chambers of commerce, district councils and a few individuals submitted written comments on the document.

The overall reaction to the publication of the Study was a mixture of indifference and cautious acceptance. The editor of a local paper complained, one month after the Study was published, about the

> *...apparent lack of interest shown by local people in the findings of the Study group, whose important recommendations have not even prompted a single letter to the 'Evening News'*[15].

Dr. David Eversley, a leading member of the M.N.T.S., who had become widely known because of his contributions to the Wythall public inquiry in 1959 (see Appendix B, pp. B-42-44) cautiously expressed what was perhaps the dominant attitude towards the report:

> *This study... makes one hopeful that regional economic and physical planning may become a reality, and that before the end of the century the quality both of economic and social life will have been immensely improved for everyone*[16].

There were, however, two submmissions which strongly rejected the

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(15) - Worcester Evening News, 9 August 1965.

(16) - Birmingham Post, 28 July 1965.

rationale and overall approach of the Study. The first attacked the idea of moving industry out of the conurbation while there was derelict industrial land in its core[17]. The second, submitted by the West Midlands Junior Section of the Royal Town Planning Institute, accused the Study of being little more than a hotch-potch of local authority schemes. The Study which was described as 'unimaginative' and 'short-sighted' was neither, in their opinion, a regional plan nor provided a sound basis for one[18]. The wording of the second comment was, certainly, excessive but there was undoubtedly a good deal of truth in both critiques.

Most of the comments, however, focussed upon matters of detail and it is now appropriate to consider some of these. The suggestion that the proper planning of the area around Coventry was being impeded by lack of co-operation between the planning authorities created a storm of protest. Warwickshire County Council reacted vehemently refusing to share the blame for the planning problems that existed in the area. The Town and Country Planning Committee of the Council stressed that the Quinquennial Review of the Town Maps of the County Development Plan had made enough provision for housing land to cater for the expected demand. And it concluded:

> *The Committee considers the criticism of the County Council implied to be completely unjustified and incorrect*[19].

This argument was factually correct but as previously indicated in this analysis, there were, in fact, disagreements between Coventry City Council and the County Council concerning the need for a subregional strategy and the best way to deal with population pressures in the area. This clash, in turn, revived the issue of the failed attempt made by Coventry, in the early 1960's, to enlarge its boundary

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(17) - "The Study Group seems to have plans for the Black Country to remain as it is today, a memorial to the industry of the nineteenth century and the prodigality of the twentieth. The West Midlands must not remain rotten at the core". Letter of G.M. Barkas in the Birmingham Post, 13 August 1965.

(18) - Evening Sentinel, 26 September 1965

(19) - Coventry Evening Telegraph, 10 November 1965

so as to incorporate Bedworth[20].

The fuss created by this issue assumed such proportions that firstly the Secretary of State for Economic Affairs and then the Minister of Housing and Local Government were forced to issue apologetic statements assuring both local authorities that nothing in the Study could be

> *...even remotely regarded as a criticism of Warwickshire or Coventry as planning authorities*[21].

Even so, the Town and Country Planning Committee of the Warwickshire County Council suggested that the Council should not co-operate in the preparation of the subregional plan suggested by the Study[22]. The dispute was only solved after the Minister of Housing and Local Government - Richard Crossman - met representatives of the two local authorities at Coventry[23]. The agreed comprimise led to the preparation of the report Coventry - Solihull - Warwickshire. A Strategy for the Sub-Region, published in 1971 (Coventry C.B., Solihull C.B., Warwickshire C.C., 1971).

Another proposal of the Study which came under fire was the suggestion to enlarge Worcester City in order to absorb 50,000 overspill population up to 1981. In this case, both Worcestershire County Council and the Worcester City Council argued the suggested overspill was too large and proposed instead, a much slower rate of growth. In contrast, the proposal for expansion in the Wellington-Oakengates area received a warm welcome both from the local authorities concerned and the Dawley New Town Society. However, only one month after the Study was published and on the eve of the announcement of the draft master plan for Dawley New Town, the Minister disclosed that its population target would be increased to 250,000. This statement, which was made without

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(20) - Idem., 28 July 1965.

(21) - Birmingham Post, 11 November 1965

(22) - Idem., 3 February 1966.

(23) - Idem., 12 February 1966.

prior consultation with the Chaiman of the New Town or its general manager reflected in the words of a Minister of Housing spokesman that

> *Mr. Crossman believes quite clearly that some of the New Towns are not big enough*[24].

This opinion arose from the conclusions of a departmental Study on the progress of Town Development which concluded that

> *...in the long run it would probably be best to look for a large scale expansion which can be carried out under the New Town mechanisms*[25].

It was, probably, with this in mind that the Redditch New Town Development Corporation suggested an enlargement of the town target by some 20 - 25,000. This was later adopted by the Government. Overall there was a tendency to take isolated decisions even before the full implications of the strategy had been assessed.

Finally, another aspect of the Study which deserved some criticisms concerns its defence of existing regional policy in general, and of the industrial location controls in particular. Two types of criticism were evident. On the one hand, there were those, such as the Confederation of British Industry, who argued that the policy under which I.D.C.'s were issued was not conducive to the achievement of balanced regional development, and favoured rather a positive policy geared to improve communications and the overall economic infrastructures of the development areas. On the other hand, other comments argued that if the location controls in the region were not lifted, the overspill policy would fail and long term decline would occur within the industrial structure of the West Midlands. This was the position taken, inter alios, by the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce. As a whole, it was evident that support for the maintenance of industrial location controls was not widely shared in the region, particularly among its business community.

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(24) - Idem., 13 August 1965.

(25) - Quoted by Cullingworth (1979), p. 520.

The Study was published in July 1965, four months after the West Midlands Economic Planning Council members had been appointed. The Study was immediately referred to the E.P.C. and comments were asked for on four key issues: the strategy of physical containement of the conurbation; the suggested expansions at Worcester, Wellington-Oakengates and Stafford-Stoke (Swynnerton); the proposal for the study of a potential axis for longer term economic growth in the west of the region; and how to achieve greater industrial mobility. The Council presented its initial views on the first three issues in March 1966 stressing their provisional character and indicating that a more detailed analysis would follow[26]. A study of the problems of industrial mobility was commissioned at the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies of the University of Birmingham.

The initial views of the council expressed support for the broad strategy of containment of the conurbation, but were critical both of some of the suggested areas for expansion and of the longer term axis of growth proposal. In general terms the Council considered the planned expansion at Worcester to be appropriate within the context of the regional redistribution of population. However, it made it clear that it favoured halving its rate of expansion bearing in mind the historic character of the city and the need to proceed to very substantial improvement of the city's social and economic infrastructure. This was broadly in line with the opinion expressed by the City Council and referred to above. The Council also gave its support to the expansion at Wellington-Oakengates but stressed that because of the environmental problems involved and of the existing poor road communications with the conurbation it had doubts about the possibility of expansion taking place in the period envisaged. As far as the Stafford-Stoke development was concerned the Council noted that the precise site had not been located and that this would probably result in a slower rate of expansion than suggested in the Study. Given this context the

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(26) - See W.M.E.P.C. (1967), Annex A.

Council argued that an additional sizeable overspill scheme was necessary and suggested as a possible location the city of Burton-on-Trent.

In practical terms, the Council views represented a reversal of the Study's strategy to channel the population expansion to the Western part of the region. This reversal was further stressed by the comments made on the Study's proposal for an axis in the West of the region for longer term economic growth. In this respect the Council considered

> *...that it would be arbitrary, and indeed unjustifiable to confine their initial examination of longer term growth potential to one particular part of the region.*
>
> (W.M.E.P.C., 1967, Appendix A, para. 22)

Alternatively they suggested the study of the growth potential of four other axis around the routes from the conurbation to the North, North-West, South-East and South-West.

A number of important developments occurred before the Council had the opportunity to publicise its definitive views on the Study's proposals. The annoucement made by the Housing Minister concerning a substantial increase of the population target for Dawley has already been referred to. This annoucement was somewhat surprising as there was growing concern over the performance of the two designated New Towns in the region. In a survey of the region's problems, published in The Economist in April 1966, the location of the two new towns was severely criticised and it was claimed that in terms of quickly relieving Birmingham's housing problems they were the "*slowest quick relief ever known*"[27]. The progress of the Town Development Schemes was not also very satisfactory. In December 1966, only 3,757 dwellings had been completed in these locations. To further complicate the problem the Secretary of State for Economic Affairs made it known that he was not contemplating a sizeable overspill scheme in North Staffordshire for the time being.

However, as early as March 1966, and even before the initial views of

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(27) - The Economist, 2 April 1966, "New Towns. Why There?".

the Economic Planning Council of the Study were made known, the Minister of Housing announced that he was considering a further peripheral development for Birmingham[28]. So, when in December of that year, the Minister wrote to the Worcestershire County Council warning them that there was a short term need to find land for 15,000 municipal dwellings for Birmingham people, within the triangle formed by Droitwich, Kidderminster and Redditch, this move did not constitute a complete surprise. There was, however, a considerable amount of bad feelings especially as the Minister asked for the feasibility study of that expansion to be completed in only three months.

The outcome of the study, which involved the work of staff from the Worcestershire County Council, the Birmingham City Engineer and external consultants, was to suggest the location of some 10,000 dwellings in Redditch to take advantage of the existing infrastructures and organisation of the New Town, and some 5,000 in one of the alternative locations: Bradley Green, Bromsgrove or Wythall (Watson, 1967). In the event, and against the background of hostility caused in Redditch by these developments, the New Town Corporation volunteered to increase the Redditch building programme by 800 houses per annum during five years and this reduced the need for some 11,000 houses. The initial proposals were abandoned and in July 1968 agreement was reached between Birmingham and Worcestershire for a 1,700 acres development at Hawkesley and Moundesley (near Wythall) and Frankley near the Birmingham boundary. All three locations were within the Green Belt. Professor Sargant Florence, in a letter to The Times, typically described this agreement as

> *...positively aggravating instead of alleviating the three cardinal sins of unplanned town growth: conurbation, congestion and commuting.*[29]

A public inquiry into the scheme began in September 1969 and turned out to be the longest of the four held in relation to he Wythall area. The government decision on the inquiry, however, was only taken after the 1970 general election which

(28) - In Hansard, Vol. 725, Col. 237, 11 March 1966

(29) - The Times, 15 July 1968, Quoted in the Midlands New Towns Society Newsletter, nº 53, (July 1968), p.1.

returned to power a Conservative Government and confirmed the tendency of Conservative ministers to protect, as far as possible, Green Belt from urban encroachment. The decision followed very closely the position defended at the public inquiry by Worcestershire County Council; development was granted at Frankley and Hawkesley, but not at Moundesley (except for a playing field).[30]

Meanwhile the W.M.E.P.C. had published its first major report on the region's planning problems (W.M.E.P.C., 1967). Its proposals followed closely those presented in the Council's initial view (Table II). They already included the Central Government recommendations for development in North Worcestershire, but continued to insist on development in North Staffordshire upon which the government had previously delivered a negative judgement (see above, pp. 140).

Though as a whole these schemes already provided some flexibility the Council felt it was advisable to further preview the long term (post 1981) spatial strategy for the region. The report argued that the major single element influencing the potencial of growth of different areas of the region was the existing pattern of communications, particularly the existence of traffic arteries linked to the national communications network. Following this line of argument the report discarded the growth potential of the area between Shrewsbury and Hereford for the years after 1981. The report suggested instead as areas with long term growth potential, those around the routes from the conurbation to the North, North-West, South-West, South-East and North-East. However, the Council refused to commit itself either to the direction of growth or to any specific pattern corridor of growth, freestanding towns surrounded by Green Belt, etc. of long term development[31].Thus, and in contrast to the layout adopted by the Study, proposals for the period up to 1981 were not linked with any specific long term strategy.

The report also made a number of comments concerning the economic prospects of the region. In respect of this problem the report emphasised the

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(30) - See Stranz (1972), pp. 50-1

(31) - See W.M.E.P.C. (1967), Paras. 141 - 149.

Location	Population Intake	
	WR-RS	P.G.
Town Development Schemes:-		
a) Agreed:		
Daventry		22,000
Droitwich	45,000	13,000
Other		19,000
b) Under discussion:		
Lichfield, Tamworth, Stafford	50,000	50,000
New Towns:-		
Dawley	50,000	50,000
Redditch	35,000	35,000
Possible New Developments:-		
Expansion Dawley/Oakengates/ Wellington	50,000	50,000
Worcester	50,000	25,000 (1)
Burton-upon-Trent	------	40,000 (2)
North Staffordshire	50,000	50,000 (3)
North Worcestershire	------	50,000 (4)
Expansion around the Green Belt for overspill purposes	130,000 (5)	150,000 (5)
TOTAL	460,000	554,000

TABLE II: *Suggested Location of Overspill from the Conurbation: 1963 - 1981*

Notes:

(1) As recommended in the Council initial views and accepted by the Minister.

(2) Subject to detailed feasibility study by the Minister of Housing and Local Government.

(3) Rejected by the Secretary of State for Economic Affairs.

(4) Previously suggested by the Minister of Housing.

(5) Both figures excluded Chelmsey Wood (60,000 people).

(Sources: D.E.A. (1965) and W.M.E.P.C. (1967)).

lack of adequate research and the difficulty of making detailed forecasts in a period of rapid technological change. Two issues were singled out as having the utmost importance for the region's future economic performance and spatial balance. Firstly, the need to increase the productivity of the region's manufacturing sector. The second area of concern was related to the operation of the government's regional policy. The report was critical of the effects of the existing regional policy on the implementation of the overspill strategy. It reaffirmed proposals made by the Council in November 1965 for the provision of financial incentives, and the lifting of I.D.C.'s controls for firms moving to overspill locations. These claims were, however, cautiously worded with reference to the Council's awareness

> *...that each application has to be considered on its merits in the light of the Board's statutory obligations towards the development areas*
>
> (W.M.E.P.C., 1967, p. 116)

Bearing in mind the failure of the existing mechanism to promote overspill it was surprising that there were no proposals to create a more efficient machinery for implementation of this strategy. A likely explanation for this shortcoming was the desire to avoid offending the local authorities who were in practice the main implementing bodies. A further element which needs to be taken into consideration was that the Housing Bill 1967 being discussed in Parliament at the time, greatly improved council housing finance in general and overspill housing in particular (Smith, 1972).

In the summer of 1967 government officials gave consideration to the proposals contained in Patterns of Growth. The suggestions which sought to foster industrial overspill were rejected and this, in turn, led to the rejection of the schemes suggested for Burton-on-Trent and North Staffordshire. Conversely the decision to go ahead with the North Worcestershire development was strengthened. These decisions were formally announced in the D.E.A.'s reply to Patterns of Growth made public in January 1968[32].

(32) - M.N.T.S., Quarterly Newsletter, No. 51, February 1958, pp. 3 - 4.

The proposal for development at Wellington-Oakengates received considerable attention from central government. The problem here was not only to decide whether the scheme should go ahead or not, but also if it should be designated as part of Dawley New Town. So far the progress of the New Town had proved extremely disappointing and, with the benefit of hindsight, there was a general agreement among Ministers and civil servants that its designation had probably been a mistake[33]. Prospects for the future were also bleak, but there were compelling political arguments against abandoning the project. There also was a hope that the enlargement of the initial scheme would provide the required impetus for the New Town to be successful[34]. Finally, with great reluctance, the expansion was agreed and the draft designation order was announced almost simultaneously with the Government reply to Patterns of Growth. After a local inquiry in May 1968 the designation of Telford New Town occurred in December 1968, raising the population target of the New Town to 170,000 to be achieved by 1986.

II.1.4 - SUMMARY

During the early and mid 1960's regional planning thinking in the West Midlands was dominated by the obvious threat suggested by ever increasing forecasts of population growth. Attention was focussed on the problems likely to occur if the projection proved to be correct and on the search for adequate planning solutions to these problems. The main difficulty, yet again, appeared to be where to locate the houses required to accommodate the population increase. The dilemma in this respect was to balance the need for quick action in house building with the strong commitment of shire counties to the 'containment' concept with all that this entailed. With some noticeable exceptions - of which

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(33) - See Cullingworth (1979), pp. 258 - 265.

(34) - The Treasury, however, did not share this hope. See Cullingworth (1979), p. 264.

the designation, and later expansion, of Dawley/Telford New Town is the more obvious and substancial example - there was a tendency to pragmatic solutions to the perceived housing-location problem.

By the mid-late 1960's, however, local authorities in the region became more outspoken about the character of certain central government decisions concerning the region, and the way in which the decisions were taken. Two issues were important in this respect. Firstly, it became obvious that central government was taking partial decisions without fully assessing its effects on the region's future. Central government decisions concerning Dawley/Telford New Town and the North Worcestershire overspill scheme appeared to local authorities both contradictory and precipitate. Secondly, there was a growing feeling that the regional economy was being prejudiced not only by the operation of the regional policy (I.D.C.'s controls were particularly resented) but also by ill-thought physical planning proposals (for example, the suggestion for an axis of growth west of the conurbation). Given this state of affairs it was to be expected that sooner rather than later local authorities would react to the absolute dominance of central government in the formulation and adoption of regional planning recommendations. Such a reaction became apparent in the late 1960s.

II.2 - PLANNING FOR GROWTH OR DECLINE?

By the late 1960's it was apparent that the British experiment of indicative economic planning, at both national and regional levels, had collapsed. Further, it was clear that the attempt to integrate physical and economic considerations into a comprehensive regional planning process had also failed. In the West Midlands, reflecting the negative assessment of a number of separate and somewhat contradictory decisions taken by central government, there was a growing feeling among local authorities that the 'overspill' was being developed without any cohesive planning for the region as a whole. Further, there were increasing fears, especially among the business community, that the whole approach of central government to the region ('overspill', industrial location controls, etc.) was severely damaging the economic future of the West Midlands.

Given this perspective it is not surprising that both local authorities and the business community decided to take a more positive stance concerning the planning of the region's future. Thus the period from the late 1960's to the early-mid 1970's came to be marked by the multiplication of often contradictory planning initiatives at the regional, subregional and local levels and by a sucession of misunderstandings, and conflicts, between the main bodies involved in the planning of the region (local authorities, central government and the W.M.E.P.C.). It would be over-optimistic to expect, in these circumstances, that substantial progress could be made in the planning of the region.

Before analysing the sequence of events in the region during this period, it is important to briefly consider the most significant features of the changing regional planning context.

II.2.1 - PLANNING FOR GROWTH OR DECLINE?

Among the various changes in the regional planning context during the

late 1960's and early 1970's, it seems appropriate to refer in the first instance to the dramatic turnaround in population projections. While the early and mid 1960's had been characterised by continuing rises in the forecasts of population growth, in the late 1960's the trend was for a downward revision of the projections (Figure 8). Given that most regional planning thinking in the West Midlands had so far been mainly concerned with the problems of where to accommodate expected population increases, the importance of this scale-down in population forecasts was of the utmost importance.

The important changes as far as population forecasts are concerned were not, however, paralleled by changes of a commensurate scale on the economic front. After the devaluation of sterling in 1967, the new parity led to an increase in the volume of exports and, eventually, to a balance of payments surplus in 1969. However, this improvement in the U.K. financial position was only achieved at the expense of slow economic growth and a widening of the gap between investment levels and productivity growth in the U.K. and elsewhere (Shanks, 1977).

The late 1960's were also marked by significant changes in the legislation governing 'town and country planning' and in the organisation of British government. Turning first to analyse the developments concerning planning legislation, these had their origins in the Planning Advisory Group (P.A.G.) 1965 report on 'The Future of Development Plans' (M.H.L.G., 1965). The broad idea put forward in this report was that the existing Development Plans, because of the need to give a firm base for development control, had become too detailed and exclusively concerned with land-use. Due to these characteristics development plans took a long time to prepare and approve and so they could not provide a flexible instrument to respond to rapid changes in the outside world (increased personal mobility, growth in demand for housing, rise in car ownership etc.). Thus the report argued for changes in the planning process aimed at improving the flexibility of the system.

The broad conclusions of the report were adopted by the government and

largely incorporated into the Town and Country Planning Act 1968. Broad strategic issues were separeted from detailed land-use planning; the former being dealt with in Structure Plans and the latter in Local Plans. Structure Plans were intended to provide a clear statement of the local authority's policy concerning the nature and location of development. The Local Plan was intended to translate the Structure Plan policies into a level of detail adequate to the operation of development control. However, due to a number of procedural and political difficulties the impact of the new planning system was only to become significant from the mid 1970's onwards.

As far as developments in the structure of British government are concerned the late 1960's was a period of enormous activity. Of the changes which were implemented while the Labour Party was still in power the abolition in 1969 of the D.E.A. was of particular significance, as it stressed the failure of the 'planning experiment' of the 1960's. However, most of the results of this process of administrative reform would only become apparent under the following Conservative government.

In spite of the fact that when the Conservative government came to power a great deal of thinking had already been put on the restructuring of the government structure, the Conservatives were, nevertheless, able to impress their mark both on the reorganisation of central government and on the reform of local government. Concerning the first aspect the Conservative government pushed the process of departmental amalgamation, and the creation of super ministries (Department of the Environment, Department of Trade and Industry) well beyond what its predecessor would have done (Town Planning Review, 1978). As far as the process of local government reform was concerned the Conservatives not only rejected the principle of a single, all-purpose tier of local authorities but also kept, as far as possible, the separation beween 'urban' and 'rural' local authorities. Thus the process of local government reform ended in a very different way from what would have happened if a Labour government had been in office at the time (Honey, 1981).

This was not the only area of government activity on which the Conservative admnistration attempted to impress its mark. In the field of economic policy, for example, the government headed by Mr. Edward Heath adopted, during its first two years in office, a tough strategy designed to hold down wages and stimulate the restructuring of industry in response to slow economic growth. However, concerns over social and political unrest led to a dramatic U-turn on economic policy in 1972 (tax cuts, public expenditure increases, etc). Contrary to the expectations of the Government the effects of this U-turn were not a rapid increase in investment levels but rather property and currency speculation coupled with a credit explosion and an increasing trade and balance of payments deficit. Thus late in 1973 the government had, yet again, to change course in order to contain inflation and avoid a major financial crisis. Quantitative controls over credit expansion were imposed and were accompanied by a massive reduction in the public expenditure planned for the following year. Finally, early in 1974, the government collapsed in the course of a miners' strike which had forced manufacturing industry to operate for only three days a week.

In other policy areas, however, the changes introduced by the Conservative government proved more stable. This was, certainly, the case as regards the shift introduced by the Housing Finance Act 1972 from a policy of slum clearance and redevelopment to one of urban renewal . The same can be said of the adoption of a more cautious approach to roadbuilding in urban areas, and, to a large extent, the approach to industrial assistance suggested by the Industry Act 1972.

It is now important to return to the West Midlands and analyse the evolution of events therein starting with the consideration of the organisational arrangements for regional planning in the region.

II.2.2 - ORGANISATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR REGIONAL PLANNING - THE START OF CONFLICTS

By the mid 1960's local authorities in the West Midlands had already a considerable experience of co-operation in planning matters. As early as 1923, on the instigation of central government, they had established the Midland Joint Town Planning Advisory Council. This voluntary collaborative venture joined with central government in the early 1930's in the preparation of an advisory regional plan. But with planning powers shared by a large number of small authorities and planning expertise and resources largely missing, its practical impact was always very small (Cherry, 1980). After World War II, the need for strengthened co-operation between local planning authorities became particularly acute in order to implement the overspill strategy suggested in the West Midland Plan of 1948. This led in 1955 to the creation of the Joint Committee for Birmingham Overspill (see Appendix B, p. B-38).

Though this organisation undertook a lot of useful work it was unable to overcome the enormous problems that the overspill strategy had to face. Furthermore the terms of reference of the Committee restricted its action to the examination of problems created by Birmingham's overspill and this prevented the Committee from extending its activities to cover issues such as transportation planning, or land-use problems outside Birmingham. The inadequacies of the existing inter-authority planning arrangements in the West Midlands were therefore apparent, from the early 1960's, at least. However the conflicts existing between various authorities concerning population and industrial overspill matters precluded a speedy solution of the problem. In the end this occurred in response to various central government initiatives.

The first government initiative which prompted this response, as already mentioned, was the creation in 1965 of the system of Regional Economic Planning Councils and Boards. These bodies were made responsible for drafting and implementing regional economic plans without any formal involvement of local planning authorities. A second, and regionally specific action, was the

publication in the summer of 1965 of The West Midlands: A Regional Study (D.E.A., 1965). This was prepared without the involvement of local authorities and they consequently felt little commitment to implementing the recommendations.

These central government initiatives led to discussions during 1965 within the Joint Committee on Overspill, as to whether it would be appropriate, or not, to extend the membership of the Committee to comprise all local planning authorities in the region. In the event it was decided not to enlarge the membership of the Committee[35].

This was, however, merely delaying the inevitable. The decision by the government to allow development at Chelmsley Wood, the designation order for Redditch New Town, etc., had confirmed the view held by the shire counties that the implementation of overspill was being undertaken without any cohesive planning for the region as a whole. It was also felt that before a regional plan was produced with the active involvement and final agreement of all local planning authorities, attempts at peripheral development would continue, and the confirmation of the Green Belt around the conurbation would be further delayed. These issues were specially important for the shire authorities, but Birmingham, for instance, also had an interest in the creation of new organisational arrangements as the City Council was involved in separate overspill negotiations with more than fifty different local authorities in places as far afield as Mid-Wales and Northamptonshire. This, of course, created a significant strain on its administrative machinery.

The incentive to create a strong local inter-authority organisation was further encouraged by rumours during 1966 that the Labour Government was contemplating the creation of elected regional authorities. In December 1966, discussions on this issue were resumed in the Joint Committee on Birmingham Overspill in the basis of a proposal from the Worcestershire County Council Planning Committee:

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(35) - See Joint Committee on Birmingham Overspill, Minutes, Meeting of 9 November 1965.

> *The Committee had in mind that since the present national tendency appeared to be towards the creation of Regional Councils, it would be well for local authorities to set machinery in operation for co-operation on a voluntary basis*[36].

The objective was to broaden both membership and functions of the existing arrangements to include transport, water supplies, sewage and refuse disposal, public open spaces, etc... This proposal was discussed firstly at meetings of the Joint Committee on Overspill and then forwarded to the individual Councils for approval.

Meanwhile, the Secretary of State's request for the provision of 15,000 houses in peripheral locations in North Worcestershire provided the final impetus for the establishment of a more comprehensive inter-authority venture.

The terms of reference of the new organisation were:

1) To examine the problems of overspill and to put forward and examine proposals for their solution.
2) To study the longer term needs of the West Midlands Conurbation and to suggest the broad strategy on such matters as land use, population, integration of transport, employment and other major planning issues of commom interest.
3) To provide a forum whereby the view of constituent authorities on matters referred to in 2) can be appropriately assembled and studied in liaison as may be necessary with government departments and other authorities and bodies concerned[37].

The membership of the new organisation - the West Midlands Standing Conference on Planning (later West Midland Planning Authority Conference (W.M.P.A.C.) - included three representatives from each of the five counties in the region and one representative from each of the Black Country County Boroughs, Birmingham

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(36) - See Birmingham Council Minutes, Report of the General Purposes Committee, 13 June 1967, p. 39. The proposal was first discussed at the Joint Committee on Birmingham Overspill meeting of 13 December 1965.

(37) - Idem., p. 41.

C.B. and Solihull C.B.. The first meeting took place on the 1st. November 1967 and later, in 1969, Worcester C.B. and Stoke-on-Trent C.B. were also admitted as members of the organisation.

During the first months of the existence of the Conference, techical work was undertaken exclusively by the Technical Officers Standing Committee (later Technical Officers Panel) which brought together the chief planning officers of the Conference constituent local authorities. But, soon the need for a different organisation of technical work became apparent.

In March 1967, the W.M.E.P.C. published its first major planning report - Patterns of Growth. Though in broad terms the report's proposals were acceptable to most of the planning authorities in the region the way they had been produced was not. As a consequence of the local authorities'reaction to the publication of the document, senior government officials in the region asked the W.M.P.A.C. to prepare a planning document for the region. The W.M.P.A.C. accepted the responsibility and early in 1968 it instructed its Technical Officer Panel to make arrangements for the production of the document.

The Technical Officers Panel suggested the creation of an independent planning team - the West Midland Regional Study (W.M.R.S.) which would be assisted in their work by Technical Working Parties, involving officers of both the individual local authorities and the regional offices of central government departments. These covered the fields of population, employment, socio-economic, communications, physical planning and regional strategy (Figure 11). The main task of the W.M.R.S. was broadly defined as to prepare a report with recommendations for a physical strategy for the region up until the end of the century, with a special concern for the next ten years, and submit this to the W.M.P.A.C.. The Technical Officers Panel also provided the W.M.R.S. with initial guidance in the form of a list of objectives to be achieved by the Study. Following the first stage, it was suggested that the W.M.R.S. should work without any outside influence. This was considered to be necessary in order to achieve a dispassionate view of the region's problems. The most important

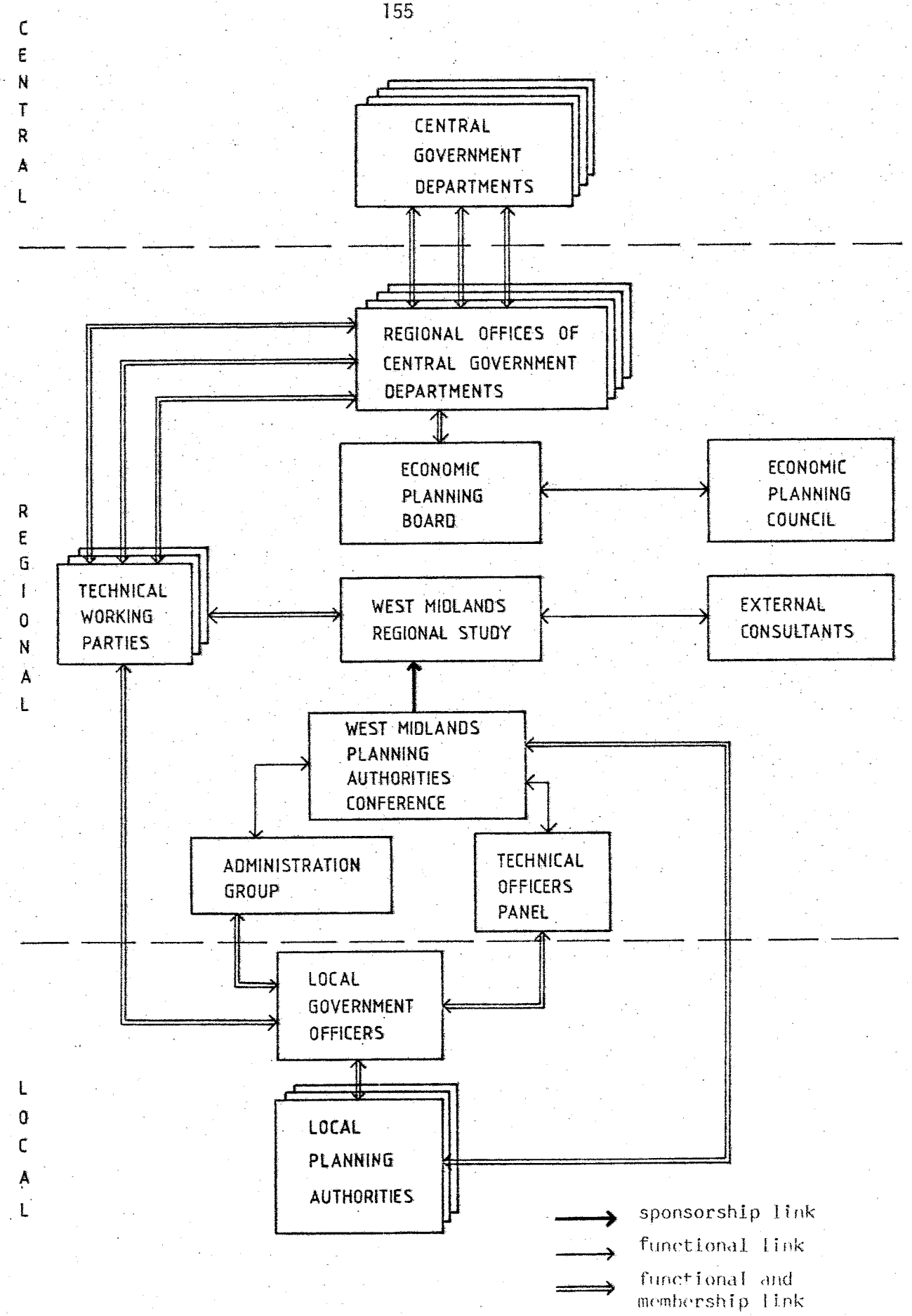

Fig. 11: Regional Planning Networks in the West Midlands Region in the late 1960's

consequence of this provision was that W.M.R.S. recommendations were seen as neither committing the conference as a whole nor any of its individual members to their implementation.

The first task of the W.M.R.S. was to elaborate on the terms of reference with which it had been instructed by the W.M.P.A.C.. This involved the identification of specific objectives, the development of a detailed methodology for the Study and, above all, the definition of a set of assumptions on which the Study would be based. In this respect, the assumption concerning the future prospects of the regional economy was of critical importance as the state of the regional economy would influence the mobility of jobs and people, and a substantial part of the resources likely to be available for the implementation of the planning recommendations. The working assumptions of the W.M.R.S. concerning the future economic prospects of the region were as follows:

a) *That the economy of the region would continue to perform at a rate slightly above the national average and its health would remain sound and*

b) *that full employment would be available for the needs of the region's population.*

(W.M.R.S., 1971, para. 147)

Elaborating on these assumptions the W.M.R.S. envisaged a rapid shift in emphasis within the regional economy from the manufacturing to the services sector, and a continuation of the dominant economic role of the conurbation in the region. Bearing in mind these premises the Study addressed itself

> *...to the question of where and in what form future growth within the Region might be best deployed.*
>
> (W.M.R.S., 1971, Introduction)

In this context, the acceptance of the scarcity of mobile employment in the region was only seen as impinging on the selection of future development locations. Whether these would be necessary at all was a question which was largely unconsidered by the Study team.

This optimistic vision of the regional economy was at odds with some of the more cautious forecasts put forward in Patterns of Growth and was not widely shared among the W.M.E.P.C. membership. So, with the W.M.P.A.C. already embarking in what was considered to be primarily a physical planning exercise, the Council decided that it would be appropriate to report on the prospects and nature of future economic growth in the region. This decision was vehemently supported by the Council's chaiman - Adrian Cadbury - who, being an economist and an industrialist, had a lurking feeling that something was wrong with the region's economy and that unless changes in policy were made, the West Midlands would experience during the 1970's a process of rapid decline similar to the one experienced in the 1920's and 1930's by Lanchashire[38].

The task of preparing the report was ascribed to a Working Party created for that exclusive purpose by the Council in December 1968. The eighteen strong Working Party comprised Council members representing employers, trade unions, local government and academics together with outside representatives of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and the Confederation of British Industry (Table III).

Members	Number
Industrialists	7
Employers' Organisations*	4*
Trades Unions	3**
Local Authorities (Chaimain of W.M.P.A.C.)	1
Secretary of the W.M.E.P.C.	1
Academics	2***
TOTAL	18

TABLE III: *Constitution of the Working Party*

* Including Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and C.B.I.
** Two resigned during the preparation of the report.
*** One resigned during the preparation of the report.
Source: W.M.E.P.C. (1971), Appendix I.

(38) - Interview with Dr. Ian Gibson, 21 January 1981.

The composition of the Working Party was therefore clearly unbalanced with an overrepresentation of one side of industry, and this was clearly reflected in both the style adopted in the report and its final contents. The report can therefore safely be interpreted as the views of the local business community on the state of the regional economy, on past government economic policies affecting the region, and on the proposals considered to be necessary in order to maintain and further increase the industrial wealth of the region.

Meanwhile, in the summer of 1968, the D.E.A. had issued a document which attempted to set a framework for the relations between E.P.C.'s and Standing Conferences of Local Authorities, which were proving conflictual in various English regions. According to this document, the E.P.C.'s had the double function of advising the Government on the implications of national economic policies for the regions; and of bringing to the attention of the Government the special economic circunstances of the regions of which, in their view, account should be taken in formulating national and regional policies[39]. The document emphasised that, though the confidentiality of official information provided to the Councils should be safeguarded, this fact should not be so overstressed as to prevent close co-operation between Councils and local authorities. However, the document was remiss in not indicating how that co-operation should be developed and simply stated that detailed arrangements needed to be worked out in the regions themselves[40].

In the case of the West Midlands this proved to be even more difficult than normal. In fact, the region was simultaneously being the subject of:

a) a regional physical planning study sponsored by the W.M.P.A.C.;

b) a subregional planning study sponsored by three planning authorities, namely Coventry C.B.C., Solihull C.B.C. and Warwickshire C.C.;

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(39) - See D.E.A. (1968), p. 1.

(40) - Idem., p. 3.

c) an economic study sponsored by the W.M.E.P.C. and worked out by a semi-autonomous working party;

d) a dozen or so Structure Plans conducted by the individual local authorities.

A large number of plans being produced simultaneounsly was, in itself, a sufficient reason for inter-organisational disputes. But, on top of this, it is also necessary to bear in mind the problems created by overlapping membership coupled whith lack of definition of where the locus of decision-making power actually rested. Central Government departments in the region, for example, were simultaneously involved in the Regional Study, because of their participation in Working Parties; in the Economic Appraisal, as they provided most of the data and analysis for the exercise; and were also actively involved in the early stages of preparation of Structure Plans, as theseconstituted a completely new exercise in which the individual local authorities had no experience. However, they were not formally committed to supporting the proposals of any of these exercises. Local authorities were sponsoring the Regional Study and heavily involved in the exercise through their planning officers but were also not formally committed to support the proposals of the exercise. Local authority representatives sat on the Economic Planning Council and in the Working Party preparing the Economic Appraisal but again no commitment existed to support the results of the exercise. Finally, and in spite of the assurances given by the E.P.C. that their economic study would not duplicate or overlap the Regional Study sponsored by the W.M.P.A.C., the fact was that a clear boundary line between the two studies was hard, if not impossible, to draw.

Given these circumstamces and despite the fact that co-operative arrangements were set up at the beginning of the work of both the Study Team and the Working Party, the relationship increasingly developed into a conflict situation. The E.P.C., for example, complained that it received almost no information on the work being undertaken by the Study Team, and government

officials also shared this view. Once again, it was necessary for the personal intervention of the Secretary of State - Anthony Crosland - to smooth over these difficulties. In January 1970 he wrote to the chairman of the W.M.P.A.C. - Sir Michael Higgs - expressing the view that it was necessary to create an agreed framework for regional planning in the region and use this as a basis for action. He stressed that this was particularly important in the region

> *...in order to assess the Structure Plans being produced and to avoid the continuance of piecemeal decisions (which were) not adequately related to each other and inconsistent with good general planning criteria*[41].

The letter ended with the suggestion of a tripartite meeting - Government, E.P.C., W.M.P.A.C. - to discuss forms of co-operation between the organisations and individuals involved.

This meeting took place on the 13th March 1970 but it did not achieve, in the short term, the results sought after. In practice the work of the various parties had developed to such an extent that the meeting could only agree that full co-operation would be undertaken after the W.M.R.S. report had been presented.

II.2.3 - THE ECONOMIC APPRAISAL - THE CASE FOR A WEST MIDLANDS 'REGIONAL CLAIM'

The W.M.E.P.C. Working Party reported in April 1971 and the document swept aside the longstanding consensus on the region's healthy economic prospects (W.M.E.P.C., 1971).

The report emphasised that economic problems were likely to develop in the region in the near future due to its deficient industrial mix. The inadequacies of this were understood to stem from three major sources[42].

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(41) - Letter from the Secretary of State for Housing and Local Government to the Chairman of the W.M.P.A.C., 8 January 1970.

(42) - See W.M.E.P.C. (1971), paras. 2.14 - 2.16.

Firstly, there was an overrepresentation of manufactures and underrepresentation of the service sector, in a period when manufacturing employment was beginning to decline nationally (Table IV).

	G.B. % EMPLOYED		W.M. % EMPLOYED	
YEAR	MANUFACTURING	SERVICES	MANUFACTURING	SERVICES
1954	41.7	44.3	56.6	32.1
1962	38.7	48.7	53.9	36.1
1969	38.4	51.0	53.2	38.1

TABLE IV: *Employment in Manufacturing and Services 1954 - 1969 in Great Britain and the West Midlands.*

Source: W.M.E.P.C. (1971)

Secondly, the manufacturing sector was overdependent on a few key sectors. Almost three quarters of manufacturing employment was engaged in the production or use of metals at a time of a vast rate of substitution of metals by plastics. Finally, the Economic Appraisal stressed a lack in the region of fast growing industries like chemicals, electronics, office machinery, scientific and precision instruments, etc... This analysis of the region's industrial mix was complemented by a series of disturbing economic indicators[43]. Firstly, the monthly average of unemployment in the region had climbed from 19,000 in 1966 to 67,000 in 1970 and had overtaken the United Kingdom average for the first time in many years. Secondly, for the manufacturing sector as a whole, and for most manufacturing groups, the net output per head was lower than the Great Britain average. Thirdly, male weekly earnings were above the Great Britain average and were only exceeded by those in the South-East region. These two latter indexes were consistent with those registered six years earlier in the D.E.A.'s West Midlands - A Regional Study and indicated a longstanding problem within the regional economy.

(43) - Idem., paras. 3.16 - 3.27.

But, the main point of concern of the Working Party was with the perceived negative effects of national economic policies in the region, with special emphasis being laid on the effects of regional policy. Indeed if the report has had any influence on the evolution of the region at all this derives clearly from its vehement rejection of the regional policy as practised in the United Kingdom since World War II. The report started its analyses of the effects of regional policy by arguing that appropriate assessment should involve the answer to two fundamental questions. Firstly, what are the long term effects of the policy on the structure and efficiency of the United Kingdom industry? Secondly, what are its costs compared with other methods of achieving the same ends? The Working Party argued that no satisfactory answer had been given to these questions and proceeded to voice its criticisms about what it considered to be the worst element of the policy, namely the system of I.D.C. controls. The objections to the existing system of controls were summarised under three headings: growth and productivity; use of resources; attraction of new industries[44].

Taking the first issue the report claimed that I.D.C. controls penalised both growth and modernisation of labour processes as these generally involved increases in floor space. In support of this argument the report presented the results of a survey carried out in 1968 by the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and Industry which suggested that a substantial proportion of firms were being discouraged from introducing new technologies or expanding productive capacity because of the perceived difficulty of obtaining I.D.C.'s. The report stressed also that for small firms the refusal of an I.D.C. to expand locally was almost synonymous with no expansion as the opening of a branch plan or the relocation of the entire firm was not an alternative considered practical by their management. A second issue covered by the report concerned the negative effects of I.D.C. controls on the utilisation of resources especially

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(44) - Idem., paras. 8.25 - 8.27.

land. In this respect the Economic Appraisal argued that given the uncertainty arising form I.D.C. policy this led many firms to obtain permission for future expansion and buy land adjacent to their premises, above their existing needs. Thereafter this land remained unused, or derelict, until extra demand or new technologies called for it being brought into use. Finally, it was claimed that the policy also discriminated against the setting up in the region of firms in new sectors of production. This resulted from the fact that two of the main justifications for granting I.D.C.'s to firms in the region, namely that they relied on existing linkages with both suppliers and buyers or on the pool of skilled labour available, could not be used by new or technological innovative firms[45]. As a result, the prospects for structurally generated decline were enhanced. Furthermore it was claimed that the system of I.D.C. controls diminished the probability of sucess of the physical planning strategy of planned overspill to self-contained urban developments within the region and, by doing so, contributed to a further deterioration of the region's conditions of living. This, in turn, made the region less attractive for investment purposes.

The criticism levelled at the system of I.D.C. controls were not unfamiliar in the region. Since 1960, the annual reports of the Technical Officers Panel of the Joint Committee on Overspill had consistently attacked the Board of Trade policy concerning the non-granting of I.D.C.'s in overspill areas[46]. More recently the evidence submitted by various regional bodies (Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, West Midlands Economic Planning Council, etc) to the Hunt Committee on Intermediate Areas had also made clear the general dissatisfaction with the operation of the policy[47]. What was new in the report

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(45) - See Birmingham Post, 26 July 1968, article of J. Jardine (Regional Controller of the Board of Trade).

(46) - See Technical Officers' Panel, Annual Report, 1960, para. 30.

(47) - See G.B. (1969) (The Intermediate Areas, (Hunt Report), Cmnd. 3998).

Party was keen to stress that their positive policy was likely to achieve through market forces and increased growth, what the existing policy was already achieving - movement of firms to assisted areas - but at the same time, avoiding the negative effects on the long term prosperity of the non-assisted areas. The argument was that the lifting of negative controls would create a faster rate of growth in the region and, following the likely shortage of labour, firms would be encouraged to move to the assisted areas for purely commercial reasons. On the contrary, if the health of the regional economy was further damaged, fewer firms would need to expand and less mobile investment would be available to steer to the assisted areas.

The major emphasis of their approach, however, was seen to be the need to increase the competitiveness of the firms in the region. In this respect the document singled out the motor vehicle industry as the sector in which the negative influences of regional policy was most evident. Indeed, of a total of 122,000 jobs 'moved' to Assisted Areas in the period 1960 - 1965, 41,000 were in the vehicles group[49]. This movement, as a study of the National Economic Development Office clearly revealed, was primarily a result of the operation of I.D.C. controls in the West Midlands and the South-East region (N.E.D.O., 1969). To take just one example, the British Motor Corporation was only allowed to expand its Longbridge (Birmingham) plant, by 10 acres and 1,600 jobs in 1960, after having agreed to locate three quarters of its total planned development in Scotland, South Wales and Merseyside. Similar conditions applied to the other three major vehicle manufacturers firms and to a number of major components manufacturers[50]. Seven out of the nine firms involved in processes of this kind claimed that the policy had prevented a more efficient use of resources with an aggregate cost penalty of five per cent incurred, for instance, in making bodies away from the points of assembly. On top of this the firms also reported higher

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(49) - See N.E.D.O. (1969), p. 1.

(50) - Idem et passim

levels of absenteeism, labour disputes and shortages of skilled labour in the Assisted Areas.

The Economic Appraisal echoed these facts with dismay. In the opinion of the Working Party, the best way to deal with the problem of the industry was not to promote a costly dispersal of the component plants, justified on regional policy criteria, but rather to encourage the industry to put forward an overall plan for reorganisation aiming at increasing its international competitive position. The report recognised that this would create redundancies in the short term but claimed that

> *...these must be weighted against the consequences if this key industry fails to hold its own in the markets of the world.*
>
> (W.M.E.P.C., 1971, para. 8.41)

With hindsight, it is difficult not to interpret this advice as of a prophetic nature.

The Economic Appraisal met with a lukewarm response from central government, local authorities and academics. The attitude of the former is hardly surprising given the critical attitude adopted towards regional policy. As far as the local authorities were concerned it is necessary to bear in mind that the Standing Conference was sponsoring a study which assumed full employment and rapid economic growth in the future (see above p 156).

The criticisms by academics fell into two main groups, those dealing with specific issues and those addressed to the overall tone of the document[51]. As far as the first group of criticisms were concerned there was agreement that the document provided no evidence to support the assertion that the lifting of I.D.C. controls in the region would prove beneficial for the Assisted Areas in the medium-long term; and that national policies (I.D.C. controls in particular) were the major causes of the declining prospects of the region. Further it was noted that there was insufficient evidence to confirm these trends, and that no

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(51) - Reference is made to the comments produced by Herson (1972) and Smith (1972).

sub-regional breakdown of the analysis had been attempted in order to identify the prospects of the various parts of the region. Most of these criticisms were pertinent but to understand their full meaning they have to be seen in the context of the second group of comments.

For Smith (1972), the terms of reference of the Working Party were considered to be 'essentially selfish' and, stemming from this original sin, the document was seen as overstating the problems of the region

> *...irrespective of the Region's comparative health vis-à-vis other regions which the national interest feels need more cherishing for economic or political reasons.*
>
> (Smith, 1972, p. 1)

The document was held to be sensationalist in character and lacking realism and consistency in the way policy proposals were formulated. Herson (1972) pushed the course of criticisms in a different direction. For him the major shortcoming of the document arose not so much from an exaggerated statement of the region's economic problems, though he also acknowledged this, but from the fact that the document articulated a corporatist defence of the interests of leading businessmen and industrialists. And so he concluded that

> *It seems a travesty of universal democracy that a body often thought of as being quasi-governmental (the W.M.E.P.C.) can in fact be the vehicle of expression for such narrowly-based groups of people.*
>
> (Herson, 1972, p. 6)

These latter criticisms were substantiated by the analysis of the Working Party membership (see Table III above p. 157) which indicated the dominance of employers' representatives; and by equating the document's plea for an efficiency-oriented reorganisation of the industry with pressures towards greater economic inequality. But the report itself gave more straightforward material on which such criticisms could be based. In referring, for example, to the need for better environmental conditions in the region the document significantly made the claim, that

> *While industry would support the efforts being made to improve the*

> *amenities of the Region, they will be expensive and will not produce results in the short term and so cannot come high on our priorities for expenditure. (sic!)*
>
> (W.M.E.P.C., 1971, para. 7.66)

Conversely, it might be argued that the Working Party did contain trade union representatives and that neither these representatives nor the trades unions themselves ever voiced public criticisms of the document.

Rather than attempting to identify a monopolistic class bias in the document it is, perhaps, more appropriate to analyse it as the expression of the specific characteristics of a 'regionalist claim'. In fact the proposals of the Economic Appraisal contained the suggestion that it would be appropriate to create an institutional bridge between central government and local authorities with powers to manage the capital expenditure of both these levels of administration in the region, and to promote sectoral re-allocation of ressources where necessary. No detailed proposals were presented in this respect but the report stressed the importance of further development of the regional administration of central government as a necessary step to create such a mechanism.

As the expression of a specific form of 'regionalist claim' the Economic Appraisal can be compared and contrasted with the 1948 Conurbation study (see Appendix B, p. B-17-19). Such a comparison highlights the fact that 'regionalism' may assume different, and apparently opposite, forms depending on the circumstamces. When the Conurbation study was produced, the economic future of the region appeared to be rosy and the 'regionalist claim' rejected central government aid to achieve a restructuring of the regional economy. The region's close knit industrial structure, comprising small and medium firms, was presented as a favourable condition to achieve faster economic growth, and the forced introduction in the region of large firms, particularly in non-traditional sectors, was repudiated in the name of economic efficiency. At the time this protectionist strategy - a specific form of regionalism - was challenged by central government interventionist attitudes, clearly outlined in

the West Midlands Plan which was in favour of promoting by all possible means increased productivity and competitiveness to serve an export-oriented economic policy.

In the context of the late 1960's and early 1970's, the positions were apparently reversed. The 'regionalist claim' now argued against the constraints placed upon firms in new productive sectors to settle in the region and for central government help in the reorganisation of the region's industry. But, once again, central government priorities pointed in a different direction.

The terms of reference of the Working Party had a clear economic bias and the Council was keen to emphasise that a comprehensive strategy for the region was being prepared by the W.M.P.A.C.. Having said this, however, the Working Party then went on to express its broad preferences concerning the physical planning of the region[52]. In short these concerned two main issues, namely the form and location of future development. The Working Party voiced its support for corridors of growth linked with communication channels. In relation to the location of 'overspill' developments the report emphasised that past experience cast doubts on the possibility of implementing a strategy based on developments beyond commuting range. Accordingly, it was suggested that overspill needs should be met, in similar proportions, both by the New Towns and Town Development Schemes outside the proposed Green Belt and by urban developments at the fringes of the conurbation itself. While these proposals were broad and flexible their mere formulation constituted a further element of conflict between the Council on the one hand and the local authorities and their Conference on the other.

It is now important to consider the development of the W.M.P.A.C. sponsored regional strategy.

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(52) - See W.M.E.P.C. (1971), paras. 8.7 - 8.16.

II.2.4 - A DEVELOPING STRATEGY FOR THE WEST MIDLANDS - THE BLUE BOOK

As it was referred earlier the W.M.P.A.C. handed the task of preparing a regional strategy for the region to the W.M.R.S.

According to its terms of reference the W.M.R.S. was to develop its work free of political pressures from the sponsoring local authorities. In the opinion of its Director, the Team's independence was respected and it experienced almost no political interference before the Study (Blue Book) was published in 1971[53]. Of course, consultation and joint technical work with both central and local government officers was a constant feature of the Team's work. But, at the end of the exercise, the independence of the Team was evident in its claim that the report was an exercise in the logic of change and that it had

> *...emerged through a deductive process, in which the conclusions of one stage are used as a basis for the next.*
>
> (W.M.R.S., 1971, Introduction)

A methodology of this kind obviously reinforces the importance of the initial premises. As already stated, the most relevant of these was the assumption of regional growth in the years ahead. Regional labour supply was estimated to increase to a figure within the range 2.43 to 2.55 M by 1981 and labour demand to 2.50 M. Manufacturing job losses were expected to be more than compensated for by service sector employment growth and large scale unemployment was ruled out as likely feature of the region's economic future. The population in the region was expected to increase by 600,000 up to 1981 and 1,300,000 up to 2001 and the Study Team considered that its first priority should be to address the question of

> *...where and in what form future growth within the Region might best be deployed.*
>
> (W.M.R.S., 1971, Introduction)

In practical terms, however, the question was not exactly this. A substantial proportion of future growth would be in situ natural growth and this

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(53) - Interview with Mr. John Moreton, 23 March 1981.

of course, did not create allocation problems. Only growth resulting from planned and unplanned movements of population (and industry) created such problems. The population involved in such movements was labelled 'option population' and the exercise was mainly addressed to answer the question of how and where this growth should occur.

There was in this approach to the physical planning of the region a subtle, but nevertheless important, break with previous planning studies for the region. In the past planners had concerned themselves only with the mapping of planned movement of population (overspill). The approach adopted in the Blue Book was that overspill had to be planned against the backcloth provided by the unplanned movements of population resulting from the operation of market forces. This was, by its very nature, largely uncontrollable through planning decisions, but its direction and size had to be taken into consideration for the location of the planned overspill. This shift from overspill to option population planning was, perhaps, the major methodological novelty of the exercise.

The final report of the Study Team, the so-called Blue Book, was published in September 1971 almost four years after the decision was taken to start the exercise. Meanwhile a number of planning decisions had been implemented or were fully committed in the region, namely the North Worcestershire Scheme, the expansion of Dawley (now Telford) New Town population target, the development at Chelmsley Wood, etc. The Blue Book naturally reflected in its contents these developments.

The base year for the exercise was 1966 and its terms of reference called for an assessment of problems, and proposals, to be made for the period up to 2001 but with special emphasis being placed on the period up to 1981.

For the period up to 1981 overspill from the Conurbation was expected to amount to 100,000 households and the corresponding figure for the period up to 2001 was roughly two and a half times greater. When the housing provision in the schemes already being developed or committed was compared with these overspill requirements, it was evident that, even allowing for a fifteen per cent

shortfall in all non-peripheral developments, some 85 per cent of the housing required up to 1981 could be provided in schemes already in development or fully committed[54]. Two further peripheral developments, east of Sutton Coldfield and South-West of Solihull, would cover the gap between the expected supply and demand for strategic housing.

With the medium term (up to 1981) housing-land needs almost covered by existing or committed schemes, the only course of action open to the Study Team was to devote itself to the difficult task of generating and evaluating long term physical 'growth' strategies for the region, that is to say, for the period up to 2001 according to its terms of reference. In real terms, this was what the Blue Book was about.

The Study Team attacked this task with enthusiasm. First of all, three concepts of physical planning were singled out as being of potencial use in the generation of strategies: (1) expansion of the existing major towns outside the conurbation; (2) peripheral expansion of the conurbation and; (3) corridors of growth. Based on these concepts, broad preliminary 'coarse' strategies were explored: the expansion of existing towns; two options of peripheral expansion with bias to the North and the South; and five directions of growth: North, North-West, North-East, South-West and South-East. These alternatives were then evaluated in terms of total capital costs of roads and annual operating costs of the communications system for the period up to 2001. This part of the Study was carried out by the transportation consultants of the Study Team, who had been previously responsible for a regional transportation study. This evaluation suggested that the expansion of major towns outside the conurbation and development in corridors of growth in the South-West and North-East directions were the least expensive of the alternatives tested.

The shortcomings of this initial evaluation were, however, quite

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(54) - For the purpose of these estimates, peripheral developments were North Worcestershire, Chelmesley Wood and the Staffordshire schemes. See W.M.R.S. (1971), p. 256.

evident. The precedence given to the 'expansion of major towns' assumed, for instance, high levels of employment mobility and low levels of commuting which neither fitted with the past experience of industrial mobility nor with future prospects. The peripheral expansion strategy scored badly in the list of preferences but it was obvious that, both because of the locations of committed schemes and pressures of marked forces, a good deal of the option population would be located in that way[55]. Based on considerations of this kind, the Study Team decided to adopt a more sophisticated evaluation of four 'fine' options, on the basis of lower employment mobility and higher commuting assumptions.

The options selected for this second stage were: (1) the expansion of major towns, (2) peripheral development and (3) two directions of growth towards the South-West and Nort-East respectively. These four 'fine' options were evaluated in a first stage using the 'communications cost' test previously used to assess the coarse options. Once again the 'expanded towns' solution came out best from this evaluation in terms of both capital and operating costs. The two directions of growth appeared fairly evenly matched, but either seemed preferable to the peripheral expansion of the conurbation.

The 'fine' options were then subjected to the 'planning balance sheet' appraisal method developed by the economic consultants of the Study[56]. The purpose of this evaluation method, which is an adaptation of cost-benefit analysis to the problems of physical planning, was to assess the desirability of the alternative fine options in terms of their relative costs and benefits in general, and its impact on various sections of the community in particular (current and new residential occupiers, industrial occupiers, etc.).

The use of this method in the evaluation of the various alternatives indicated the North-Eastward growth option and the peripheral expansion of the

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(55) - Idem., paras. 229 - 234.

(56) - This was the first major application of the method developed by Nathaniel Lichfield & Associates. The method is extensively described in Technical Appendix of the W.M.R.S. (1971).

conurbation to be the best options with the 'expanded towns', and the South-Westward direction of growth specially, lagging well behind.

In the further testing of options, they were assessed as to whether there were significant financial variation in costs between them and whether any option might impose a disproportionate financial burden on the local authorities who would in part be responsible for 'implementation'. The conclusions of this analysis suggested that financial considerations were not likely to present a significant constraint on the strategies and so the study moved on to form a fifth option based on locations that had been shown to have advantages in the light of the 'planning balance sheet' analysis. Finally a sixth and 'preferred strategy' emerged based not only on the evaluation exercise but also on the

> ...*objectives of the Study and the criteria for an effective strategy.*
>
> W.M.R.S., 1971, para. 200 (Fig. 12)

The major features of the preferred strategy were:

a) the creation of an axis of growth extending North-Eastwards from Lichfield towards Burton-on-Trent and South-Westwards from Solihull and Redditch towards Mid-Worcestershire;

b) a number of small and medium peripheral developments steering some 61 per cent of option population in the period 1981 - 2001 to areas within, or surrounded by, the proposed Green Belt; and

c) the spatial restructuring of conurbation industry by developing industrial sites on either side of the North-East/South-West axis at the rim of the conurbation.

The preferred strategy can be interpreted as a result of the influence of three major forces: the location of committed schemes, the perceived difficulty of challenging large free market forces, and the need to distribute overspill population between the various local authorities[57]. Firstly, all the

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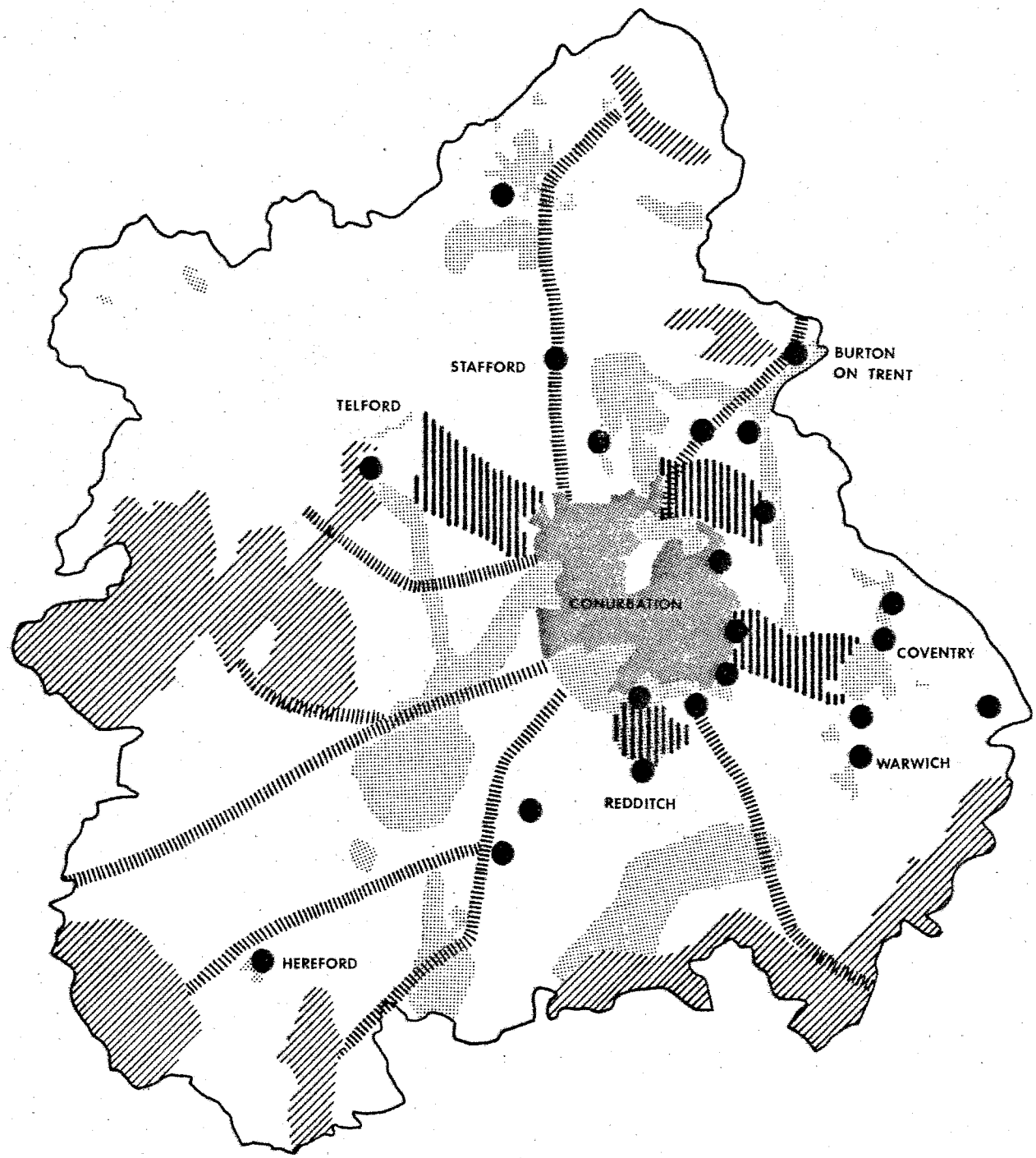
(57) - Also important were the proposals of the Coventry-Solihull-Warwickshire Subregional Study.



location of option population

subregional parks

regional parks

areas of special control

scenic routes

Fig. 12: A Developing Strategy for the West Midlands - preferred strategy

(Source: adopted from WMRS (1971) Fig. 27)

four initial four options assumed an identical spatial pattern in 1981 which was largely determined by the location of the committed schemes. Further to this, the committed schemes were to receive almost 50 per cent of the total option population up to 2001. Given these circumstances, their influence on the evaluation exercise is easily understandable. Secondly, both because of the existence of planned residential estates in the periphery of the conurbation and the past experience of lack of industrial mobility, the bulk of market pressures was almost certainly likely to fall in peripheral areas. Together these two elements were very difficult to resist. Finally, and as far as large scale overspill resulted in financial and environmental burdens not compensated for in the short run by adequate receipts, it was necessary to allocate the option population in terms acceptable to the various individual local authorities which were, in the last resort, responsible for implementing most of the strategic proposals.

II.2.5 - A DEVELOPING STRATEGY FOR THE WEST MIDLANDS: FROM THE BLUE BOOK TO THE ORANGE BOOK

Once the report was concluded it was forwarded to the Conference accompanied by a number of policy and executive recommendations[58]. In broad terms these were that the Conference should adopt the 'preferred strategy' with accompanying policies, and that it should approve an effective monitoring system to record and review the implementation of the strategy according to the evolution of events.

Meanwhile the W.M.P.A.C. had adopted, early in 1970, a sequence of procedures to deal with the Strategy (Fig. 13). As there was no statutory backing for the preparation of the regional strategy the Conference decided that it would be convenient to undertake a selective consultation programme involving

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(58) - See W.M.R.S. (1971), p. 101.

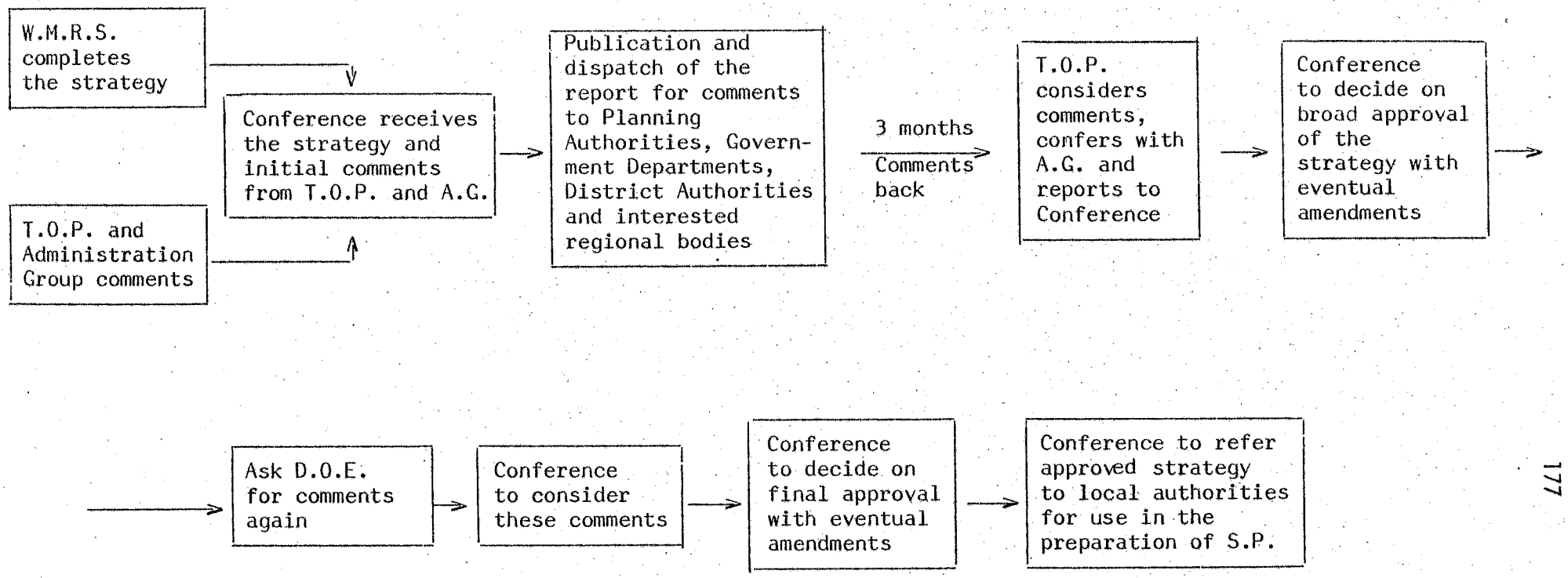

Fig. 13. : Approval of the A Developing Strategy for the West Midlands

(Source : Adapted from W.M.R.S., 1971, Appendix 3.)

local authorities, government departments and interested regional bodies. The objective of this exercise was to establish as wide as possible a consensus around the strategy adopted. No time limit was defined for this programme and, as it happened, it lasted for more than two years and gave rise to major alterations to the initial report.

The first stage of the consultation process involved sending the report to all those bodies and organisations from which comments were sought. This led to no less than 101 responses being sent back commenting on the report. Not surprisingly, local authorities had the lion's share (41) of the overall number of comments but in addition to this there were comments from conservation societies, employers' organisations, trades unions, statutory bodies such as the New Town Development Corporations, the Sports Council and Electricity Boards, academics, professional institutions (R.I.B.A., R.T.P.I., R.I.C.S.) and, of course, the Department of the Environment. Overall these comments covered almost every aspect of the report and identified its major weaknesses. They constitute therefore a unique vehicle through which the strategy may be assessed[59].

There are, however, a number of difficulties associated with the use of these responses. First of all, comments had variable scope, ranging from mere declarations of broad approval and disapproval to detailed criticisms of suggested policies. Secondly, they covered a wide range of issues, from the methodology and techniques used in the Study to monitoring and implementation arrangements; from derelict land policies to the effects of regional policy; from environmental to financial issues, etc.. Finally, comments came from organisations and bodies with variable knowledge of the problems being dealt with, with different interests at stake in relation to the strategy and, last but not the least, with varying responsibilities, and powers, in the eventual implementation of the report's proposals. Statistical considerations, concerning

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(59) - The following account is based on the 'Report of Comments Received' jointly produced by the Technical Officers' Panel of the W.M.P.A.C. and the W.M.R.S. for presentation to the members of the W.M.P.A.C., October 1972.

declarations of approval and disapproval, are totally inadequate when dealing with the comments made.

It is therefore important to adopt a critical perspective when considering the responses. In particular it is necessary to be selective in identifying the issues to be explored and selective in regard to weighting the importance and impact of the various comments. This involves, of course, a number of background assumptions as to how to select issues and evaluate the importance of the comments. The bias introduced by these can, however, be minimised by making them explicit. In the following account the selection of issues was made bearing in mind their importance in regard to alterations which were subsequently introduced in the 'preferred strategy' and in order to highlight the main weaknesses of the Blue Book. The selection of comments is also biased in favour of comments made by organisations with major power, and influence, in the 'implementation' of the strategy.

A number of the comments challenged the assumptions of the Study Team concerning the actual state and future prospects of the regional economy, industrial mobility and the rate of achievement of the committed schemes. In regard to the first issue the comments made by the W.M.E.P.C. were particularly caustic. In their opinion the economic base of the region had not been studied in sufficient depth, and inadequate attention had been paid to the changes which might result from increased automation, E.E.C. membership or changes in the composition of the working population and industrial structure. The likely rapid decline in employment demand in the manufacturing sector was also emphasised by a number of local authorities (for example, Coventry C.B.C., Staffordshire C.C., etc.) who suggested that increases in the service sector would not be enough to compensate. The comments made by the Department of the Environment, which represented the views of central government departments in the region, were less severe in this regard but doubts were expressed about the optimistic assumptions concerning the economy of the region.

The comments on the question of industrial mobility assumptions were,

to a large extent, determined by the opinions expressed in regard to the previous issue. The strategy assumed that in the period 1967 - 1981 some 29,000 jobs would move from the conurbation to overspill areas and that after 1981 and up to 2001 the rate of industrial overspill would step up to 2,750 jobs per annum. Both the W.M.E.P.C. and the D.O.E. were highly critical of these assumptions. They stressed that past experience and current trends suggested these figures to be highly 'optimistic'. Further the D.O.E. comments added, very aptly, that industrial mobility could not be forecast independently of the future strategy since the choice of strategy would influence the volume of movement. Both comments emphasised that industrial mobility would most probably fall short of the requirements of jobs in the committed schemes. Industrial mobility assumptions were also considered overoptimistic by the Birmingham and Wolverhampton County Borough Councils. On the contrary, but not surprisingly, both Redditch and Telford New Town Development Corporations argued that the potencial for industrial overspill had been underestimated. It is certainly not stretching a point too far to argue that the consideration of the geographical location of these commenting bodies goes a long way towards explaining their position.

A similar argument can also be put forward in relation to comments concerning the study assumptions on the rate of achievement of the committed schemes. Telford and Redditch Development Corporations, Tamworth Borough Council, Northamptonshire, Salop and Staffordshire County Councils on behalf of Daventry Town Development Scheme, Telford New Town and Tamworth Town Development Scheme respectively, all considered the assumed shortfall to be unjustified. On the contrary, and consistent with the previous comments on the growth and industrial mobility assumptions, both the W.M.E.P.C. and D.O.E. suggested that the assumptions of a 15 per cent shortfall might well be overtaken by events. These two bodies were also critical of the Study's emphasis on a long term (1981 - 2001) strategy and considered that it would be helpful both for evaluation and implementation purposes to interpose a break at 1991. Furthermore, and though

the evaluation method was praised, the D.O.E. argued that the results of the work were constrained by the quality of the assumptions and input into the process. In this respect the D.O.E. emphasised that basic planning forecasts had been substantially overtaken by events and that both employment and population forecasts, in particular, needed considerable revision[60].

The 'preferred strategy' was also subject to a number of important criticisms. At first sight, these criticisms seemed to fall into two mutually compensating groups. On the one hand, there was a group of comments which adopted the position that the strategy overemphasised the importance of New Towns and Town Development Schemes in the solution of the conurbation problems and gave insufficient attention to the need for restructuring the conurbation itself. These commentsvoiced amongst others by Birmingham and Wolverhampton County Borough Councils, suggested that this bias resulted from the Study's overemphasis on long term issues. A second group of comments claimed that the report fell very short of presenting a comprehensive developing strategy for the whole region, and that it merely constituted a problem solving exercise for accommodating future population generated by the Birmingham/Black Country conurbation. These latter comments also emphasised that the Study Team had completely overlooked the problems of North Staffordshire and the Western Rural areas of the region. These criticisms came not only from interested parties such as Herefordshire County Council, Salop County Council and Stoke-on-Trent County Borough Council but also from regionwide organisations such as the Midlands New Towns Society.

These two groups of comments were only superficially contradictory. In fact they were presented simultaneouly by both the W.M.E.P.C. and the D.O.E. who, though not explicitly rejecting the preferred strategy, made it very clear that the report was excessively concerned with the distribution of residential

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(60) - Criticisms were in this particular pushed a bit far too much as the Study Team was blamed for not using the provisional result of the 1971 Census, when the Census itself was only conducted after the technical work of the Blue Book was being completed!

population from the conurbation to the detriment of other problems, such as the distribution of work in relation to linkages, markets and labour pools, the future growth and internal structure of the conurbation and the problems of North Staffordshire and the Western Counties. The comments from the W.M.E.P.C. also emphasised that the 'preferred strategy' lacked robustness and that, if there were less population growth, better planning of the conurbation to reduce overspill or inability of local authorities to restrict development to the preferred locations, then the strategy would fail.

Stemming from these general comments a number of more detailed criticisms were also put forward. On the one hand, a number of commentators, noticeably Salop and Staffordshire County Council and Telford New Town Development Corporation, argued that the development of further peripheral locations before the committed schemes were completed would make any shortfall in the rate of achievement of these schemes doubly likely. On the other hand, Staffordshire and Salop County Councils, Stoke-on-Trent County Borough Council, Shrewsbury M.B.C., etc., asked for more positive proposals for their areas. These latter criticisms were also presented by both the W.M.E.P.C. and the D.O.E..

The Study's proposals for the spatial restructuring of the conurbation's industry by developing industrial sites at the rim of the conurbation faced overwhelming criticism for three different reasons. Firstly, there was a widespread criticism that the competition these sites would give rise to had not been allowed for in assessing the industrial prospects of the 'option population' areas. The local authorities where 'committed schemes' were sited were unanimous in claiming that the rim sites would, most probably, affect negatively the industrial prospects of these schemes. Secondly, a number of other comments hinted that these proposals had not been adequately evaluated in terms of their implications - traffic generation in particular - and suggested further consideration of this case. This view was expressed by authorities such as Birmingham, Dudley and Wolverhampton County Borough Coucils.

Finally the D.O.E. suggested that there was a certain degree of inconsistency between the prediction of an absolute fall in manufacturing jobs in the region and the proposal for additional industrial areas at the rim of the conurbation.

Another bone of contention was the Study Team's proposals for the reformulation of the Green Belt policy[61]. The Blue Book suggested that the Green Belt policy should be seen as part of a wider range of policies aiming to encourage development in accordance with the strategy rather than impose purely negative constraints. Developing this suggestion the report argued that the criteria underlying the Green Belt should be extended over the whole region, and that there should be a division of the region into a system of 'rural' and 'urban' zones linked together by recreation and leisure spaces forming a hierarchy of national, regional ans sub-regional parks. 'Rural' areas were to remain traditionally rural in character and, in the 'urban' zones, 'areas of special development control' would be designated at strategic points where no urban development would be allowed. Within this context the Study Team's original proposal did not attempt to map the Green Belt around the conurbation, rather it limited itself to an indication of the 'areas of special control' within the proposed Green Belt.

Bearing in mind the longstanding disputes concerning the conurbation Green Belt these proposals were bound to become a focus of criticism. Conservation societies, local authorities within the proposed Green Belt, and landowners' organisations vehemently rejected the suggestion of a blanket coverage of the region by Green Belt. On the one hand, this extension was seen as unrealistic. On the other hand it was held that 'areas of special control' would become second rate Green Belt areas where pressures for development would be harder to resist. Overall the Study Team's proposals were considered in this respect to be cryptic and open to multiple interpretations.

A final issue in which there was considerable criticism of the

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(61) - See W.M.R.S. (1971), paras. 274 - 284.

strategy concerned the likely social implications particularly in regard to the question of social polarisation. This problem had been stressed as early as the 1948 West Midlands Plan and had been reviewed in all subsequent planning documents for the region. Though, no action had been taken to check its development. It was widely recognised that the overspill strategy, if implemented by private housing, would lead to the creation of economically strong commuting belts leaving within the inner areas of the conurbation those social groups who could least afford the cost of private housing coupled with commuting.

The Study Team explicitly recognised that this polarisation was very much at work in the region's core creating a rather uneven distribution of socio-economic groups[62]. As a matter of fact the report went as far as to recognise that though the preferred strategy offered a wide range of opportunities for choice its authors were

> *...conscious that it will not be possible for all sectors of the population to take advantage of these.*
>
> (W.M.R.S., 1971, para. 302)

Despite this recognition, however, the Study Team did not attempt to suggest any discriminatory measures in favour of the socially disadvantaged groups[63]. On the contrary, it restricted itself to a pious statement that

> *...the full resolution of this issue... (would) come about only from the pursuit of social policies that deal equitably with the situation of the disadvantaged in one society.*
>
> (W.M.R.S., 1971, para. 133)

As the comments of the City of Stoke-on Trent and of the D.O.E. remarked, the 'preferred strategy' paid very little attention to the social implications of its implementation and the need to steer investments to the more needy areas of the region. As a matter of fact, the preferred strategy seemed to reinforce the polarisation trend itself by concentrating on the 'option population' only.

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(62) - Idem., paras. 78 - 85.

(63) - See Hall (1971), p. 13.

The report that the Study Team and the Tecnical Officers' Panel of W.M.P.A.C. presented to the Conference on the comments received concerning the Blue Book, was a clear illustration that consultation exercises may be all things to all men. The main conclusion of this report was that, though some comments constituted an overall challenge to the 'preferred strategy', none argued sufficiently cogently to cause the Conference to rethink the Strategy overall. The Conference in its first report to the Secretary of State in October 1972 seemed quite happy to adopt this somewhat overoptimistic attitude as it argued that

> *...the overriding impression to be gained from the Study of the 101 observations is one of broad acceptance of the Strategy.*
>
> (W.M.P.A.C., 1974, para. 13)

The reality was, however, quite different.

Before the report was produced both the D.O.E. and the W.M.E.P.C. - the latter pressed by the former - urged for the strategy to be fundamentally reviewed. These two bodies stressed that, since the Blue Book was based primarily on data up to 1966, it was necessary to give consideration to more recent data, namely the provisional results of the 1971 Population Census, which indicated a marked slowdown in the rate of population growth, and recent unemployment figures. After a series of meetings between officers of the Conference and senior government officials in the region, the Minister for Local Government and Development made known to the Conference that he would not adopt the strategy as stated in the Blue Book[64]. Further he stressed that unless a regional strategy was agreed before the local government reorganisation came into being the process of approval of Structure Plans would be delayed by three to four years. In terms of development control this was extremely damaging as some parts of the region had no development plan at all. Faced with these pressures the Conference agreed to introduce a number of changes in the original forecasts of the Study to 1981 and alter the Strategy accordingly.

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(64) - Interview with Sir Michael Higgs, 23 January 1981.

The changes introduced in the forecasts concerned most of the fundamental variables of the strategy. Firstly, the forecasts in the demand for labour in the region up to 1981 were revised downwards. This reflected changes in the numbers of people employed in the region. While in the period 1961 - 1966 employment had increased by some 150,000 in the subsequent five-year period there was a decline of 118,000 jobs. Simultaneously the monthly average of unemployment in the region had risen from 19,000 in 1966 to 57,000 in 1971. Secondly, and partly as a consequence of the downward revision of the first figure, the forecast movement of 29,000 jobs to new and expanded towns up to 1981 was considered to be too high and a revised 25,000 figure was agreed. Thirdly, as a consequence of lower birth rates and higher outmigration the forecast of regional population growth up to 1981 was reduced by 200,000. Finally, the estimate of 'option population' from the conurbation previously of 300,000 people or 100,000 dwellings was reduced to a figure in the order of 225,000 people.

The decision to substantially revise downwards most of the previous forecasts had two major consequences. Firstly, and though W.M.P.A.C. expressed its support for the long term strategy of the study, it agreed that in the face of the new figures it would not be practicable to make detailed adjustments in the proposals for the period beyond 1981. Accordingly the report made no reference to the distribution of the option population for the period 1981 - 2001.

But having dropped the proposals for the period beyond 1981 the report went on to reformulate the allocation of 'option population' for the period 1966 - 1981. These were now expressed, with the exception of the Chelmsley Wood development which was already substantially finished, in terms of a range of 'option population' for each development (Table V, column 2). Of course, with 'option population' reduced to three quarters of the original forecasts the maintenance of the potential option population for the various schemes up to 1981 amounted to overprovision being made, or in the subtle phrasing of the

Ref.	Location	(1) Option Population 66 - 81	(2) Range of Option Population 66 - 81	(3) Non-local Provision 1971 - 1980	(4) Estimate Achievement Range Related to Scale of Provision 71 - 86
1.	Chelmesley Wood	43,500	43,500	---	---
2.	Redditch	47,000	33,300 to 47,000	41,000	35,000 to 45,000
3.	North Worcestershire Scheme	20,000	14,000 to 20,000	13,600	13,000
4.	Droitwich	10,000	7,000 to 10,000	18,100	7,500 to 10,000
5.	Telford	76,500	54,500 to 76,500	86,700	60,000 to 76,500**
6.	Staffordshire Schemes	6,000	4,000 to 6,000	5,400	5,000
7.	Daventry	22,000	13,300 to 22,000	21,000	13,000 to 20,000
8.	Tamworth	31,000	22,000 to 31,000	29,000	25,000 to 30,000
9.	Location No. 1 (N.E. of Conurbation)	15,000	10,500 to 15,000	29,500	9,500 ***
10.	Location No. 2 (S.W. of Solihull)	13,000	9,000 to 13,000	15,000	15,000 ****
11.	Burton Area	2,000	1,500 to 2,000	5,600	2,000 to 3,000
12.	Stoke Area	2,000	1,500 to 2,000	---	---
13.	Location No. 3 (Centre of the Burton, Lichfield, Tamworth, urban complex)	---	Post 1981 only	---	---
14.	Lichfield Area	---	Post 1981 only	10,700	5,000 to 8,000
15.	Stafford Area	2,000	1,500 to 2,000	18,300	4,000 to 9,000
16.	Cannock	---	Post 1981 only	13,600	5,000 to 10,000
17.	Solihull Area	---	Post 1981 only	Additional provision available	---
18.	Coventry Belt	6,000	4,000 to 6,000	28,500	15,000 to 20,000
19.	Rugby	---	---	8,500	---
20.	Worcester	---	---	11,000	2,000 to 5,000
21.	Herefordshire	---	---	---	---
22.	County land availability (Rural areas only)	4,000	3,000 to 4,000	(50,000)*	(25,000 to 35,000)*
23.	Further Rural Areas	---	---	---	---
24.	Option Total	300,000	225,000 to 300,000	335,000 (or 383,000)	218,000 to 279,000 (or 243,600 to 314,000)

Notes: * Structure Plans, provision outside strategic locations
** Reservations to these figure survey, Gov. Dept.
*** More 5,000 people in Sutton Coldfield
**** More 6,000 people in Solihull

TABLE V : A Developing Strategy for the West Midlands - Allocation of Option Population

Sources : Col. 1. - W.M.R.S. (1971), Table 37.
Col. 2. - W.M.P.A.C. (1972), Report of the W.M.P.A.C. to the S. of S., October 1972, Initial Monitoring of Table 37, Part I.
Col. 3. - W.M.P.A.C. (1973), Addendum to the Conference Report, October 1973, Table II and para. 12.
Col. 4. - Idem., Table III and para. 15.

report, *"allowing more flexibility"* (W.M.P.A.C., 1974, Table 37, note).

Though the latter alterations had more practical implications in the short term, the former had a much wider scope. In fact the evaluation of the various strategy 'options' had been made for the period 1966 - 2001 but all had assumed the same population distribution in 1981. If proposals for the long term were dropped then, in practice, the evaluations of the various strategies and more generally the whole exercise leading to the Blue Book recommendations became, by and large, irrelevant. As a consequence A Developing Strategy was reduced in practice to the confirmation of the already existing committed schemes. Of course, this was something which the W.M.P.A.C. report was not keen to stress.

This element of continuity was further reinforced by the Conference decision to alter the Blue Book proposals concerning peripheral industrial sites and the Green Belt[65]. The Conference had accepted that economic growth would be slower than previously expected and that it would be doubtful whether many sites on a regionally significant scale would be required before the 1980's. Given these circumstances the revised proposals for industrial sites were limited to indicating potential locations without any commitment to earmark specific sites for development. As far as the Green Belt policy was concerned the Conference considered that it was necessary in the light of the comments received to reaffirm its support in principle for the submitted Green Belt, thereby dropping suggestions for 'areas of special control'

II.2.6 - STRUCTURE PLANNING IN THE WEST MIDLANDS AND THE APPROVAL OF THE ORANGE BOOK

While the W.M.P.A.C. was proceeding with these amendments to the strategy both the County Borough Councils within the conurbation and the shire

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(65) - W.M.P.A.C. (1974), paras. 23 - 25.

counties around it were busy preparing their Structure Plans. The Town and Country Planning Act 1972 required the local planning authorities to have regard inter alia

> *...to current policies with respect to the economic planning and development of the region as a whole.*
>
> (T. & C.P.A., 1972, Section 7 (4) (a).)

This statutory requirement, however, only applied to central government policies as the regional strategies themselves were only advisory and not statutory. The Manual of Form and Content issued by the D.O.E. required, however, that attention should be paid to the proposals of the existing regional strategies[66]. In order for this to become operational it was necessary to bring the proposals of the regional strategy and of the Structure Plans into the same time-horizon.

In the case of the West Midlands, this was difficult because the various Structure Plans themselves had different time-horizons. It was decided, therefore, to produce an Addendum in which the proposals of the W.M.P.A.C.'s earlier report to the Secretary of State were slightly modified so as to constitute an interpretation of the likely position at 1986. This was the time-horizon used by a majority of the conurbation local authorities' Structure Plans. In order to make the revisions, in the light of the Structure Plans' early proposals, consultations were held with central government officials in the region which resulted in a further report of the W.M.P.A.C. to the Secretary of State in October 1973 (W.M.P.A.C., 1974, Addendum).

The early proposals of the Structure Plans indicated that there was a misfit between the projected movement of population out of the conurbation and the provision for non-local population which were being made in the surrounding shire counties (whether in the strategic locations listed in the Blue Book, or outside them). Planned and unplanned overspill from the conurbation in the period up to 1986 was estimated to fall within the range 236,000 to 249,000, but non-local provision being made in the shire counties was as high as 335,000, or

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(66) - See D.O.E. (1971), p

385,000 if provision outside strategic locations was also included (Table V, Column 3). The excess of provision over forecasted need was, therefore, roughly in the region of 50 per cent. This overprovision of housing land was, to a great extent, a consequence of the different population forecasts being used by local authorities. While the more up-to-date regional population forecasts indicated an increase of some 330,000 people between 1971 and 1986, the sum of the Structure Plan forecasts suggested that that increase was likely to fall within a 530 - 827,000 range!

Bearing in mind the scale of overprovision, it was obvious that the Structure Plan proposals, if approved in their early form, would provide more than merely adequate flexibility and choice. Indeed, they could give rise to an overconcentration of resources in the central part of the region, with detrimental effects, on the one hand, for other parts of the counties beyond the area of influence of the conurbation and, on the other, for the areas within the conurbation[67]. Given this context, the Conference produced a new set of proposals for the strategic locations 'option population' up to 1986 expressing these in terms of 'estimated achievement range' in relation to the reduced scale of expected overspill. These proposals were very similar to those previously submitted by the W.M.P.A.C. in October 1972. The main differences were a fourfold increase in option population in the Coventry Belt, a slight increase of the option population of location 2 (Solihull) to the detriment of the North Worcestershire scheme and substantial increases in the provision of housing land in the rural areas of the shire counties outside strategic locations (Table V, Column 4). It was this new set of figures which was finally submitted to the Secretary of State for consideration late in 1973.

Since the regional strategy was non-statutory it could not be formally approved by the Government. To overcome this problem the Secretary of State sent the Chairman of the Conference and the W.M.E.P.C. a letter expressing the

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(67) - W.M.P.A.C. (1974), Addendum, paras. 14 - 16.

government's decisions in respect of the strategy. This, together with the W.M.P.A.C. final report, constituted the 'approved' regional strategy for the region.

The letter from the Secretary of State expressed satisfaction (or perhaps relief!) that the final stage of an exercise which lasted for more than six years had finally been reached[68]. In broad terms the Secretary of State endorsed the contents of the 1973 Addendum, but the letter stressed that the strategic locations were not to be considered fully committed schemes but rather 'planning zones', the detailed location and size of which were to be decided when the Structure Plans were submitted[69]. (Fig. 14) It was, therefore, clear, bearing in mind the failure of the W.M.P.A.C. to secure consistency between the regional strategy and the Structure Plans' early proposals, that the Secretary of State had decided to leave the door open for the D.O.E. to step in and assume, once again, the leading role in regional strategic planning matters.

The initial report of the Study Team had recommended that the Conference should create an adequate monitoring system to deal with the problems of implementing the strategy and the probable need to review it in a few years time. This proposal had received widespread support in the comments made on the report and had been reinforced by the events following the publication of the Blue Book[70]. It is against this background that the W.M.P.A.C., in its October 1973 Addendum, presented proposals for the creation of a monitoring system[71]. These proposals which had been jointly worked out by the Conference and senior regional officers of central government involved the creation of two bodies:

a) the Officers Steering group (O.S.G.) (later Joint Monitoring Steering Group (J.M.S.G.)) - comprising joint chairmen from the D.O.E. and Conference, plus four officers each from the regional

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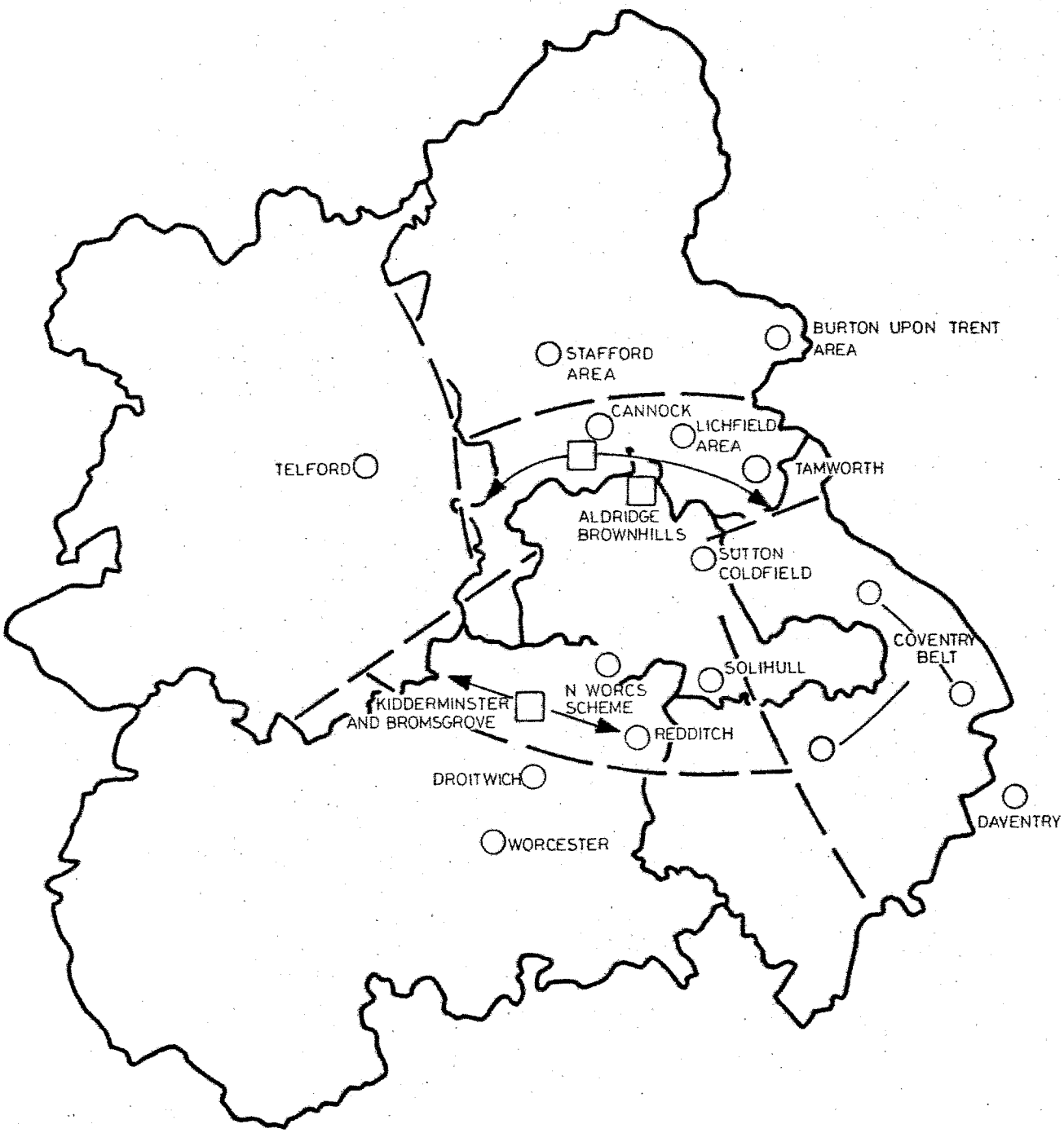
(68) - Idem., letter from the Secretary of State, p. 1.

(69) - Idem., pp. 4 - 5.

(70) - Among the various comments supporting the creation of monitoring arrangements were those from Salop and Worcestershire County Councils, Coventry and Dudley County Borough Councils, the W.M.E.P.C., etc.

(71) - See W.M.P.A.C. (1974), **Addendum - Monitoring.**



○ 'Blue Book' locations accepted by the Secretary of State

□ broad locations added by the Secretary of State

Fig. 14: A Developing Strategy for the West Midlands
- alterations introduced by the Secretary of State

offices of central government and the W.M.P.A.C.; along with the Principal Planner of the D.O.E. in the region and the Director of the W.M.R.S.;

b) Working Group (W.G.) (Later Joint Team Working Group (J.T.W.G.) - chaired jointly by the Principal Planner of the D.O.E. regional office and the Director of the W.M.R.S. and constituted by up to eight other members drawn equally from the regional offices of central government and the W.M.R.S.

The O.S.G. was to decide areas of work which needed to be carried out, receive reports of the monitoring process from the Working Group and submit annual reports to Ministers, W.M.P.A.C. and W.M.E.P.C.. The Working Group (later J.T.W.G.) was charged with the responsibility for both undertaking and allocating work, for superintending any outside research projects and for preparing reports to the O.S.G. (later J.M.S.G.) on the above, and on areas of future work.

The expected outcome of these arrangements was to include an annual report on the progress in implementing the strategy, reports on general and particular problems of the region, information reports on changes and interactions between key variables and, finally, a full review and roll forward of the regional strategy to be undertaken in the mid 1970's. In his letter of response, the Secretary of State gave his agreement to these arrangements and explicitly asked for *"a full scale review in five years time"* (W.M.P.A.C., 1974, Letter from the Secretary of State, p. 6). If nothing else, the exercise had apparently achieved a greater commitment from central government to regional strategic planning in the region. Future events however would reveal how fragile this commitment was.

Before proceeding to analyse those events it is appropriate to refer to some planning issues of significant influence in the period which was to follow.

II.2.7 - REGIONALISM AND LOCALISM IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

The first issue concerned the location in the region of the National Exhibition Centre (N.E.C.). This was important for two different reasons. First of all, it is noticeable that a major regional investment (total cost £28.5 million) had been decided during the preparation of both the Blue Book and the Economic Appraisal without either the W.M.P.A.C. or the W.M.E.P.C. having played an active role in the strategic decision[72]. Negotiations and lobbying concerning the location of the Exhibition Centre in the region were conducted during 1969 by Birmingham Corporation and the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce. However this matter was not raised either in the W.M.P.A.C. or in the W.M.E.P.C. where these bodies had representatives. The issue was only discussed in these two organisations after the decision, in principle, had been taken by central government in January 1970. In the event the confidentiality of the negotiations seemed to pay dividends as the decision was taken in favour of the West Midlands location, and against a powerful London lobby. However the impact of the location of the N.E.C. in the region was not considered and assessed either by the Blue Book or by the Economic Appraisal[73]. Equally significant was the fact that the N.E.C. was located in a sensitive area of the Green Belt, between Birmingham and Coventry and near the Elmdon Airport. To obtain the planning agreement of Meriden Rural District Council for this location, the representatives of Birmingham Corporation had to give strong political assurances that no further development would take place in that area[74]. This of course, created a new point of planning conflict in the region as the N.E.C. surroundings were to become a very attractive area for investment.

The second issue deserving attention concerns the differing political-organisational implication of the two regional documents. The Economic Appraisal

(72) - See Painter (1972), pp. 128 - 131.

(73) - The Economic Appraisal did refer to the N.E.C. but it is obvious that the considerations made had a clear 'after the event' character.

(74) - Interview with Mr. Ledbetter, 12 June 1981.

was especially concerned with the prospects of a collapse of the regional economy and considered that the only way to avoid that situation was to secure a reversal of the central government attitude towards the region. The report, however, argued for more than a mere shift in central government policies. It also stressed the need to devolve powers to the region by creating a regional body which would be made responsible for the management at a regional scale of the capital expenditure of both central government and local authorities[75].

The Blue Book, in contrast, was seen as a *"Regional solution to Regional problems"* (W.M.R.S., 1971, para. 3.14). The Study Team argued for an enhanced role for the Conference which ought, in their view, to be made responsible for ensuring consistency between the strategy and the Structure Plans of constituent authorities, for programming the implementation of the strategy's main proposals and for achieving appropriate liaison between central government and local authorities. However, the report fell short of suggesting the creation of a regional authority for these purposes and relied instead on the ability of the W.M.P.A.C. to perform these roles.

This confidence was misplaced as a few examples will illustrate. The administration group of the W.M.P.A.C. attached to the Blue Book a number of recommendations concerning the implementation of the strategy. One of these recommendations suggested the creation of a financial arrangement through which the costs of major population transfers within the region would be pooled by all local authorities. This was contested by a number of local authorities and the W.M.P.A.C. was unable to secure agreement for this proposal. Partly as a reaction to this failure the Conservative majority on Birmingham City Council decided to pull out of the W.M.P.A.C.[76].

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(75) - See W.M.E.P.C. (1971), paras. 8.71 - 8.80.

(76) - This attitude was also due to the fact that the 1972 local government reorganisation did not extend the Birmingham boundary to include the development at Chelmsley Wood as the Council had expected, and the insufficient, in Birmingham's viewpoint, provision of peripheral development.

The inability of the W.M.P.A.C. to constitute a united front in planning terms was also made evident by the fact that when the Conference submitted its Addendum in October 1973 to the Secretary of State, four conurbation local authorities (Dudley C.B., Walsall C.B., West Bromwich C.B. and Wolverhampton C.B.) sent a separate memorandum expressing doubts about some parts of the W.M.P.A.C.'s submission. Finally, the difficulty of the W.M.P.A.C. in assuming a co-ordinating role was emphasied in the significant mismatch between the 1972 Conference option population proposals and the early suggestions of the various Structure Plans for provision of housing land for the non-local population. This was further reinforced by the fact that the Study Team and the Conference persistently refused to comment on the specific proposals of any Structure Plan[77]. All in all, it was quite obvious that central government had to step in to assume co-ordination of planning.

II.2.8 - SUMMARY

The period from the late 1960's to the mid 1970's was characterised in the West Midlands by multiple planning initiatives at the regional, sub-regional and local levels. Contrary to what had happened in the preceding period local authorities were responsible for most of these initiatives. However, the broad outcome of these initiatives was not particularly successful.

A Developing Stategy for the West Midlands (W.M.R.S., 1971) took four years to prepare and the assumptions and forecasts on which the strategy was based proved to be overoptimistic. Thus the W.M.P.A.C. was forced to substantially revise the strategy's recommendations in the light of new data and forecasts, and roughly two and a half further years elapsed before the revised version received broad ministerial approval (W.M.P.A.C., 1974). In the end,

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(77) - This happened, for instance, when Salop County Council approached the Study Team arguing that the Worcestershire Structure Plan was not in accordance with the regional strategy. No formal answer was ever given to this approach. Interview with Mr. Marshall, 14 January 1981.

however, and after more than six years of planning activity, the approved strategy amounted to little more than a confirmation of overspill schemes already being developed or agreed.

If the assumptions on which A Developing Strategy was based proved to be wrong the same cannot unfortunately be said in relation to forecasts on the region's economic future contained in the Economic Appraisal (W.M.E.P.C., 1971). This report presented two main arguments. Firstly, that the region's industrial basis was outdated and that unless a positive policy of industrial regeneration was adopted, its economic prospects were bleak. Secondly, that the overall government approach to the region, and the operation of regional policy in particular, was contributing to the existing state of affairs and that it should be drastically changed. With the benefit of hindsight these arguments appear totally justified and of relevance. However, at the time, they met with a very cold reception from central government (which is understandable) and from local commentators (which is more surprising). In these circumstances they did not lead to any significant policy changes or initiatives.

The regional plans and studies sponsored by the local authorities and the W.M.E.P.C. proved therefore to be largely inconsequent. Furthermore, significant inconsistencies developed both between the draft Structure Plans prepared by the local planning authorities in the region and between these and the findings and recommendations of A Developing Strategy. In order to redress these inconsistencies a direct intervention by central government was both likely and required. Indeed such an intervention played an important role in subsequent regional planning developments in the West Midlands.

II.3 - THE DEMISE OF REGIONAL STRATEGIC PLANNING

In spite of the conflicts and difficulties encountered during the process leading to the Government's response to the Developing Strategy, the future of regional strategic planning in the West Midlands looked healthy in the mid 1970's. The region not only had a strategy endorsed by both central government and the W.M.P.A.C. but there was also agreement about organisational arrangements to monitor the progress of the strategy and an explicit commitment to review it in a few years time.

In the event, dramatic changes in the overall context in which A Developing Strategy had been produced emphasised the importance of close monitoring and led to the updating of the strategy earlier than expected. Further, the characteristics of the changes were such that they tended to exacerbate the divergences of opinion existing between the principal participants (local authorities, central government departments) in the process of regional planning concerning the problems affecting the region and the best way to tackle them. Thus the process of updating of the regional strategy proved to be much more troublesome than initially expected.

Before analysing in detail the updating process, it is important to consider the changes in the context of regional planning referred to above.

II.3.1 - THE CHANGING CONTEXT OF REGIONAL PLANNING - PROBLEMS AND POLICIES

The mid 1970's were a period of dramatic changes in the overall context of regional planning. Some of these changes were to be expected but others could hardly have been anticipated. Among these latter changes, the fourfold increase in crude oil prices after the Yom Kippur War was of primary importance, as it created substantial balance of payments problems in the oil-importing industrial countries resulting into the adoption of deflationary

economic measures.

In Britain the Labour Party had came to power in 1974 with strong commitments to strengthen state intervention in the management of the economy and extend welfare provisions within the broad framework of a strategy aimed at increasing social equality by giving far greater importance to full employment, housing, education and social benefits and *"to eliminate poverty wherever it exists in Britain"* (Labour Party, 1974). In the unfavourable economic climate of the mid 1970s, however, these commitments soon proved to be politically unrealistic.

By the end of 1974 inflation had jumped to 25 per cent per year, external industrial competitiveness had worsened and the balance of payments had gone into the red. In April 1975 a mildly deflationary budget introduced some cuts in public expenditure and in the summer the Government and the Trades Union Congress (T.U.C.) agreed a policy of 'voluntary incomes restraint' aimed at curtailing wage led inflation. However these developments proved insufficient and in the Autumm of 1976 the Government was forced to ask the International Monetary Fund (I.M.F.) for a medium-term standby facility of $3.9 billion. The strings attached to the arrangements were, as usual for I.M.F. loans, cuts ih the public sector borrowing requirement and in the money supply growth with the former being achieved mainly by cuts in public expenditure[78]. Thus by the end of 1976 the social and economic pledges upon which the Labour Government had been elected were denuded.

The reform of local government introduced by the Local Government Act 1972 provided a second significant alteration on the overall context of regional planning as far as the West Midlands was concerned. The more obvious consequence of the Act was the redefinition of the boundaries of local authorities in the region (see Fig. 6, p. 105). The area of the conurbation was represented from then onwards by the West Midlands Metropolitan County Council and the remaining

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(78) - See Milner (1980), pp. 250 - 256.

area was divided among four County Councils (Hereford and Worcester, Salop, Staffordshire and Warwickshire). Within the Metropolitan County Council seven Metropolitan District Councils represented the interests of more than half of the region's population and encompassed an area stretching from Wolverhampton to Coventry.

The establishment of the Metropolitan County Council in particular had several implications. Firstly, it created a two-tier system of local government, therefore dismantling the previous powerful all-purpose system of County Borough Councils. Secondly, the Metropolitan County Council became responsible for Structure Planning but Development Control and a substantial part of local planning was left into the hands of the District Councils. As the County covered an area previously comprising eight County Boroughs and three Counties all of whom had submitted Structure Plans for their areas, the newly created Metropolitan County became responsible for policies previously defined by no less than eleven different planning authorities.

Thirdly, the local government reform led to a revision of the terms of reference and membership of the W.M.P.A.C.. The new membership included the five County Councils in the region, the seven Metropolitan District Councils of Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton and the District Council of Stoke-on-Trent. The new terms of reference of the Conference adopted on January 1974 were as follows:

> *To keep under review the main planning issues of a regional nature including the monitoring of the broad regional strategy and other regional matters such as land-use, population, integration of transport, employment, etc. and also to liaise as may be necessary with Government Departments and other Authorities and Bodies concerned.*

A further alteration in the broad environment of regional planning which is worth taking into consideration was the transference, to a number of central government appointed executive bodies, of services and functions previously performed by local authorities. This move, which was a direct result of the refusal to establish regional authorities by both Conservative and Labour

Governments, was translated into the creation of Regional Water Authorities (1974), Regional Health Authorities (1974), Regional Councils for Sport and Recreation (1976), etc.. Further, the government created ad hoc Development Agencies in both Scotland and Wales partly as an attempt to diffuse nationalist movements in both these two countries of the U.K.[79].

Finally, it is important to refer to a number of policy changes introduced by the Labour government. In the field of housing policy the Housing Act 1974 further enhanced improvement policies to the detriment of wholesale redevelopment, namely by establishing Housing Action Areas within which local authorities were given broad powers to improve properties in areas of housing stress.

This policy of support for housing improvement reflected a much wider and growing concern with the problems of inner city areas dating back to the late 1960's. It was also reflected in the D.O.E. initiative to commission six Inner Areas Studies in 1972. The then Secretary of State for the Environment - Mr. Peter Walker - went on the record as saying that:

> *The inner cities will be the great political issue for the rest of the century*[80].

Their publications was preceded in 1976 by a speech given by Peter Shore - Secretary of State for the Environment - at Manchester Town Hall on 17 September 1976 which announced the government's intention to achieve a reversal of inner city decline by means of financial aids to industry, environment, social and recreational projects, partly at the expense of the New Towns programme. As a corollary of this emphasis on inner city problems, the D.O.E. Circular 80/76 directed public housebuilding to 'stress authorities' which in the case of the West Midlands were the majority of the conurbation local authorities, namely Birmingham, Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton District Councils.

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(79) - For a fuller discussion of this issue, see below Appendix D, pp. D-37—41

(80) - Quoted in the West Midlands New Towns Society Newsletter, No. 69, (1972), p. 3.

This was followed in 1977 by a White Paper - 'Policy for the Inner Areas' - which emphasised the need to redirect main policies in favour of selected local authorities and increase the amount of money affected to the existing Home Office 'Urban Programmes' (G.B., 1977). In the following year the Inner Urban Areas Act 1978 was passed giving additional powers to local authorities and work started in the preparation of the first Inner Area Programmes (Hambleton, Stewart and Underwood, 1980).

The new emphasis on inner cities led also to changes in regional policies. Thus the White Paper announced a cutback on the target population of the third generation (designated in the 1960's) of New Towns and gave inner areas precedence over New Towns in the granting of I.D.C.'s, only second to Assisted Areas; and instructed the Location of Offices Bureau to attract offices to Inner Areas. Reflecting a different concern of government with economic efficiency there was, in parallel, an increasing selectivity in the use of regional assistance elsewhere, a move strongly emphasised by the abolition in 1977 of the Regional Employment Premium in Britain.

While these policy developments were taking place, the government's overall economic policy came increasingly under pressure. Thus, in June 1977, the T.U.C. Conference rejected the continuation of voluntary pay restraints. This was followed by a wave of high wages settlements during the rest of 1977 and throughout 1978. However, in the summer of 1978, the Government proposed a 5 per cent ceiling for the pay round beginning August 1978 and attempted to enforce it mainly on public sector workers. This led to a wave of official and 'wild-cat' strikes during the winter of 1978 - 1979 - the so-called 'Winter of Discontent' - which in turn resulted in the Conservative Party victory at the general election of March 1979 under a Manifesto which stressed the need to control inflation and trades union power, to restore incentives to private enterprise, and protect law and order (Conservative Party, 1979).

The Conservative Party came to power against a background of a new dramatic increase in oil prices. In its favour, however, the government could

count on an increasing production of North Sea Oil and gas which not only made the U.K. self-sufficient in energy terms (the only one in Western Europe) but also provided an important contribution (Petroleum Revenue Tax, royalties and corporation tax) to the overall government revenue.

The new government had a clear set of policies aimed at bringing down inflation and increasing the competitiveness, and profitability of British industry. For these purposes a number of policy instruments were adopted, namely: tight monetary policies, cuts in overall public expenditure, cuts in state aid to industry and imposition of legal restraints on trades union activities. With a number of concessions, and though with less vigour than some of its supporters would like, the government led by Mrs. Margaret Thatcher has adhered to the main tenets of this strategy. Overall public spending was cut, and so was state aid to industry. Important progress was achieved in the field of industrial restructuring (for example, British Steel Corporation and British Leyland), and the trades union movement suffered a number of setbacks (for example, B.S.C. and B.L. strikes).

It is still early days to say whether the government will be able to achieve its medium term objectives. At the moment of writing (May 1982) the signs are that labour productivity has substantially increased (largely due to redundancies and closures), that inflation is on a falling trend, but that unemployment has reached unprecedented levels and it is still rising. The prospective success, or failure, of the government's strategy will, therefore, depend on how well it manages the unemployment issue without boosting inflationary pressures.

The adoption by the Conservative government of this overall economic strategy led to important changes in the policy context of regional planning. Firstly, as part of the attempt to cut public spending, the government decided in 1979 to reduce regional policy expenditure by some 25 to 30 per cent over a three year period. This was achieved by means of a number of measures including: the building of fewer advanced factories; the redrawing of the map of assisted

areas downgrading the status of some areas and phasing out others altogether; the cutting in the ratio of Regional Development Grant in Development Areas; the removal of all automatic grants in Intermediate Areas, etc.

Reflecting the commitment to free the private sector from public constraints I.D.C.'s were abolished in the Intermediate Areas and the exemptions raised elsewhere except in the South East. Reflecting a similar type of concern the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980 simplified planning procedures and enlarged the scope of development not subject to development control. Further local authorities involved in Inner Area programmes were encouraged to attract private developments to inner city areas and eleven Enterprise Zones were created in unemployment blackspots exempting firms establishing there from a number of legal (planning controls) and financial (rates) burdens.

A final reference is needed to developments in the field of housing policy. These appeared to point in two main directions. Firstly, and closely associated with the attempt to reduce overall public expenditure, housing capital expenditure has been dramatically reduced. Indeed, in the period 1979 - 1981 housing capital expenditure cuts amounted to, roughly, 50 per cent in real terms. Secondly, and largely determined by ideological and political considerations, the government pressed for its traditional policy of the sale of council housing in order to achieve increased owner occupation. It further discriminated in favour of owner occupation when it pushed local authorities to implement increases in council housing rents above the rate of inflation while extending mortgage interest tax reliefs to purchasing tenants, in addition to their sale discounts.

Having outlined the changing characteristics in the context of regional planning it is now possible to move to the analysis of the regional planning process in the West Midlands in the period ranging from the mid 1970's to the early 1980's.

II.3.2 - THE DECISION TO UPDATE AND ROLL FORWARD THE REGIONAL STRATEGY

In the West Midlands the Joint Monitoring Steering Group published its first annual report in 1975 against the background of a widespread economic recession (J.M.S.G., 1975). The report described in some detail the work so far commissioned by the J.M.S.G. in the fields of population, migration and employment analysis and emphasised the difficult conditions for the implementation of A Developing Strategy brought about by the economic slump and the cutbacks in both local and central government expenditure. In what was otherwise a grim account of events, the report warmly welcomed the Secretary of State's decisions concerning the confirmation of the Green Belt for Salop in August 1974 and Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Hereford and Worcester in March 1975[81]. These decisions conformed very closely to the submissions made in the late 1950's and early 1960's and though some of the areas were approved on an interim basis the subsequent approval of the Shire County Structure Plans actually increased the overall Green Belt area.

The Second Annual Report published in 1976 provided a more detailed picture of the changing circumstances in which regional strategic planning had to operate in the West Midlands (J.M.S.G., 1976). Firstly, the report noted that the more recent (1974 - based) forecasts of the growth of the regional population up to 1986 indicated that the increase could be as low as one-fifth of the growth estimates used when producing the Blue Book. These forecasts, made by the O.P.C.S., also indicated that the bulk of the population pressure would fall, ceteris paribus, in the area immediately beyond the Green Belt. Secondly, the report argued that the forecasts of population overspill from the conurbation should be revised downwards for three cumulative reasons:

a) lower population growth entailed, naturally, lower pressures for residential land;

b) higher costs of commuting made overspill housing less attractive

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(81) - See J.M.S.G. (1975), para. 4.8.

to the conurbation population;

c) both the 1969 and the 1974 Housing Acts had moved housing policies away from wholesale clearance and rebuilding and towards gradual renewal and improvement. This, of course, had increased the chances of in situ rehousing.

Thirdly, the report added that industrial mobility was also lower than expected. With the economic recession biting hard, the principal factor determining industrial movement - economic growth - decreased even further in importance. Connected with this lack of industrial growth, the J.M.S.G. projection of regional labour supply and demand for the year 1981 indicated a 100,000 deficit of jobs, with both the W.M.E.P.C. and the W.M.P.A.C. considering that the deficit could be even higher[82]. A fourth dimension of the changed circumstances was provided by further public expenditure constraints associated with the International Monetary Fund loan requested late in 1976.

Finally, there was an increasing awareness of the social and economic problems associated with inner city areas. These had been almost totally overlooked in the policy proposals of the A Developing Strategy and in the first wave of conurbation Structure Plans, but came increasingly into the open with the publication of details of the 1971 Census of Population and the first reports of the Inner Area Studies[83].

The important changes in the socio-economic context, coupled with the evident conflict between the policy prescriptions of A Developing Strategy and the current policy priorities of both central government and a number of conurbation local authorities, clearly called for an overall reassessment of the regional strategic choices. Further to this, the West Midlands County Council had

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(82) - Even at this moment in time, however, the argument that the West Midlands was suffering the negative effects of deep seated structural economic problems was questioned by various contributors to a seminar on the West Midlands regional problems. See Crompton and Penketh (1977), p. 125n and Liggins (1977), p. 24.

(83) - Reports are summarised in D.O.E. (1977).

already expressed its commitment to a fundamental review of the various Structure Plans covering the authority's area. Bearing in mind the importance of the metropolitan county in the regional context, and the role regional strategies had in the Examination in Public of Structure Plans, this commitment clearly reinforced the need to revise the regional strategy.

Some of the shire counties, however, were scarcely willing to proceed in this direction as they foresaw that a review of the regional strategy, in the changing context, would very likely involve a diminishing commitment to the success of the 'overspill' schemes at a distance from the conurbation[84]. However, a compromise was reached and so, in the preface to the Second Annual Report, the Joint Chairmen of the J.M.S.G. made reference to proposals to update and roll forward the regional strategy in the light of current priorities and regional circumstances.

In October 1976 the chairman of the W.M.P.A.C. wrote to the Secretary of State for the Environment - Peter Shore - asking for central government support in the updating and rolling forward of the regional strategy up to 1991. The letter stressed that the review was to be very selective, concentrating on key issues and their interrelationships and that a comprehensive review involving a 'rewriting' of the regional strategy from scratch was neither practicable nor justified. More specifically, the letter suggested that the work should be carried out by the existing monitoring arrangements and that the outcome of the exercise shoud be a report to be submitted jointly by the J.M.S.G. to W.M.P.A.C., central government and the W.M.E.P.C. in approximately one year's time. In February 1977 the Secretary of State wrote back expressing his agreement with the proposals put forward by the W.M.P.A.C. chairman and inviting the J.M.S.G. to set in hand at once the work.

Before starting to analyse how the work of the updating and rolling forward of the regional strategy was carried out, it is convenient to

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(84) - Interview with Mr. Eric Whittingham, 9 January 1981.

concentrate for a while on the organisational framework in which this occurred. A first point to bear in mind is that the West Midlands organisational arrangements were unique in character. On the one hand the sponsorship of the exercise was conceived under the tripartite arrangements model involving the West Midlands Economic Planning Council, the W.M.P.A.C. and the West Midlands Economic Planning Board. On the other hand, and contrary to what had happened in the South-East, North-West and East Anglia, the technical work was not carried out by an independent planning team but rather was undertaken under the existing monitoring arrangements (Figure 15).

These arrangements were significant for two different reasons. First of all, the fact that the work was not carried out by an independent team but by individuals and organisations from the various commissioning bodies made the planning arrangements much more sensitive to pressures from the steering bodies. This contrasted sharply with the arrangements made to produce A Developing Strategy in which the W.M.R.S. worked without being subject to direct political pressures. Secondly, and closely linked with the previous aspect, the new arrangements marked a clear shift in the balance of powers concerning the process of regional strategic planning in the West Midlands. The W.M.P.A.C. no longer could claim an independent, iniatiating and dominant role in the process but had to share that role with the representatives of central government in the region. Furthermore, not only had central government assumed a more important role in the process of regional strategic planning but by doing this it reinforced its ability and legitimacy to act as the supreme judge over the outcome of the process. Unlike the arrangements for A Developing Strategy, those adopted for the Updating and Rolling Forward allowed central government to intervene directly in the methodological and substantive elements of the exercise and, therefore, to avoid the repetition of the situation in which central government acted only in a corrective fashion[85].

(85) - It also avoided the emergence of a situation, like in the Northern Region, in which the misfit between the output of the team and central government priorities and concerns was so great as to impose that the Regional Strategy had to be simply ignored. See below p. 432.

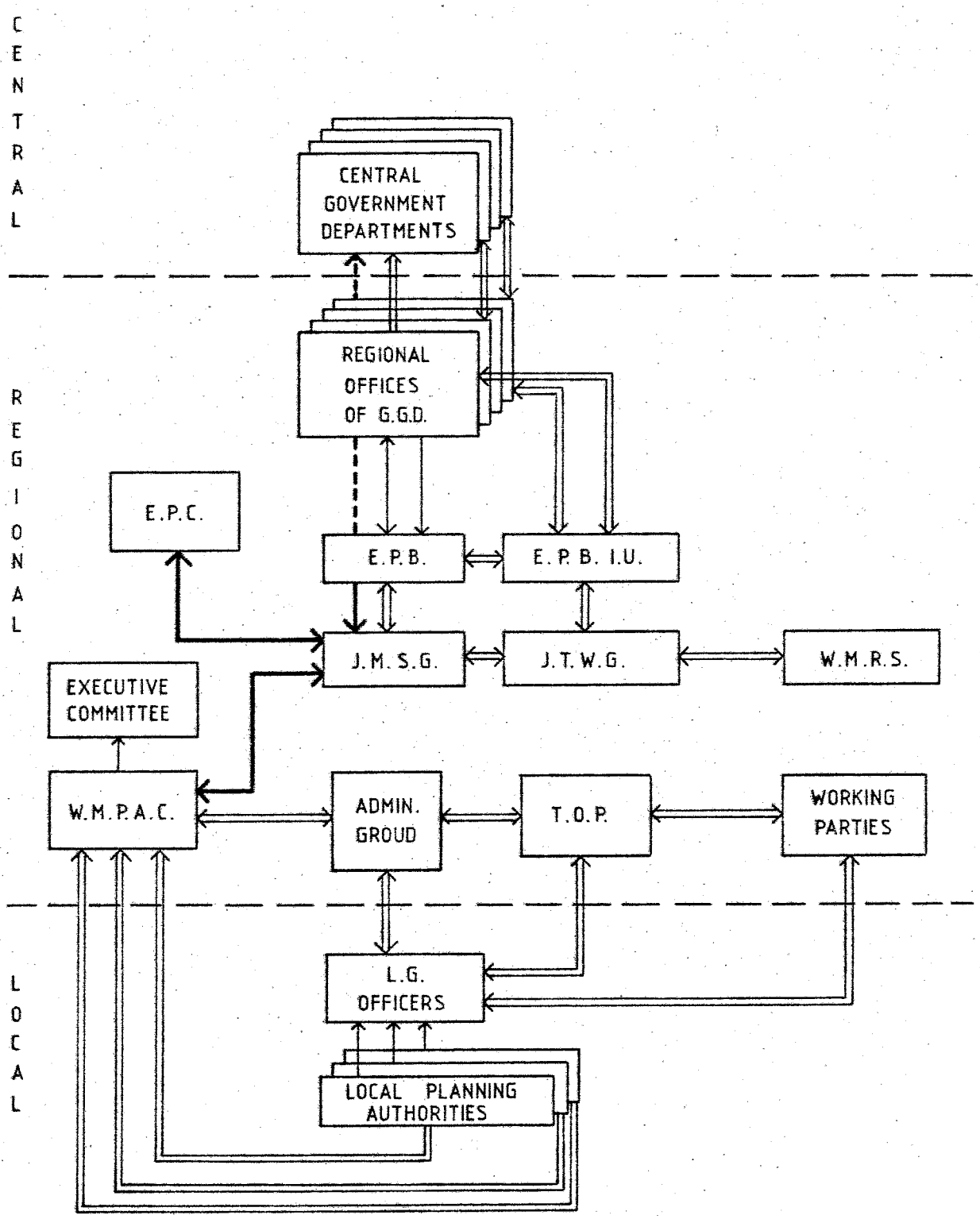

Fig. 15: Regional Planning Networks in the West Midlands Region in the mid to late 1970's

Bearing in mind that the idea was not to rewrite the regional strategy from scratch, but to concentrate on a few selected matters, the methodology adopted by the J.M.S.G. was to develop the exercise in three overlapping stages, based on work carried out in four priority areas of concern. The issues singled out as being of fundamental importance were:

1) population, housing and households;

2) the future of the regional economy;

3) resources; and

4) the implications of Structure Plans decisions.

The three overlapping stages of the exercise were: the assessment of issues and the identification and analysis of trends, the consideration of the implications of the assessment work and, finally, the development of policy proposals. Early in 1977 a timetable was agreed by the J.M.S.G. according to which the whole exercise, up to the publication of a draft of the updated strategy, should be completed by February 1978. In the event, however, the technical and political complexity of the process proved to be greater than expected and it was not until the summer of 1979 that the visible outcome of the exercise became apparent (J.M.S.G., 1979 and W.M.E.P.C. & W.M.P.A.C., 1979).

II.3.3 - THE UPDATING OF THE REGIONAL STRATEGY: ASSESSMENT STAGE

The complex web of technical and political problems associated with the exercise first became evident early in 1977 in relation to a comparatively trivial issue, namely, the division of the region into subregions to be used in both the analytical and policy output of the updating and roll forward. The issue was first raised by a document submitted by the joint chairmen of the J.T.W.G. to the J.M.S.G. in February 1977. (J.M.S.G. 1977a) The J.M.S.G. had previously agreed that some sub-regional analysis and output from the exercise would be needed and the E.P.B. had considered possible sub-regional boundaries for this. Agreement had been reached concerning three broad sub-regions - the

West Midlands County Council, the rural West and the North Staffordshire area - but, as the document stressed,

> *This left unanswered the question of how to divide meaningfully the rest of Staffordshire, Hereford and Worcester and Warwickshire.*
>
> (J.M.S.G., 1977a) (Fig. 16)

The E.P.B. favoured a grouping of those Districts adjoining the Metropolitan County to form an Outer Metropolitan Area or Middle Ring. The W.M.P.A.C. objected to this on the basis that some shire Districts stretched from the West Midlands County Council boundary to the other end of the county and that some areas in Districts not adjoining the Metropolitan County had important economic links with the Conurbation. Furthermore, the W.M.P.A.C. argued that the definition of a Middle Ring according to the terms suggested by the E.P.B. was over-rigid and that the Middle Ring boundary ought to vary according to whether the substantive issue was housing, employment or commuting[86]. To overcome the obstacle the joint chairmen of the J.T.W.G. suggested the division of the remaining area into an Outer Metropolitan and a Non-Metropolitan Area reflecting the level of influence (measured by travel to work flows and other criteria) exerted by the conurbation over these areas. Bearing in mind the type of arguments used by both sides it was not surprising, however, that this solution was rejected. The failure to reach an agreement in this field was evident in both the economic and the population and households assessment papers. The E.P.B. used a fivefold division of the region (West Midlands County Council, North Staffordshire, the rural west, Middle Ring and Outer Ring) while the W.M.P.A.C. combined the two latter to form a Rest of the Region division and worked on the basis of only four subregions[87].

At first sight it might seem that the above disagreements were merely the result of an exacerbation of technical arguments concerning the methodology of spatial analysis. However, as Mawson and Skelcher (1980) suggest, they also

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(86) - See J.M.S.G. (1977b), p. 67.

(87) - See, for example, J.M.S.G. (1977c) and J.M.S.G. (1977d).

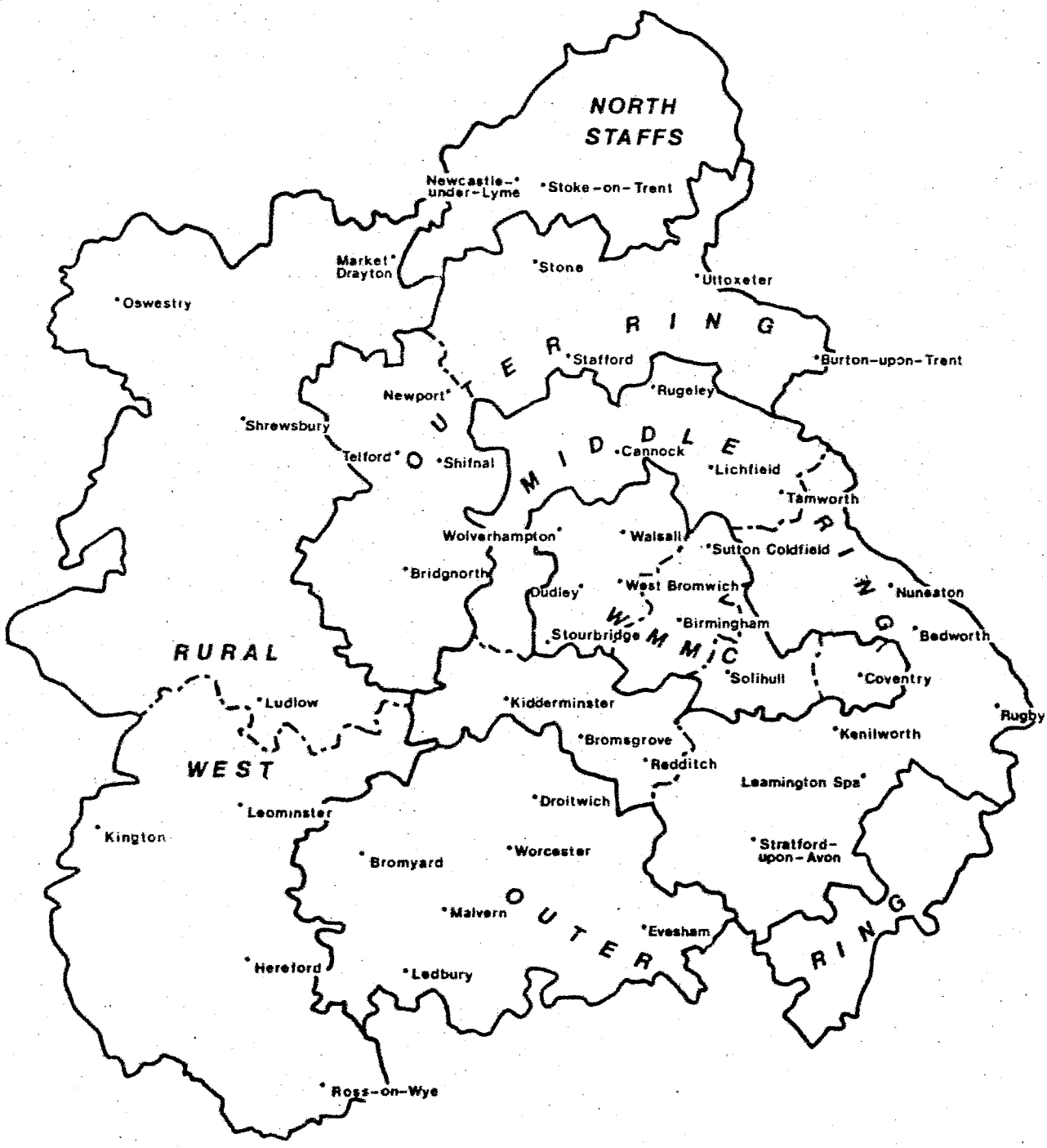

Fig. 16: Updating and Rolling Forward of the West Midlands Regional Strategy - subregions and parts of regions

reflected deeper planning disputes which could be traced back to the experience of regional planning in the West Midlands since World War II. Briefly the basic aspects of the disagreement can be summarised as follows. The E.P.B. proposal for a fivefold division of the region reflected the belief that there were significant differences in population and economic prospects between the areas immediately adjacent to the West Midlands County Council and the areas further away from the Conurbation. Bearing in mind the rationale of the E.P.B. claim for a fivefold division of the region it was obvious that the definition of the boundaries of the Middle Ring, or the tout-court recognition of its existence, had potentially significant policy implications. There was, in particular, a fear among some local authorities that once the Middle Ring was recognised for analytical purposes it could also be used for defining policies. This, in their view, involved three interrelated dangers.

Firstly, that peripheral developments would be allowed on the basis that they corresponded to market trends. Secondly, and bearing in mind the precise boundaries suggested by the E.P.B., that committed schemes which were located outside the suggested Middle Ring (Telford New Town, Worcester and Stafford Town Development Schemes, etc.) would be negatively affected by this commitment to the Middle Ring. Finally, as Mawson and Skelcher (1980) suggested, there, was also the fear amongst shire authorities that the development of peripheral sites could be used by the metropolitan authorities as an argument to justify further requests for extensions of their tightly defined boundaries[88]. It is interesting to note in this respect that the Metropolitan County Council never objected to the division of the region into five subregions.

Bearing in mind the background reasons for the disagreements, it is not surprising that they were not rapidly solved. A preliminary compromise was achieved in the summer of 1978, and the J.M.S.G. report on the implications of the assessment work used the five subregions suggested by the E.P.B. to draw

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(88) - See Mawson and Skelcher (1980), pp. 162 - 163.

conclusions from this. However, the document stressed that the Middle Ring was the inner part of the W.M.P.A.C. 'Rest of the Region' and that

> *...its separate examination does not imply any W.M.P.A.C. recognition of a sub-division of this region, nor of the appropriateness of the boundaries chosen.*
>
> (J.M.S.G., 1978a, p. 28)

Only in the process of writing the report on the policy options of the Updating was it possible to reach an acceptable solution for all parties concerned. Two different definitions of the Middle Ring for 'statistical' and 'policy' purposes were agreed. (Fig. 17)

A comparison of the two definitions clearly reinforces the interpretation of the disagreements outlined above. From the 'statistical' definition, the 'policy' Middle Ring excluded parts of North Warwickshire, Rugby, Stratford-on-Avon, wyre Forest and Lichfield Districts. Conversely the 'policy' Middle Ring was extended beyond the 'statistical' boundaries to include Telford New Town, Stafford and Worcester. The obvious effect of the changes was to emphasise the importance of the committed schemes previously within the 'statistical' Middle Ring,and to include most of the remaining free-standing committed schemes within the limits of the revised Middle Ring boundaries. Any blanket policy for the Middle Ring would, on the basis of the new boundaries, impinge on most of the committed schemes in a similar way. With this alteration the shire counties had ensured the prospects of the committed schemes, but the methodological and policy relevance of the Middle Ring division, as introduced by the E.P.B. original proposals, was seriously affected. It is also apparent that the use of the two different definitions, for analytical and policy purposes, impinged negatively both on the consistency and clarity of the whole exercise of updating the regional strategy.

While the J.M.S.G. attempted to reach a consensus about the division of the region into sub-regions, work continued in relation to the four priority areas agreed for the assessment stage of the review of the regional strategy. The W.M.P.A.C. was mainly responsible for work in the areas of population,

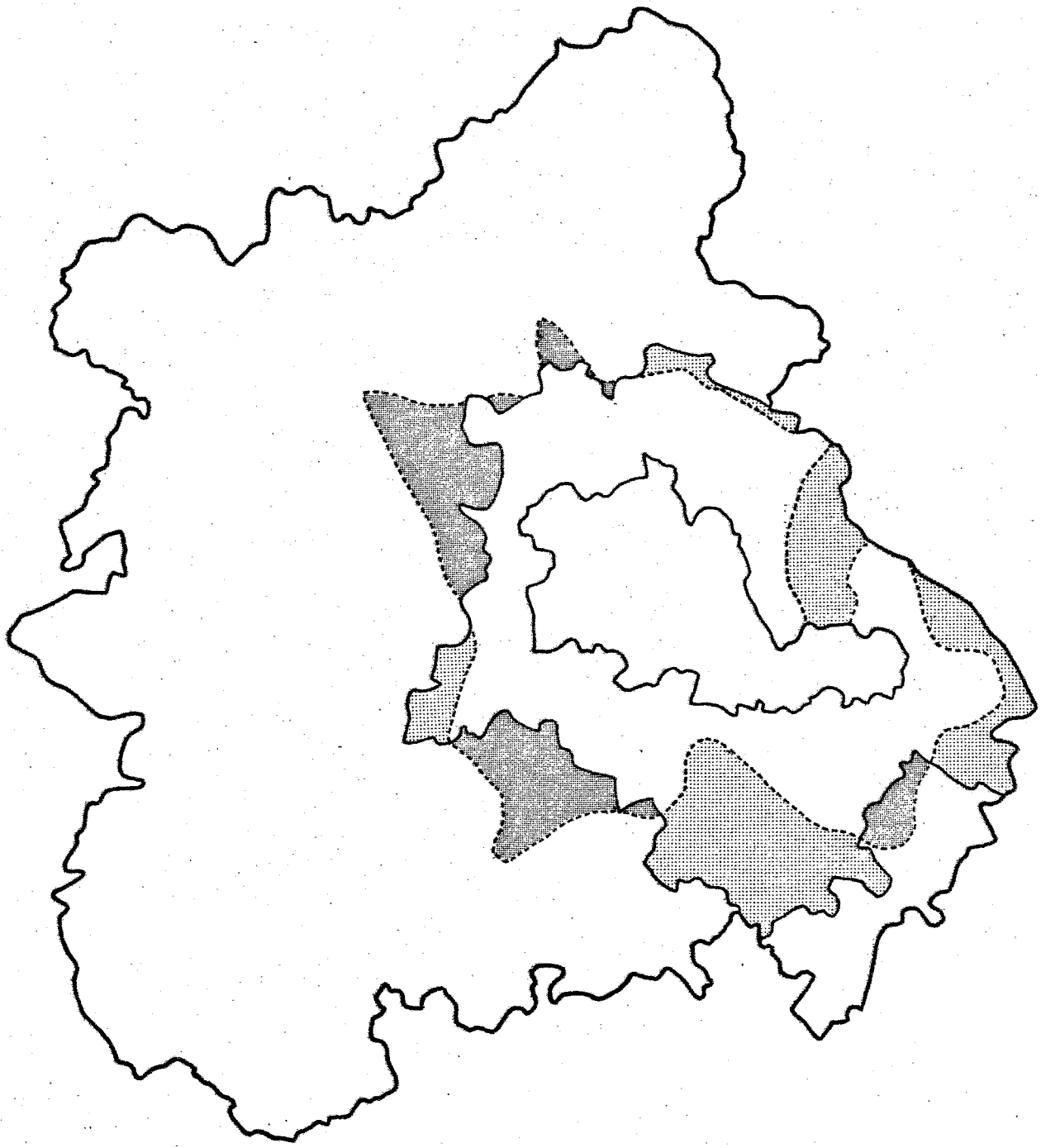

Fig. 17: Updating and Rolling Forward of the West Midlands Regional Strategy - subregions for statistical and policy purposes

households and housing and the regional economy. The regional offices of central government produced assessment papers with regard to the two other areas of concern: progress on Structure Plan decisions and resources. In addition they also prepared supplementary papers on both topics dealt with by the W.M.P.A.C..

By the late summer of 1977 assessment papers had been produced in all four priority areas and the three sponsoring bodies could engage on a preliminary evaluation of the work undertaken up to that point in time. These evaluations indicated significant differences of opinion concerning substantive elements of the updating process, and a good deal of mutual criticism and recrimination between the two parties involved in the technical work, namely the W.M.P.A.C. and the E.P.B.. It was quite evident at that point in time that the sponsoring bodies were already a long way from 'agreeing the facts'. More important, perhaps, it was also becoming apparent that the sponsoring bodies had different perspectives as to what the main objectives and concerns of the exercise should be.

For the W.M.E.P.C.,

> *The primary aim of the Regional Strategy must be to provide a firm basis for action, by central and local government, by statutory undertakers, and by the private sector to create wealth in the West Midlands - to get prosperous, efficient companies and a prosperous and stable workforce. Other considerations follow from this.*
>
> (J.M.S.G., 1977e, p. 2) (underlined in the original)

This attitude was, by and large, shared by the local authority side of the arrangements which stressed that

> *...in assessing the effectiveness of the Regional Strategy, economic aspects must play a central role. The question of the Region's economic viability must come before considerations of future physical development and its scale, phasing and location.*
>
> (J.M.S.G., 1977f, p. 1)

The views of the government departments in the region were somewhat different. They stressed that

> *Regional Strategies focus traditionally on the strategic pattern of physical development in a region.*
>
> (J.M.S.G., 1977g, p. 1)

However, and bearing in mind the changed economic circumstances of the nation, and the West Midlands, over the past few years they were prepared to accept

> *...that the industrial and commercial context of physical development must play a large part in any review of the future of this region.*

(Ibidem., p. 1)

This, of course, fell somewhat short of the commitment of the other two sponsoring bodies to give primary importance to the problems of the regional economy.

These differences in attitudes between the W.M.P.A.C. and the W.M.E.P.C. on the one hand and the regional offices of central government on the other were to be expected at that point in time. Earlier assessment work on the future of the regional economy conducted separately by the W.M.P.A.C. and the E.P.B. had indicated a marked disagreement concerning the interpretation of the forecasts of labour supply and demand for 1981. Both parties presented the balance between labour demand and supply in terms of ranges of figures[89]. Allowing for variations in the assumptions - for example, concerning the numbers of self-employed - both documents presented similar projections to 1981, indicating in the most favourable case a rough balance between labour supply and demand and a 300,000 demand deficit for the least favourable assumptions. The qualitative assessment of these figures was, however, very different.

For the W.M.P.A.C. the maintenance of current employment levels would constitute an optimistic out-turn by 1981 and it suggested that the full range of possibilities suggested by the forecasts should be brought forward in the implications stage[90]. For the E.P.B. labour demand was likely to rise to meet the increased economic activity resulting from the introduction of the government's industrial strategy[91]. The position of W.M.P.A.C. and W.M.E.P.C. were therefore

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(89) - See J.M.S.G. (1977b) and J.M.S.G. (1977h).

(90) - See J.M.S.G. (1977b), paras. 6.27 - 6.30 and J.M.S.G. (1977f), p. 1. This view was shared by the W.M.E.P.C., see J.M.S.G. (1977e), p. 3.

(91) - See J.M.S.G. (1977h), para. 19 and J.M.S.G. (1977g), para. 7.

regarded as unnecessarily pessimistic. Accordingly it was suggested that though the implications of worsened economic prospects should be included in exploratory work at the following stage of the updating, the central assumptions of the implications stage should be that of continuing stability in the regional economy[92].

The differences in the appreciation of regional economic prospects were not smoothed out at this stage. On the contrary, they became the basis for persistent disagreements during the preparation of the report on the Implications of Assessments (J.M.S.G., 1978a). The report openly acknowledged this fact:

> *...as far as the W.M.R.S. is concerned (there is) ... a section of the report - that on the future of the regional economy and employment - with which the study is not wholly in agreement.*
>
> (J.M.S.G., 1978a, Preface)

The report mentioned a number of disagreements, most particularly that insufficient emphasis was given to the possibility of structural weaknesses in the region's economy and to the probably future widening gap in the balance between labour supply and demand. The preface to the report also suggested that

> *...bearing in mind the disparate nature of the numerous bodies involved in the process of updating agreement over details may never be forthcoming.*
>
> (Idem.)

Unfortunately for the exercise disagreements extended well beyond the level of detail. For two of the sponsoring bodies, at least, the future of the regional economy was not a matter of detail but the main raison d'etre for the updating itself.

The assessment work conducted in the three other priority areas, was, to varying degrees, less controversial. The work undertaken on resources examined the organisation and current circumstances of five major infrastructure programmes (gas, electricity, water and sewerage, health and education), along with the public expenditure framework within which agencies responsible for

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(92) - See J.M.S.G. (1977g), para. 9.

these services operate. The results of this work were not particularly rewarding.

Not surprisingly, the work suggested that

> *For the different programmes, there were variable problems and opportunities associated with different spatial locations where development could take place.*
>
> (J.M.S.G., 1978b, p. 2)

Obviously the different executive agencies favoured development in locations which led to greater utilisation of existing spare capacity and avoided substantial investment requirements. However, the detail of the information made available did not allow a check on the extent to which such spare capacity overlapped between services or coincided with land availability. In these circumstances the conclusions of the exercise remained at a very broad level of generality, with almost no operational guidance being put forward concerning the location of strategic development.

Because of the particular relations local authorities enjoyed with the regional executive agencies and their planning mechanisms it was the view of W.M.P.A.C. that many of the matters with which the resources assessment was concerned were best dealt with at County or District level and so there was little controversy in this field. All in all, the exercise indicated that the process of regional planning was, most probably, not the most appropriate level to undertake detailed co-ordination of the investment programmes of instrutural executive agencies.

The assessment work in the field of population, housing and households proved even more difficult. The main dispute arising in this particular respect concerned the level of outmigration from the region and the potencial of household formation[93]. The initial W.M.P.A.C. assessment paper dealing with migration suggested that for the period up to 1991 outmigration from the region should fall within a 5,000 - 14,000 persons per annum range[94].

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(93) - See J.M.S.G. (1977f), pp. 2 - 3 and J.M.S.G. (1977g), pp. 4 - 6.

(94) - See J.M.S.G. (1977i). pp. 2 - 4.

However in the calculation of overspill from the conurbation a lower figure was adopted. The E.P.B. considered that in the view of the more recent figures for net outmigration of the region - 14,600 in 1974 - 1975 and 18,400 in 1975 - 1976 - the figures suggested by the W.M.P.A.C. were on the lower side. Alternatively they suggested that the figure of 14,000 per annum should become the central tendency of the forecast with 20,000 per annum being introduced as the higher forecast level; the implications of which should be explored[95]. The discussion on migration flows assumed particular relevance as the continuous fall in birth rates meant that the migratory flows would be the most significant factor affecting the evolution of the regional population. Depending on the net outmigration assumptions - 5,000 or 20,000 per annum - the population in 1991 would range from 5,034,000 to 5,415,000 compared with a regional population of 5,122,000 in 1971 and an estimate of 5,164,000 in 1976. Against the backcloth provided by these revised population forecasts, which indicated a static or slowly growing regional population to 1991, a key strategic issue was the rate of household formation.

This had increased substantially during the early 1970's and the estimates of households stemming from the above population forecasts suggested that there would be a continuous absolute increase across the range of assumed migration levels, with increases ranging from 8.6 to 13.9 per cent. These forecasts suggested that housing needs would continue to grow even in a situation of overall population decline. Furthermore they suggested that changes would occur in the patterns of demand for dwellings in form, size and probably tenure and location. Together with the need to replace unfit dwellings - estimated at 60,000 - this indicated a substantial housing shortage.

Bearing in mind that derelict land in the conurbation was increasing at a rate of 500ha per annum in the early 1970's, and was already bigger than 4060ha in 1976 this raised a number of important policy options[96]. Firstly, the

(95) - See J.M.S.G. (1977g), pp.4 - 5.

(96) - See J.M.S.G. (1978a), p.13.

traditional housing land deficiency approach, on the basis of which the calculation of 'overspill' from the conurbation was made, was no longer valid. The question became whether further strategic housing land should continue to be provided outside the conurbation, to meet apparent preferences, at the risk of further undermining the use of public sector resources within it. Secondly, and closely related with the former aspect, there was a question of the social-polarization associated with overspill. Outward migration from the Conurbation had been selective in both age and socio-economic groups. This was emphasised by the predominance of private housing in the growth areas and of public sector housing in the old urban areas. In a period of public expenditure cutbacks, this meant that poor quality housing would increasingly be concentrated in the older urban areas, adding to the existing problems of falling employment opportunities, and declining levels of income. Finally, the question arose as to whether strategic developments in the Middle Ring should be restricted in favour of a policy geared to regeneration of the older urban areas, and how far such a strategy would be feasible bearing in mind past trends in both housing and industrial development. These questions were, inevitably, bound to the last of the four issues selected for analysis in the assessment stage, the analysis of Structure Plan decisions. Before considering these linkages it is appropriate to provide a short background to the process of Structure Planning in the West Midlands as it stood in late 1977.

II.3.4 - THE UPDATING OF THE REGIONAL STRATEGY AND STRUCTURE PLANNING

The West Midlands was chosen in the late 1960's as a pilot area for the mise-en-ouevre of the Development Plan system introduced by the Town and Country Planning Act 1968 (see above p. 188-9). Accordingly planning authorities in the region were encouraged to submit their Structure Plans before the local government reorganisation of 1974 (Table VI). During the process of approval of A Developing Strategy it became clear that there was a significant mismatch

COUNTIES	Submited to S. of State	Examination in Public Start	Draft Modification Published	Approval by S. of St.	Formal Subm.	Alterations Approv.	Review	NOTES
West Midlands CC	10/80	3/81		3/82	a)	b)		a) Formal Amendment Anticipated
* Solihull CBC	3/73	11/73	9/74	5/75	----	----		b) First Alteration
* Coventry CBC	4/73	11/73	9/74	5/75 **	4.77	8.79		c) Roll Forward (generally 1986-91)
* West Bromwwhich CBC	2/74	3/75	9/77	5/78	----	----		d) Review involving Combination of plans
* Wolverhampton CBC	2/74	3/75	9/77	5/78	----	----		e) Intention to repeal and replace under § 10 Local Gov., and Land Act (1980)
* Birmingham CBC	3/74	3/75	9/77	5/78	----	----		f) Transportation Reservation
* Walsall CBC	3/74	3/75	9/77	5/78	----	----		g) Rural Areas
* Warley CBC	3/74	3/75	9/77	5/78	----	----		h) Transport Amendment
* Dudley CBC	3/74	3/75	9/77	5/78	----	----		i) Under Regulation 8(1971 TCPA)
Warwickshire CC							Draft 5/80 c)	j) Land Adjacent to Worcester City
* Warwickshire CC	3/73	11/73	9/74 (4/75) g)	7/75	3/77 g) h)	8/79 h)		k) Directed Amendment
Nuneaton and Bedworth	2/77 i)			8/79				
Warwick,Leamington,Kenilworth	4/77 i)			8/79				
Stratford-Upon-Avon	3/80							
Hereford and Worcester CC					a)	b)		
* Worcestshire CC	3/73	1/74	9/74 (1/75) g)	7/75	10/78	4.80		
* Herefordshire CC	3/74	12/74	7/75	1/76	10/78			
Worcester City	10/78 i)	5/79	12/79	3/80				
Hereford Central City	never presented							* Pre-April 1974 Local Authority
Staffordshire CC							Issues 7,11/79 d) e)	** Reservations concerning housing land and the number of people for whom housing would be provided
* Stoke-on-Trent CBC	3/74	10/74	7/77 (9/77) g)	4/78	10/78 h)	12/79		
* Burton-Upon-Trent CBC	3/74	/74	3/76	4/78	----	----		
* Staffordshire CC	3/74	/74	7/76 (9/77)	4/78	10/78 h)	12/79		
Shropshire (Salop) CC	6/78	1/79	9/79	2/80	a)	k)		

TABLE VI - Structure Plans - West Midlands

between the draft (and some definitive) proposals of the Structure Plans concerning the provision of strategic residential land and the needs for this as quantified by the regional strategy. This led to the production of an addendum to the original W.M.P.A.C. submission, which brought forward to 1986 the required provision of land in strategic locations, and it was on the basis of these later figures that the Secretary of State finally devised his letter of approval early in 1974. It was widely held at the time that the shire counties were providing strategic residential land well beyond the needs created by the expected levels of intraregional population movement out of the conurbation. To a great extent the 'last minute' alterations introduced in the regional strategy were seen as instrumental in creating the basis for a coherent approach by central government in the approval of the various Structure Plans; leading to a closer fit between Structure Plans themselves and the approved regional strategy.

Various motives can be put forward in order to explain the 'overprovision' of strategic residential land allocations made in the shire counties' Structure Plans. First of all, local authorities were urged by central government to build maximum flexibility and choice into the Structure Plans and this was translated into the best currency planning practice at the time, which was synonymous with 'planning' for the maximum possible growth[97]. Secondly, the various plans were produced against a backcloth of a continuing reduction in population forecasts and the shire counties worked on the basis of those forecasts which suggested higher levels of population and economic growth. Last, but not least, there was a deliberate political decision in the shire counties to overprovide residential land as this would allow them to meet eventual demands from conurbation authorities in freestanding towns, and so to safeguard their commitment to the Green Belt and their refusal of outward expansion of the Conurbation by peripheral developments[98].

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(97) - See, in this respect, Circular D.O.E. 102/72 and Davies (1975).

(98) - Interview with Mr. Colin Davies, 30 January 1981.

Given the circumstances in which the first wave of Structure Plans in the West Midlands were approved, with long periods in between them, it was difficult for central government to completely redress the apparent misfit existing between the various plans. First of all, the whole exercise constituted a planning innovation and there was therefore no past experience which could be used as a guide for the process. Secondly, and partly as a consequence of the previous aspect, attention had to be spread over an enormous range of issues. Thirdly, the various plans were considered and approved at various points in time and this precluded a stricter evaluation of their mutual consistency as they were based on different sets of data and aimed at different time-horizons. Even given these unsatisfactory arrangements central government introduced considerable modifications to the plans submitted for approval and a brief reference to these alterations is necessary here.

The first set of Structure Plans submitted for approval were those of the local authorities previously involved in the Coventry-Solihull-Warwickshire Sub-Regional Study. The proposals of the sub-regional study, which were endorsed by the three sponsoring bodies, were broadly in agreement with the regional strategy but even so there were a number of conflicts which had to be tackled during the process of approval of the Structure Plans. Three issues deserve special mention here. Firstly, the Solihull Structure Plan made insufficient provision of housing land to cater for the overspill from the conurbation and Coventry, suggested in both the regional and sub-regional strategies. This reflected the traditional concern of affluent suburbia to resist 'planned overspill' - generally of less affluent members of society - and was attacked vigorously by Birmingham Council during the Examination in Public of its own plan. In the end the Modifications suggested by the Panel and introduced by the Secretary of State provided for the reception of an additional 7,000 people.

A second issue worthy of consideration concerns the Warwickshire Structure Plan. This plan only dealt with the rural parts of the County, with the urban areas being set apart for subsequent coverage by Urban Structure Plans

under Regulation 8 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971. This decision, of course, created serious difficulties in assessing the allocations of housing land and was strongly criticised by the Panel. In the event the report from the Panel's Chairman suggested that more positive growth policies should be introduced in North Warwickshire, to cater for extra overspill from the Conurbation.

Finally, in the case of the Coventry Structure Plan this was linked with the City Council's total ten years Capital and Revenue Programmes, and benefitted from the fact that a review of the previous Development Plan for the city had been approved by the Secretary of State as recently as December 1972. While the latter element clearly facilitated the process of approval, the new Structure Plan, nevertheless, was the object of strong criticism from central government representatives. They argued that because of the statutory role of the Structure Plan this could not be made dependent on the local authority's corporate plan. In the end following the recommendations of the Panel, the Secretary of State approved the plan, with reservations in respect of the provision of land for housing and the numbers of people for whom housing would be provided.

Given the difficulties experienced in the appraisal and co-ordination of the three plans, it is hardly surprising that the Panel's report should open with the following quotation:

> *"I like to have a plan", said Palliser "And so do I", said his wife "if only for the sake of not keeping it"*
>
> (Anthony Trollope in 'Can you forgive her') [99]

The Examinations in Public of the Structure Plans for Worcestershire and Staffordshire were conducted separately but the type of questions raised by the process and the modifications introduced in the plans were so similar that they can be dealt with simultaneously. Both plans were based on an attempt to favour the creation and development of freestanding towns which would not be

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(99) - See D.O.E. (1974), Introduction.

dependent, in employment terms, on commuting to the Conurbation. This, obviously, implied an optimistic assessment of the prospects for industrial mobility, the growth of the regional economy and population. These assumptions were vigorously contested during the Examination in Public, and the modifications introduced by the Secretary of State pursued the dual aim of reducing the overall provision of strategic residential land and shifting the location of the approved developments to sites closer to the conurbation, so as to allow for significant commuting.

In the case of Worcestershire this resulted in the reduction of overall strategic residential land provision by 6,000 housing sites; this after consideration of the further 1,500 sites allocated in Bromsgrove District, and, which, significantly, had good commuting facilities. In the case of Staffordshire the planned increase of Stafford was reduced from 31,000 to 14,000 people but provision of land in peripheral sites - Aldridge-Brownhills and other South Staffordshire locations - was increased to allow for some 10,000 - 14,000 extra people. Reflecting lower assumptions of population growth, the forecast migration of people to South and Central Staffordshire was also reduced from 53,000 to 36,000 - 38,000.

As far as the plans of the other local authorities in the Conurbation were concerned, these were co-ordinated during their preparation by the West Midlands Conurbation Structure Plans Co-ordinating Group, comprising the principal planning officers of the various local authorities. In spite of this attempt at co-ordination, the plans submitted to the Secretary of State for the Environment, for approval were very different in presentation, planning approach and time-horizons with, for example, 1981, 1986 and 1991 all being used for this latter purpose. Another important aspect to bear in mind is that the six Structure Plans were submitted for approval by the six former County Borough Councils but when the Examination in Public was held in March-May 1975 the structure planning authority was already the West Midlands County Council.

The new planning authority suggested extensive modifications to the

Structure Plans previously presented. Most of the modifications focussed on the attempt to unify the approach to land use policies across the area of the new authority and, significantly as a new feature, to delete those policies which were outside the range of powers controlled by the new Metropolitan County Council or the Department of the Environment. Much of the Examination in Public and the report of the Panel took on a similar role.

As a result of these concerns a huge number of modifications were finally introduced by the Secretary of State (Table VII).

Local Authority	Number of Modifications
Birmingham	35
Dudley	73
Walsall	57
Warley	102
West Bromwich	75
Wolverhampton	39
TOTAL	381

TABLE VII: Modifications Introduced in the Six Conurbation Structure Plans

Source: D.O.E. (1976) Modifications to the Six Structure Plans, mimeo.

Although most of these modifications were related to the attempt to unify the form and contents of the various plans there were also particular substantive changes introduced in various structure plans. In the case of Birmingham, for instance, the Secretary of State deleted the proposals for 'clustered' developments at high densities along certain railway lines and for service employment centres in suburban locations. The modifications involved also a considerable reduction in the programme of road construction in the period up to 1986.

During the Examination in Public of the plans, the figures for demand and supply of housing in the conurbation, up to 1986, were re-examined and the

likely overspill of households was reduced to a range of 43,600 - 65,000 from a previous range of 76,265 - 80,465. This reflected reductions in population forecasts and higher estimates of housebuilding within the conurbation.

Because of this reduction in the levels of expected overspill from the conurbation the provision of strategic residential land in the shire counties exceeded forecast needs. It was this degree of 'overprovision' of strategic residential land in the shire counties that the assessment work of the E.P.B., concerning Structure Plan decisions, attempted to quantify. Even after allowances were made for the reduction in the Telford population target, from 150,000 to 130 - 135,000 by 1986, and for the revised population forecasts submitted by Warwickshire County Council, both in 1977, the E.P.B. assessment work concluded that:

a) Provision of strategic residential land in the shire counties amounted to some 25,000 - 55,000 housing sites (50,000 - 140,000 people) in excess of the needs created by the forecast overspill from the conurbation, and

b) the whole set of Structure Plans provided for about 360,000 - 450,000 more people in the region in 1986 than was expected by the more recent O.P.C.S. forecasts. (J.M.S.G., 1977K)

These two conclusions suggest that neitheir the co-ordination effort had been entirely sucessful in terms of avoiding a situation of mismatch between the various structure plans nor were they, as a whole, or indeed the regional strategy, adjusted to the most recent evoluation in circumstances. More important, perhaps, the growth assumptions of the shire counties' structure plans were even more optimistic than the already optimistic assumptions of the approved regional strategy.

The above conclusions were, however, vehemently disputed by the W.M.P.A.C. at two different levels[100]. At a political level it was argued that

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(100) - See J.M.S.G. (1977f), pp. 3 - 4.

if overprovision existed that was a result of the fact that they had been urged by central government to release the maximum amount of land for housing, and to provide for the top range of what had proved overoptimistic forecasts of population overspill. At a technical level the W.M.P.A.C. argued that there was no point in measuring the scale of growth or demand for housing in terms of population, and that higher rates of household formation and the reduction in the average household size were compensating for the lower than expected rates of population increase. It was also claimed that monitoring work carried out by the shire counties had indicated that performance had matched up expectations quite closely, and that in certain places housing demand and housing completion were even greater than Structure Plan expectations. Also important, they continued, was the fact that assessment work carried out on the development of regional strategic locations in the period 1971 - 1975 had indicated that, in broad terms, there was a reasonable fit between the direction and size of changes in dwelling stock in the region and the growth of strategic locations. (J.M.S.G., 1977j) The obvious conclusion was that, even if overprovision existed, this was not significantly distorting the distribution of option population suggested by the regional strategy.

Against the backcloth provided by these changes the questions which needed to be answered were the extend to which further allocations of land were required and where they should be made if the case existed. As far as residental land allocations were concerned there was little doubt that the existing allocations were, quantitatively, adequate to meet the more optimistic population forecasts. Provision of industrial land - 4,000 ha after the Secretary of State's modifications - allowed for an increase in labour demand of some 85,000 up to 1986 and this, in the prevailing economic climate, also seemed adequate. The key strategic questions raised by the assessment work were, therefore, of a qualitative nature.

In the mid-1970's a good deal of the ongoing planning discussions focussed on the problems being experienced by the older urban areas. These, in

the case of the West Midlands, assumed regional strategic importance for three interlinked reasons. Firstly, the inner areas accounted for a substantial proportion - more than 10 per cent - of the regional population. Secondly, the serious economic decline of these areas had changed the nature of the debate on spatial inequalities and had resulted in a whole series of central government policy initiatives. Thirdly, there was little doubt that the economic and social weaknesses of the core of the conurbation would negatively affect the future prospects of the whole region. In the prevailing situation of economic recession, however, giving priority to the regeneration of 'inner areas' would, most likely, result in the need to restrict development elsewhere, namely in areas peripheral to the conurbation and further away. This was not an easy decision to take, especially bearing in mind that it could well produce conflicts with the fundamental objective of overall stimulation of the regional economy. On the one hand, if a substantial amount of resources was not concentrated in the regeneration of inner areas the process of environmental, economic and social decay would undoubtedly continue. On the other hand, if absolute priority was accorded to inner area regeneration and this failed to produce rapid results the overall investment appeal of the conurbation would be further reduced, and a significant proportion of the negative consequences would fall exactly on those areas whose regeneration was intended in the first place. The nature and political sensitivity of these dilemmas clearly suggested that the adoption of clearcut policies would not be easily achieved.

II.3.5 - THE UPDATING OF THE REGIONAL STRATEGY: POLICY STAGE I - FORMULATION

The formulation of policy options was undertaken during the Summer and Autumn of 1978 and led to the publication of a Report for Consultation Purposes in January of 1979 (J.M.S.G. and W.M.P.A.C., 1979). The report was in two parts. The first, written primarily by E.P.B. staff, and supported by the J.M.S.G., reviewed the assessement work, discussed the aims and principles which should

underline the updated strategy and presented three main policy options for the physical planning of the region. The broad options were:

Strategy A) This adopted the existing regional strategy as modified by the Secretary of State's decisions on current structure plans and the latest targets for new and expanded towns, together with the government's Innner City policy. The main advantage of this strategy was felt to be its degree of continuity with the existing policies. On the negative side, however, a number of disadvantages were identified. It was pointed out that, even after allowance was made for the recent alterations in central government policy, the existing policies did not give sufficient emphasis to the issue of regeneration of the older urban areas of the region. It was also noted that its success depended on an extremely unlikely reversal of the region's economic prospects and that, in the absence of this, the problems of social polarisation and spatial misallocation of scarce public and private resources would be compounded. Finally, it was considered that this strategy made little provision for the needs of rural areas and North Staffordshire.

Strategy B) This would focus on the economic and urban regeneration of the older built-up areas in the region. Resources would be concentrated in these two areas and constraints on development elsewhere, other than for local needs, would be introduced. This strategy rested on two key assumptions. Firstly, that dispersal and past market location trends could be redirected whitout major conflict with economic objectives. Secondly, that the machinery of both physical planning and non land-use policies would be adequate to promote and control this redirection. The potential

advantage of this strategy were stated to be that it would allow for a concentration of resources in the more needy areas, create better conditions for an eventual reduction in the levels of spatial social polarisation and, in general terms, it would permit a fuller use of the existing urban resources (public transport, derelict and waste land); while avoiding some of the problems associated with dispersal (commuting congestion, use of agricultural land for urban development, etc.). The report identified also some of the potential disadvantages of a strategy of this type. It would involve the imposition of strict planning controls at a time when they were increasingly unpopular; it would mean the concentration of resources in order to develop land, often with severe physical and environment constraints which could only be achieved at a high cost. Finally, it could result in further deterioration of the environmental conditions of the conurbation, with further loss of open space and congestion of the road system. Furthermore the ability of such a strategy to override market trends was very open to question since, for instance, it would be difficult - if not impossible - to differentiate between provision for local needs and strategic purposes.

Strategy C) This strategy was presented as seeking simultaneously to achieve urban regeneration and regional economic revitalisation, while recognising the emerging interdependence between the conurbation and the Middle Ring and accepting some continuation of dispersal within it, especially to close-in locations. This strategy was presented as a more complex, flexible and pragmatic strategy

with variants being presented for:

I) Urban Regeneration:

I.a) emphasising employment generation;

I.b) stressing housing redevelopment at lower densities with more open spaces;

II) Location of employment:

II.a) emphasis on urban areas;

II.b) additional development in close-in locations

III) Location of housing:

III.a) existing locations only;

III.b) selective additions and cutbacks to existing allocations;

III.c) decisions to be taken during the review of structure plans.

IV) Urban fringe and green belt:

IV.a) no change;

IV.b) more flexible green belt policies allowing strictly limited developments where necessary in areas of low quality agricultural land.

The report pointed out that the balance of advantages and disadvantages would vary according to the variants selected. In broad terms, however, the main potential advantages of such a strategy was seen as being its close approximation to marked trends thereby making it easier to implement. Additionally it would provide more flexibility in the implementation of the inner city policy, with less a priori commitment to a specific form and function of inner urban areas. On the negative side it was suggested that the strategy could emphasise the conflict in resource allocation terms between inner areas and Middle Ring locations, that additional agricultural land could be used for

urban purposes and that commuting by private transport was likely to increase.

Although the three broad strategies were presented in fairly neutral terms it was obvious that the J.M.S.G. favoured the adoption of the third strategy.

The second part of the report dealt with the problems of the regional economy and the economy policy options. Though E.P.B. staff were involved in its preparation, the report was not supported by the central government side of the J.M.S.G.. In its response to the report, the regional offices of central government departments maintained that this fact was due to the cancellation of a J.M.S.G. meeting, which had thereby precluded the government side from giving full consideration to this part of the report prior to publication[101]. The blunt truth, however, was that, even if that meeting had taken place, the central government side of the J.M.S.G. would not have subscribed to the proposals in any case. To understand the reasons given later (see below pp. 249-50) for this split it is important to consider the economic content of the report.

This section started with a review of the assessment work done in the field of the regional economy, emphasising the importance of certain economic indicators (net output per head, levels of capital investment, etc.) which suggested a rapid decline in the relative prosperity of the region in the U.K. context. A number of policy objectives were then derived from the assessment work. These included improving the efficiency of existing firms, diversifying the region's economic base and encouraging the formation of new enterprises in the region. In sequence four broad policy options were outlined which could contribute to the achievement of these objectives. The four policy options all involved a description of various strands of government economic policy (Industrial, Regional, Inner City, Manpower, etc.). The four broad policy options contained a gradation of the strength of policy instruments, as follows:

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(101) - See J.M.S.G. (1979a), Introduction.

Policy Option 1) A continuation of existing policies, many of which had only recently been enacted and from which the full results had not yet been realised. This applied to both Central and Local Government initiatives.

Policy Option 2) An adjustment to existing policies and legislation in order to maximise their potential benefits for the region. Amongst the adjustments suggested were:

- the raising of the I.D.C. exemption limit in the region from 15,000 to 30,000 sq. ft.;
- the re-opening of the lapsed Selective Investment Scheme (under the 1972 Industrial Act) for ferrous and non-ferrous foundries, machine tools and electronic component sectors and the extension of the schemes to other sectors of industry, engineering and metal goods for example;
- the extension of powers (under the Inner Urban Areas Act 1978) to provide financial assistance in Industrial Improvement Areas towards investment in plant and machinery;
- the extension of powers of local authorities to advance money for the purchase or lease of any land and to make grants towards rents of industrial buildings;
- the alteration of the West Midlands status so to enable access to a wider range of E.E.C. funds and finance, particularly the European Regional Development Fund;
- the making of the public reclamation of all derelict land eligible for 100 per cent grant and extending derelict grants to aid private sector

reclamation in connection with industrial development;

- to increase the funds available to the Development Commission and COSIRA, etc.

Policy Option 3) This would involve a series of new policy initiatives designed to encourage economic growth and the removal of some perceived constraints at the national, regional and local level. The most significative proposals were:

- the lifting of I.D.C. controls for firms wishing to expand in situ and for foreign firms wishing to develop in the West Midlands;
- the extension to existing firms of the same grants and depreciation rates for new buildings, plants and machinery as applied in the Assisted Areas;
- the creation of a Regional Development Board involving government departments, local authorities, industrialists, trades unionists, etc., with responsibility to prepare a Regional Economic Development Programme, to stimulate industrial development, to act as a promotion body for the region, etc.

Policy Option 4) This was seen as a more fundamental approach to the problems affecting the regional economy namely by explicitly accepting the existence of a trade-off between the objectives of increasing productivity and employment. It recommended that the government should pay increasing attention to questions such as work-sharing, a shorter working week and earlier retirement. Further it considered that manpower

policies would need to be geared to the promotion of occupational mobility of labour by stimulating multiple skills and retraining of skilled labour. As far as local authorities were concerned this policy option suggested the possibility of their becoming involved in the operation of firms through the provision of working capital, the establishment of municipal enterprises or assistance to the setting-up of co-operative or common ownership enterprises. Finally, it was recommended that an assessment should be made of the costs of increasing employment in labour intensive public services such as Health, Education and Social Services.

All the policy options were formulated as a series of recommendations to government through the appropriate Secretaries of State and it was hinted that the preferred strategy could be a combination of different aspects of the various policy options.

II.3.6 - THE UPDATING OF THE REGIONAL STRATEGY: POLICY STAGE II - CONSULTATIONS

The two parts of the report were then circulated, for consultation purposes, among the region's local authorities, the members of the Economic Planning Council and the regional offices of government departments. There were two distinct sets of responses: comments from individual local authorities and comments from the three sponsoring bodies[102]. These are better considered separately (see Table VIII, p. 238-9).

As far as the second part of the report was concerned there was overwhelming support for the idea that economic considerations should play a

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(102) - For the purposes of this study, only the local authorities' members of the W.M.P.A.C. are considered.

	Local Authorities	Economy Options				Physical Planning Alternatives												
								C										
								Urban Region		Location Employment			Location Housing			Urban Fringe Green Belt		
		1	2	3	4	A	B	a	b	a	b	c	a	b	c	a	b	
COUNTIES	Staffordshire		X	X					X	X		X			X	X		
	Salop		X	X	(X)							X			X	X		
	Hereford and Worcester		X	X	(X)			X	X			X	X		X	X		
	Warwickshire		X	X				X				X			X	X		
	West Midlands		1				(X)	X			X			X			X	
DISTRICTS	Birmingham		X	X	X			X		X			X			X		
	Coventry		X	X	(X)				X		X			X			X	
	Dudley			X	X							2						
	Sandwell		X	X	(X)				X	X				X			X	
	Solihull	X	X	X	X			X		X		X	X		X	X		
	Walsall		X	(X)								3						
	Wolverhampton		1					X		X	X			X	X		X	
	Stoke (4)																	
SPONSORS	W.M.E.P.C. (5)		X	(X)	(X)				X		X			X			(X)	
	W.M.E.P.B.			6					X		X			X			X	
	W.M.P.A.C.			X	X			X		X		X			(7)	(8)		

TABLE VIII : Comments on Consultation Report - Synopsis

(Notes on next page)

NOTES FOR TABLE

(1) Argue that the strategy of economic regeneration should be subordinated to the policy which gives priority to inner areas.

(2) *"Different variants are appropriate in different parts of the Region and decisions should be taken at as local a level as possible"*

(3) *"Alternatives need to be defined more precisely to avoid conflicting interpretation"*

(4) *"Did not find the Consultation Report an acceptable basis for Updating the Regional Strategy as the separation of physical and economic options does not permit a meaningful and realistic choice and the physical planning part seems to imply that individual local authorities would be constrained in the case of planning controls available to them"*

(5) Suggests extensive redrafts of three initial economic options.

(6) Complete redraft of this part of the Consultation Report emphasising positive role of existing measures and policies and suggesting policy changes based mainly on Alternative 2.

(7) Emphasis on inner areas should be preserved.

(8) Flexibility to be used only at the local level.

fundamental role in the updated strategy and dismay was generally expressed at the fact that two documents were submitted for consideration. The response from Staffordshire County Council, for instance, suggested that

> *...without ... the economic strategy ... the Regional Strategy is an empty shell.*

The City Council of Stoke-on-Trent rejected the report altogether stating that the separation of physical and economic options did not permit

> *...a meaningful or realistic choice between the various policy options.*

There was also unanimous agreement amongst local authorities that the existing economic policies, by themselves, were not sufficient to promote the regeneration of the regional economy.

Leaving this area of broad consensus there were, however, substantial differences in emphasis between the responses from the shire counties and those from local authorities within the conurbation. The shire counties expressed an unreserved commitment to regionwide economic regeneration but the metropolitan authorities - the West Midlands County Council and Birmingham City Council in particular - though accepting that the main aim of the strategy was economic regeneration were keen to note that this should bet set within the context of current policies which gave priority to inner areas. On the same track, different conurbation authorities - Birmingham, Coventry and Walsall District Councils - rejected suggestions that benefits currently only available to designated inner city areas should be extended to the whole region. The position of the conurbation local authorities clearly reflected their awareness that a trade-off potentially existed between the twin objectives of urban and economic regeneration.

The divisions concerning the physical planning policy options were more numerous and subtle. This reflected the fact that with the exception of the West Midlands County Council all the other local authorities favoured Strategy C. The position of the Metropolitan County Council concerning physical planning policies reflected the work being undertaken on the review of the

County's Structure Plan (see below pp. 256-64). Though not explicitly endorsing Strategy B, the County Council consistently supported policy variants which could more effectively promote the concentration of resources in the conurbation or close-in locations. Particularly significant was the support given to a more positive approach to the Green Belt policy, of further provision of strategy industrial land within the conurbation and in close-in locations, and the endorsement of a policy of selective cuts, and additions, to the provision of strategic housing land.

The responses of the four shire counties also constituted a distinctive group. All of them shared the support for a policy of no change in the Green Belt, and for the 'location of housing' option which suggested that considerations of residential land allocations should be left to the process of revision of Structure Plans within the broad framework provided by the updated regional strategy. Similarly all four County Councils expressed their support for a 'location of employment' variant (variant C) not originally mentioned in the report and put forward during the consultation process by Staffordshire County Council. This argued that pressures for economic expansion and employment in the Middle Ring should be met by adequate land provision, though subject to environmental considerations and the avoidance of high cost.

As a whole this position can be regarded as a continuation of the planning stances traditionally adopted by the shire counties. It represented a defence against peripheral expansions, through the maintenance of a strict Green Belt policy, while attempting to promote the economic prosperity of the Middle Ring developments by a fairly permissive 'location of employment' policy. Further it emphasised the sovereignty of the County Councils when making housing land allocations in the Structure Plans.

The question of the level of detail which should be adopted in the updated physical strategy was, perhaps, the most recurrent theme of the responses from the metropolitan districts. In most cases - Birmingham, Dudley, Walsall, Wolverhampton more forcefully - a statement was made that the physical

planning options needed to be defined more precisely to avoid conflicting interpretations. Various responses argued that the regional strategy should identify agreed priority locations for investment, in order to face the likely scarcity of resources for the implementation of the preferred strategy. In view of the perceived vagueness of the policy variants two of the authorities (Dudley and Walsall) decided not to give explicit support for any of them. In broad terms these positions can easily be understood.

Before the reorganisation of local government these authorities provided the complete range of local authority services[103]. After 1974, however, the Metropolitan County Council assumed responsibility for structure planning of the conurbation, together with other functions. This was a fact resented by the Metropolitan District Councils which was to give rise to problems during the review of the County's Structure Plan[104]. Bearing in mind that they had, because of their membership of the W.M.P.A.C., a greater say in the preparation of the updated regional strategy than in the review of the Metropolitan Structure Plan their demand for a greater detail in the strategy is hardly surprising. Other aspects of their responses reflected also this self-protective position. They favoured concentration of strategic development in the older urban areas, selective cuts and additions to the strategic housing locations in order to boost inner area prospects, and a more flexible attitude towards developments in the Green Belt. In relation to all these issues their responses followed quite closely the Metropolitan County Council response .

The only divergence from the pattern of responses from the District Councils was provided by the comments from Solihull Metropolitan District Council. This favoured the maintenance of a strict Green Belt policy and the location of strategic employment opportunities in the older urban areas of the conurbation. But, once more, this was not a surprising position. Rather, it

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(103) - Not necessarily under the same name or with the same boundaries.

(104) - See below pp. 256-7 and Brundell (1981).

represented the continuation of the policy of the previous County Borough Council to restrict, as much as possible, development incursions into what was the most prosperous suburb of Birmingham. This policy could be traced back to the 1950's when a poll rejected planned overspill from Birmingham. The attitude was continued in the early 1970's as reflected in the opposition to the location of the N.E.C. in the Green Belt and the underprovision of housing land in the Borough's first Structure Plan. This attitude was also to be important in the review of the West Midlands Structure Plan[105].

The main conclusion of this analysis of the local authorities' responses to the Report in Consultation purposes is that, although a united front existed in stressing the primary importance of economic considerations in the updated strategy, there were important, and irreconcilable, differences of opinion, concerning the physical planning implications of the twin objectives of urban and economic regeneration and the level of detail at which these issues should be explored during the updating of the regional strategy.

Bearing in mind these differences it is interesting to analyse the W.M.P.A.C. response to the Consultation Report. This was framed at a series of meetings in March 1979. During these discussions it was considered that the final outcome of the exercise ideally should be a joint report from the three sponsoring bodies to the Secretary of State or, if the E.P.B. failed to support the part dealing with the regional economy, a joint submission with the W.M.E.P.C.[106]. It was recognised that the worst position would be the submission of three separate reports.

The W.M.P.A.C. response to the Consultation Report was a delicate political compromise between the three coalitions of positions as expressed in the individual local authority responses (J.M.S.G., 1979a). To a large extent the consensus about the importance attributed to economic regeneration served

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(105) - See above pp. 194 and below, pp. 263-5.

(106) - W.M.P.A.C. meeting of 15 March 1979 (Minutes).

to pave the way for that compromise. This, in fact, resulted more from the blurring of divergencies, for the sake of a compromise, than from their adequate resolution.

The response began by emphasising that economic regeneration was the first priority in the updating exercise and so should be reflected in the final report. It went on to stress that a consensus existed among local authorities that current policies would not do on their own, and that they needed to be altered and complemented by the sort of measures suggested by Economic Policy Options 2 and 3. These were broadly endorsed though, in a number of cases, alterations were introduced in order to favour the older urban areas and existing firms in the region. This met some of the concerns previously voiced by the metropolitan local authorities.

The most difficult part of the compromise was, undoubtedly, that related to the physical planning options to be adopted. In this respect, the W.M.P.A.C. response stressed that the notion of urban regeneration applied not only to the designated inner city areas but also to the other old urban areas in the region. Further it stated that urban regeneration involved simultaneously the upgrading and improvement of the housing stock; the attainment of a more acceptable physical and social environment; and the revival of older industrial and commercial areas. Finally, it was claimed that the strategy should not contemplate 'alternative redistributions' of population and employment; rather it should be based on the existing land allocations which were thought to be of adequate size in order to meet the overall demand for land.

Based on these considerations the response set out to indicate its favoured physical planning options. Strategy A was summarily discarded as not taking into account recent demographic and economic changes and so was Strategy B which was considered not feasible due to lack of political mechanisms capable of preventing 'voluntary overspill' from the older urban areas. Strategy C was, therefore, the natural choice by default. This, of course, still left the

decision as to which variants should be supported.

As far as urban regeneration was concerned variant b) was considered to be unrealistic in terms of costs and not meeting the simultaneous objectives of economic, social and environmental regeneration. In respect to the location of housing, variant c) was favoured, on the grounds that variant a) did not contemplate the likely shortfall (16 - 59,000) of housing in the Metropolitan County and that variant b), by suggesting close-in developments could detract from the resolution of the older urban area problems. In defence of the preferred variant it was claimed that only the results of close monitoring over the next few years would make evident whether more strategic housing land provision should be made available or not. Reflecting some of the conflicts involved in this option, the W.M.P.A.C. response acknowledged that the review of the West Midlands County Council Structure Plan was likely to advocate emphasis on close-in developments both within the county and beyond but added that these would be at a structure plan, rather than at a regionally significant scale.

Turning to the location of industrial development options, the document argued against the development of peripheral locations and favoured those variants which would involve allowance for developments both within the conurbation and in the Middle Ring. Though both variants a) and c) were referred to, it was obvious that the net effect of the response was to support the latter. In relation to the Green Belt policy the response stressed that, though flexibility in the operation of controls might be necessary at a local level, at the strategic level only the strict enforcement of development controls could guarantee the Green Belt policy effects. The report also included a revised version of that part of the Consultation Report dealing with North Staffordshire and the Rural West which enlarged on the characterisation of those areas and on the specific measures required to tackle their problems. Finally, in relation to the question of whether priorities should be established for sub-regions or for urban regeneration the response adopted the stance put forward by the shire counties that these problems could only be

resolved at the monitoring stage when a better understanding of current issues emerged.

It is obvious that this response involved concessions from the various groups of opinion within the W.M.P.A.C.. It is, however, pertinent to comment that, on the balance, the West Midlands County Council was probably the authority which conceded most in the bargaining process while the shire counties saw most of their position adopted. Given this context it was not altogether surprising that after the W.M.P.A.C. response was adopted the Metropolitan Council felt it was necessary to express, in a letter to the W.M.R.S. Director, that there were fundamental divergences of view on the physical development options between the West Midlands County Council and the W.M.P.A.C. approach.

The response from the regional offices of government departments was organised along three main lines of argument (J.M.S.G., 1979a). The first dominant theme of the response was the emphasis placed on the achievement of a high degree of consistency between the economic analysis and the physical planning strategy. Like the response from the W.M.P.A.C., the E.P.B. answer to the Consultation Report expressed support for the physical strategy C. However, unlike the response from the local authorities' side of the J.M.S.G., the E.P.B. document favoured in all options variants labelled b) which emphasised the need to respond to pressures for development within the 'close-in' parts of the Middle Ring, while retaining the existing policy bias towards the 'inner city' areas. The response stressed, in relation to this, that it would

> *...make little sense to urge on Government a series of economic measures while at the same time proposing physical policies which severely constrained economic activity in its choice of location.*
>
> (J.M.S.G., 1979a, p. 2)

The response, therefore, argued for the need to face up to reduced provisions for growth in the Outer Ring while accommodating pressures for growth in the Middle Ring wherever those arose. Furthermore, and very courageously, it suggested that the primacy given to the economy carried with it the obligation

to relax developments constraints even within the designated Green Belt. This contrasted sharply with the W.M.P.A.C. position - largely induced by the stances of the shire counties - which, while arguing for massive economic support for the region, endorsed a restrictive approach to Green Belt policy and adopted the most ambiguous policy options for housing and employment location. It is against the backcloth provided by these comments that the E.P.B. answer to the part of the Consultation Report dealing with the regional economy should be interpreted.

The answer acknowledged as a possibility that the final submission to Ministers might include a number of detailed suggestions on the Government's policies affecting the regional economy. However, it suggested that such an inclusion would depend, at least, on the adoption of a more cautious phrasing of the policy recommendations put forward and of a clearcut physical planning strategy being adopted, by all the sponsoring bodies, in favour of the objective of overall economic regeneration. To ease the solution of the first problem the response included a fresh draft of that part of the Consultation Report dealing with the regional economy. This differed from the original version in two major aspects. Firstly, there was a more carefully worded analysis of the economic problems facing the region and of the adequacy of existing economic measures to deal with those problems. It was suggested, for instance, that firms, local authorities and other agents were not taking full advantage of the measures already available to them. Secondly, it argued that proposals for the alteration of existing policies should be included in an Annex to the report and referred to as not involving the endorsement of the various sponsoring bodies. Policy suggestions to be included in this Annex were mainly drawn from Economic Policy Option 2 but in their formulation great care was evidently taken that they did not affect the existing commitments to either the Assisted Areas or the designated Inner Areas.

The final part of the E.P.B. document dealt with the future of the monitoring arrangements reflecting, probably, the E.P.B. view of the Updating

exercise; a significant alteration was suggested in the practice of monitoring. Until that point of time monitoring had been split into an analytical element - which had found translation into the two J.M.S.G. Annual Reports and various reports on specific issues - and a policy element to which the Updating provided the most visible and important input. The E.P.B., though expressing support for the existing machinery, recommended that it should be transformed into a mechanism for continuous policy review. In the opinion of the Board, if Annual Reports included policy recommendations, as well as analysis and interpretation of problems and policies, this would avoid difficult and time-consuming updating exercises while enabling the Regional Strategy to be continuously up-to-date. These suggestions were particularly significant as nowhere in the Consultation Report was this issue raised for discussion.

The response from the third of the sponsoring bodies, the W.M.E.P.C., closely followed that from the E.P.B. from which, of course, the Council received technical advice (J.M.S.G., 1979a). Strategy C, with variants b) for all detailed options, was adopted and the Council was keen to stress that suggestions for policy changes should be realistic and avoid overbidding for resource allocations. This was translated into an outright rejection of economic policy option 4) and significant deletions and amendments being introduced into policy option 2) and 3), which together were seen as providing a realistic basis for suggestions on economic policy changes.

Proposals made in the Consultation Report concerning the creation of a co-ordinating regional promotion body gave rise to particularly well-informed comments from the Council. As a matter of fact later in 1978 the W.M.E.P.C. attempted to create a West Midlands Industrial Development Association with the aim of co-ordinating promotion and lobbying activities on behalf of the region and stimulating a common approach to the problems experienced by the regional economy[107]. This Association was to bring together the W.M.E.P.C., T.U.C.,

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(107) - See W.M.E.P.C. (1978), typescript.

C.B.I., Chambers of Commerce, Trades Councils, Local Authorities, New Towns Corporations, Universities, Polytechnics and the Members of Parliament for West Midlands constituencies. However, it soon became apparent that no significant support was likely to be forthcoming for a co-ordinated effort at regional promotion, and that most of the local authorities contacted expressed support for the idea of W.M.P.A.C. taking on board more positively the lobbying role to central government on behalf of the region[108].

II.3.7 - THE UPDATING OF THE REGIONAL STRATEGY: POLICY STAGE III - DECISION

The economic questions highlighted above were very much present in the final stages of the Updating process which was marked by further conflicts between, and within, the various sponsoring bodies. The most evident result of these conflicts was the publication of two separate final reports in the summer of 1979. One, endorsed by all three sponsoring bodies, is basically a physical planning strategy for the region. In this document the consideration of economic issues is only undertaken insofar as

> *...there is an obvious link between policies for land use planning and regional economic prospects.*
>
> (J.M.S.G., 1979b, p. 17)

The second report, endorsed only by the W.M.P.A.C. and the W.M.E.P.C., deals with the regional economy and the need to adopt specific economic measures to tackle its problems. Of the J.M.S.G. report's approach to the regional economy it is stated that:

> *It conveys no sense of urgency or concern. It does not adequately set out the need for economic regeneration in the Region ... No specific policy recommendations are put forward.*
>
> (W.M.P.A.C. and W.M.E.P.C., 1979, p. 11)

The main reason for the publication of two separate final reports was the Department of Industry's refusal to accept a document which contained

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(108) - Interview with Dr. Ian Gibson, 21 January 1981.

economic policy recommendations which directly questioned the validity of the Government's regional economic policy. The decision to split the final submissions was taken after consultations between the central headquarters of the D.O.E. and the D.I., in which the former agreed that economic matters could only be tackled in the Updating to the extent that they had direct physical planning implications[109].

This decision was received with dismay by the W.M.P.A.C. and W.M.E.P.C. members. As a consequence, the report on the regional economy, submitted by these two bodies, adopted a very critical position in regard to the government's policies towards the region in line with the W.M.P.A.C. response to the Consultation Report. Of course, the decision to split the submission into two documents created further difficulties in preparing a joint submission on physical planning matters. At one point in time it seemed that agreement on basics would not be forthcoming and that two separate physical planning submissions would also be the outcome of the exercise. In the event, however, it was possible to reach a delicate compromise between the various positions[110].

The final report supported by all three sponsors started by emphasising that a strategy whose main priority was the revitalisation of the regional economy had to deal with conflicting objectives not only in relation to particular sub-regions but also in regard to the other objective of urban regeneration. This was particularly evident as the report stressed that there were

> *...powerful economic forces at work in the Region which might have differential effects on particular areas but which (were) ... unlikely to be amenable to control without detriment to the economic system.*
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> (J.M.S.G., 1979b, para. 201)

What this meant in practice was that there was clear understanding of

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(109) - See Skelcher (1980), pp. 150 - 153.

(110) - Interview with Mr. David Saunders, 5 May 1981.

the fact that the objective of urban regeneration was likely to go against marked forces. Implicit in this understanding was the recognition that, if a full commitment to this objective was made, then the overall economic prospects of the region as a whole would suffer. The problem in this respect was how to balance the commitment to two contradictory objectives. This, however, is easier said than done.

The J.M.S.G. did not make clear which options of Strategy C it supported. These were, however, implicit in the way the various policy issues were approached. In relation to the urban regeneration objective the report put forward the idea of simultaneous housing and employment regeneration. As far as strategic housing locations were concerned, the report remarked that

> *It is not intended to make additional strategic proposals for housing land in the period up to 1991.*
>
> (J.M.S.G., 1979b, para. 223)

However, allowance was made for a revision of this position during the monitoring stage of the Strategy. In both these issues the report adhered very closely to the positions of the W.M.P.A.C. in its response to the Consultation Report.

On the other hand, and as far as the location of employment and Green Belt policies were concerned, the formulations adopted in the J.M.S.G. report followed the path suggested by the W.M.C.C., E.P.B. and E.P.C. responses to the Consultation Report. Provision was made for developments in the Middle Ring, whether peripheral or not, and it was explicitly stated that local authorities should operate Green Belt controls

> *...in such a way as to facilitate limited developments which are in the interests of the region's economy.*
>
> (J.M.S.G., 1979b, para. 228)

It is obvious that concessions were made by the various parties in order to get a single physical planning submission.

The next stage in the Updating process was to forward the two documents to a number of individuals (regional members of the British and

European Parliament) and organisations (regional local authorities, pressure groups, executive public bodies, etc.) for what was described as the formal consultations on the reports. Most of the comments made on the reports, not surprisingly, failed to grasp the multiplicity of disputes and compromises involved in the formulation of the two documents. A great many of them asked for greater detail in the Strategy and expressed fears about the possible conflicts between the recommendations for regionwide economic regeneration and the regeneration of the region's older urban areas. The absence of priorities in implementing the strategy and the ambiguity surrounding the preferred strategy was also widely deplored.

However, at a more detailed level, there were conflicting ideas about the need, or lack of need, for further provision of housing and industrial land in the Middle Ring, for a more flexible operation of Green Belt controls, etc. In relation to this last issue, for instance, the comments from both the Midlands New Towns Society and the Town and Country Planning Association expressed serious concern about developments in the Green Belt[111]. On the contrary comments from a group of academics and the Heart of England Tourist Board emphasised the potential for growth of the area around the N.E.C.[112]. As a whole, however, and with the exception of a couple of local authorities - Redditch District Council and Wolverhampton Metropolitan District Council - there was no absolute rejection of the preferred strategy.

This aspect was especially emphasised in the report which the W.M.P.A.C. submitted to the Secretary of State for the Environment in February 1980 (W.M.P.A.C., 1980). The main purpose of this document was to draw the Minister's attention to those matters which had proved controversial during the consultation, and to put forward recommendations on how, in their opinion, these issues should be tackled in the Secretary of State's response. The report

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(111) - See, for example, Town and Country Planning Association (1980).

(112) - See, for example, FOCUS (1979).

was also used to comment on various events which had occurred since the two separate reports had been forwarded to central government in the summer of 1979.

The document remarked that there was widespread agreement with the proposals previously put forward and stressed, particularly, the support given in most comments to the report on the Regional Economy. This had been forwarded also to the Secretaries of State for Industry and Employment and a reply had already been received from Sir Keith Joseph on behalf of both indicating that:

> *The Government has taken careful note of your submission. I doubt, however, whether it would be useful to discuss it in detail, especially so soon after we have announced major changes in regional and other industrial policies. I can assure you that Jim Prior and I will continue to take a close interest in the industrial development of the West Midlands Region and in the views of its representatives on this subject.*
>
> (W.M.P.A.C., 1980, para. 24)

The W.M.P.A.C. was obviously dissatisfied with this reply and suggested that

> *...a less negative attitude towards the Region by Government would be constructive.*
>
> (W.M.P.A.C., 1980, para. 28)

In most other matters, Green Belt policy included, the report simply reiterated the W.M.P.A.C. support for the recommendations put forward by the J.M.S.G. and asked the Secretary of State's explicit endorsement for these.

If clarification of ambiguous elements in the strategy was expected from the Secretary of State's response to the submission then these expectations proved to be ill-founded. The response completely ignored the Report on the Regional Economy and was extremely brief in dealing whith the J.M.S.G. document (Secretary of State for the Environment, 1980). The response claimed that many of the issues raised in the report were for local authorities to work out themselves and restricted itself to comment only on three issues: urban regeneration, location of new development and restraint policies. But even in relation to these three issues, most of what the response stated was not related to the specific proposals of the J.M.S.G. submission but rather concerned the Government's commitment to free private enterprise from 'undue

planning constraints' and encourage private investment in the strategy of urban and economic regeneration. In this regard the response was somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand it argued that, if necessary, local authorities should make additional provision of industrial land in *"peripheral areas around the edges of the conurbation"*, but, on the other hand, it stressed that proposals for amending the Green Belt boundaries would need to be very carefully justified and otherwise controls should be rigidly applied. Bearing in mind the ambiguities of the original submission and with decisions about the further provision of housing land also left to the process of review of Structure Plans, it is obvious that the strategic guidance provided by the government's response to the regional strategy was very weak indeed.

This fact was stressed in a statement issued by the W.M.P.A.C. in September 1980 which commented on the Secretary of State's response (W.M.P.A.C., 1980b). Not without some irony this statement claimed that

> *The Government's approach can be seen to retain very substantial areas of Regional Planning firmly as the responsibility of the Authorities in the Region with few regional strategic elements in which Central Government will be involved in the future.*
>
> (W.M.P.A.C., 1980b, p. 1)

And the statement went on to say that local authorities in the West Midlands had a long history of working together to resolve their problems and that they intended to continue to do so. Further the statement expressed regret at the Secretary of State's failure to respond to the economic policy recommendations put forward by the W.M.E.P.C./W.M.P.A.C. submission, and argued that his *"exhortations"* for the need to encourage private investment in the process of urban regeneration should not detract from the fact that even the *"easing of constraints"* on industry wishing to expand in situ required, in most cases, public investment. And they concluded this section of their statement by remarking that the

> *...Conference is bound to be concerned if the Government's only commitment to urban regeneration is to infer that this issue is simply one of 'choice' for Authorities.*
>
> (Idem., p. 3)

This W.M.P.A.C. statement also referred to the single specific proposal which had been put forward in the Secretary of State's response to the regional Strategy submission. This called for an early review of the requirement of land for development in the north and north-west sector of the periphery of the West Midlands conurbation in order to ensure that appropriate amounts of land be available in locations attractive to the market. In this respect the major concern of the Structure Plan authorities in the region, as voiced by the W.M.P.A.C., was that the Secretary of State might be prejuding the outcome of these reviews.

This statement from the W.M.P.A.C. led to a further response from the Secretary of State in the following month (Secretary of State, 1980b). In this letter Mr. Heseltine declared that he, at that moment, was not prepared to discuss with the W.M.P.A.C. any particular issue raised by his previous letter. However, he did offer clarification on two aspects. Firstly, he explicitly stated that he was attaching great importance to the studies on land availability in the region, being carried out by the House Builders Federation with the co-operation of local authorities. Secondly, and with much wider implications, he declared that the way the public sector could ease the work of the private sector in efforts to achieve urban regeneration could not be dealt with at the regional strategic level, rather it was a matter for individual programmes and priorities.

From this review of the process of Updating of the Regional Strategy two issues offer themselves for further consideration, namely how the review of Structure Plans is interpreting the regional strategic guidance and what were the implications, for the existing regional planning arrangements in the West Midlands, of the conflicts which occurred during the updating exercise.

II.3.8 - THE UPDATING OF THE REGIONAL STRATEGY: CONSEQUENCES

In regard to the relationships between Structure Plans and the

updated Regional Strategy it is still early days to come to a view as to how these relations will be shaped. However, there are already a number of indications in this respect. The Salop County Structure Plan was approved in February 1980 and the modifications introduced by the Secretary of State provide a first glimpse as to how the current administration is interpreting the operation of the Green Belt policy in the region (Shropshire County Council, 1980). Of particular significance is the affirmative response given to the Plan's proposals for small-scale industrial and commercial developments within the Green Belt as an important means of safeguarding the interests of rural communities. This position, if extended to the rest of the West Midlands Green Belt, would mean the adoption of a more permissive approach to the operation of Green Belt controls. However, early documents from the Warwickshire Structure Plan Review indicate that this county is adopting a stricter approach to the Green Belt policy (Warwickshire County Council, 1980). In fact this document suggests that all interim Green Belt zones should be given full status and the only sign of a more positive approach to Green Belt policy is the suggestion for the creation of 'recreation priority areas' near the edges of the conurbation.

Undoubtedly it was the process of production of the first full West Midlands County Structure Plan that provided more indications of the probable nature of strategic regional planning conflicts in the years to come. The Local Government reorganisation in 1972 meant as already mentioned, that the area corresponding to the new Metropolitan County Council was affected by planning policies contained in no less than eleven different Structure Plans. Though the lengthy modifications introduced by the Secretary of State on the six conurbation Structure Plans had gone a long way towards developing a uniform approach to planning policies, the situation was hardly satisfactory for the new local authority. After the local government reorganisation most of the staff who had been involved in the formulation of the conurbation Structure Plans stayed with the Metropolitan Districts and the new W.M.C.C. had to start

with new staff who had, arguably, far less sympathy and commitment to the existing plans than those who had produced them. Partly as a result of this fact a conflict of approaches developed between the County and the Districts with the former asserting the need for the new authority to fully assume its strategic planning responsibilities, and the latter more interested in adapting the existing Structure Plans to the new circumstances than to promoting their substitution by a new County-wide plan[113]. The conflict became apparent not only among planning officers but also among elected members.

Late in 1976 the process of preparation of the County Structure Plan Review began to gain momentum with the collection of data for the exercise. This was undertaken jointly by the County and District staff but the results of this joint effort were considered to be meagre by the County planning staff (Brundell, 1980a). Meanwhile the 1977 elections for the West Midlands County Council resulted in a Conservative Party majority. The new key elements of the Council, namely its chairman and the chairman of the Planning Committee, were former Solihull councillors and this provided the basis for a change of emphasis in the Structure Plan work. Central government in the meantime, had redirected its planning efforts towards the problems of inner cities and the new Council majority in turn shifted the emphasis of the exercise from overspill and growth to regeneration and renewal. The new Council leader presented at the first meeting of the Administration's Policy and Priorities Committee (20 June 1977) a 'Memorandum on the Inner Areas Problem' which recommended that a 'planning collar' should be placed in the Conurbation, halting green field incursions and new town developments; that a more flexible attitude should be used in relation to private investment in inner city locations and that efforts should be made to amass viable development sites in the conurbation. Further, the memorandum called for changes in the government's regional policy.

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(113) - See Morran (1980), p. 3.

During 1978 work developed in the preparation of three alternative strategies for the physical planning of the County. These were, with obvious changes of scale, similar to the physical alternatives considered in the updating of the regional strategy. A first option, Strategy 1, would leave the existing policies of the Structure Plans largely unchanged by means of an abundant supply of land, particularly in suburban areas. Strategy 2 was aimed at concentrating resources and development in the older urban areas. Selective cutbacks and additions to existing land provisions would be used to implement this alternative. Finally, Strategy 3 was planned in such a way as to direct all new housing developments to the older urban areas but directing industrial and commercial developments to what were considered to be more viable peripheral locations.

The new leader of the Council strongly favoured Strategy 2, not least after a planning conflict at Cranmore in Solihull[114]. This conflict originated in a proposal from Solihull Metropolitan District Council (Conservative controlled) to publish a plan for development of about 4,000 houses at Cranmore, a green field site which had been proposed and confirmed in the approved Solihull Structure Plan. The County Council exerted strong pressures against the development and went as far as to modify the Development Plan Scheme in order to exclude the proposal, which was eventually withdrawn with only minor developments being allowed pending the completion of the W.M.C.C. Structure Plan Review.

The alternative strategies were published late in 1978 for consultation purposes, and in addition to a 'public participation' exercise detailed consultations proceeded with officers and representatives of District Councils, D.O.E., Regional Water Authorities, Regional Health Authorities, etc. After these consultations a preferred strategy emerged combining different aspects of the three initial alternatives. Public resources were to be

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(114) - See Brundell (1981a), pp. 16 - 17.

concentrated on the regeneration of the older urban areas, particularly for housing purposes, but allowance was made to provide opportunities for private investment in peripheral areas with the aim of creating employment.

In the Spring of 1979 the preferred strategy was presented at a joint meeting of the Policy and Priorities, and Planning Committees of the Council, just before the general election. Probably because of the electoral climate major rows developed. Proposals for development in Solihull, particularly around the N.E.C. area were vehemently attacked by the Council and were, eventually, withdrawn. A number of detailed proposals were also subject to close scrutiny. One of these was the inclusion, or not, in the Draft Written Statement of a suggestion that sympathetic consideration should be given to applications for a change of use of parts of a dwelling-house for office or light industrial use. There was awareness that this would, probably, be resented by District Councils as an intrusion into their planning prerogatives but it was decided to keep the proposal in the Draft. A second bone of contention was related to the feelings among various District Authorities, namely Coventry, Dudley and Walsall, that the fact they had no special status under the Government's Inner City policies would put them at a disadvantage for urban regeneration purposes. This issue was solved by defining within the County map those areas which were to receive priority in urban regeneration (Priority Areas).

The Draft Written Statement was finally approved in July and published in October 1979 for 'public participation' and consultation. The public response was particularly sensitive to the need for more public transport and increased selectivity in highway building. This position was also shared by a number of Metropolitan District Authorities, probably reflecting a well organised and concerted activity of various pro-public transport pressure groups. The District Councils, not surprisingly, also flatly rejected the policy suggestions dealing with enterprises in dwelling-houses arguing that this would impinge on their planning prerogatives and cause

environmental and social nuisances.

But the most fundamental criticisms of the strategy was that it made insufficient housing land allocations, not least in Solihull, and that industrial land allocations seemed excessively reliant on difficult sites with insufficient choice of land in outer locations[115]. In a period of public, and private, economic uncertainties and difficulties this was seen, particularly by the D.O.E. regional office, as too risky a strategy. Interestingly enough, the District Councils, which had expressed concern over the vagueness of the Regional Strategy, considered that the Structure Plan policies were expressed in too much detail (see above, pp. 241-3).

The document finally submitted to the Secretary of State in October 1980 took into account these criticisms (West Midlands County Council, 1980). Among the most significant changes introduced in the Draft Written Statement were the introduction of a new chapter defining the extent and purpose of the Priority Areas; more housing land allocations (but not in Solihull!); some additional industrial land provision; the deletion of the policy dealing with 'mixed use' dwellings and a major revision of the Transport policy chapter reflecting, among other things, increased public financial constraints.

The next stage in the process was, of course, the Examination in Public of the submission. The way this was organised by the D.O.E. provided a clear indication of the changing nature of the government's approach to strategic planning practice. To begin with the period allocated for the exercise was less than a week which represented a significant change from the Examination in Public of the six conurbation Structure Plans which had lasted some six weeks. Secondly, only three matters (industry and commerce, housing and transport) were selected for discussion. No provision was made for discussion of issues such as Green Belt policies, recreation and tourism, etc. Thirdly, from outside the West Midlands County Council area, only the shire

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(115) - See Focus (1980) and M.N.T.S. Newsletter nº 89 (1980), p. 6.

counties and Telford Development Corporation were invited to speak at the Examination in Public. This emphasised the central government's commitment to speeding up the approval of the plan and to reduce its involvement in non-strategic issues.

The Examination in Public of the Plan held in March 1981 proved that the alterations introduced in the submitted version had not been sufficient to overcome previous criticisms concerning the level and quality of housing and industrial land allocations. In relation to industrial land provision within the Priority Areas a survey conducted by the Land Forum - involving representatives from the County and District Councils, statutory undertakings and private developers - had indicated that of the sites surveyed many had infrastructure problems, 50 per cent ownership difficulties, 33 per cent marketing problems and that 75 per cent of peripheral sites were unsuitable for development at the present time[116]. From these findings various participants - Birmingham and Dudley Metropolitan District Councils - concluded that many sites would not be available in time, if at all, and that the Strategy was risky in terms of the resources available and the prevailing economic climate. Accordingly these authorities called for further allocations of land being made outside the priority areas. Birmingham Metropolitan District Council in evidence specifically stressed the development potential of the area around the N.E.C. just outside Birmingham.

This area was, of course, very much the focal point of the discussion concerning the need to provide 'prestige sites' for development. These were defined as distinguished by the nature of development, which should be unusual in scale and purpose, infrequent in occurrence in any particular area and of regional or national importance. With the exception of Solihull District Council and the local M.P., all participants identified the area around the N.E.C. as the most suitable for these purposes. Disagreements arose, however, about the

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(116) - See D.O.E. (1981), para. 2.9, Day 1.

relative merits of setting aside a site in advance of need. The County Council representatives suggested this was not necessary but both Birmingham and Dudley Metropolitan District Councils argued in the opposite direction. The inadequacy of the industrial land provision made in the Plan and the need for a 'prestige site' had been made evident in the effort to attract to the West Midlands a Japanese car firm (Datsun-Nissan) early in 1981. Within days of this company anouncing its intention to locate a major plant in Britain to supply its European distribution network, the W.M.C.C. had identified at least three major sites, none of which had been allocated for industrial development in the Structure Plan!

A similar type of discussion developed in relation to housing land allocation. Once more the two District Councils, this time with strong support from the construction industry (for example, Bryant Homes, National Building Association) argued that the existing allocation within Priority Areas was neither adequate nor feasible. Further, Warwickshire County Council expressed its surprise that the Cranmore site previously approved in the Regional Strategy and in the Solihull Structure Plan for strategic purposes was now only being considered to cater for local needs[117]. Also in relation to the inadequate housing land allocations made in the Priority Areas, and despite earlier agreements on the levels of population overspill to shire counties (between the shire counties and the W.M.C.C.), both Hereford and Worcester and Staffordshire County Councils made it clear that they could not possibly resist housing pressures if developments within the Priority Areas did not proceed fast enough to cater for the demand[118]. Simultaneously, Telford Development Corporation expressed fears that the level of expected overspill to Salop could lead to no less than 11,000 housing sites in Telford remaining idle up until 1991.

The report of the panel conducting the Examination in Public of the

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(117) - Idem, para. 2.6, Day 3.

(118) - Idem, paras. 1.7 - 1.8, Day 4.

Structure Plan was an insubstantial document which, with two exceptions, did not recommend major modifications in the document submitted for approval (D.O.E., 1981). Thus the report recommended no changes concerning transport policy or roads, provision of industrial land (including 'prestige sites'), etc.

The two significant modifications included were: firstly, the addition of a location for about 2,400 dwellings South-East of Sutton Coldfield, and secondly, the deletion from the Written Statement of references to detailed housing densities to be used in various types of residential developments[119]. The first modification was recommended on the grounds that it would ease the overall position of Birmingham concerning the provision of housing land, would provide opportunities for the second generation of Chelmsley Wood households to continue to live close to their families and to their work and, finally, that it would relieve pressures on Green Belt both in and outside the Metropolitan County. The second recommended modification was backed by the argument that decisions concerning densities for housing developments were better dealt with in Local Plans.

The Secretary of State adopted the two major recommendations put forward in the Panel's report and agreed, also, with the Panel's views that there were no advantages in earmarking, in advance, a precise site for 'prestige development'. However, he introduced a number of further modifications related to industrial land provision and Green Belt policy[120].

Turning first to consider the modifications related to industrial land provision, the Secretary of State accepted the suggestion presented by the W.M.C.C., in the first day of the Examination in Public, for various alterations in the scale and location of industrial land provision. The net effect of the modifications introduced was to add some 20 - 40 hectares to the provision of industrial land in the Black Country part of the conurbation. Further the

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(119) - See D.O.E. (1982a), paras, 77 and 87 respectively.

(120) - Idem, paras. 3.4, 3.5, 4.2 - 4.5, 6.5.

Secretary of State hinted, though no modification was introduced in this respect, that the W.M.C.C. should be prepared to accept an expansion (up to 50 hectares) of industrial land provision in the eastern part of Birmingham, if so required. Finally, in relation to Green Belt policy, the Secretary of State introduced a modification in the Structure Plan's 'key diagram' to designate as Green Belt an area south of the Birmingham to Coventry railway line and adjacent to the N.E.C. and the Birmingham Airport.

Taken as a whole the modification introduced by the Secretary of State appears to point into two main directions. Firstly, the modifications concerning housing and industrial land provision gave implicit support to those who argued that the overall planning strategy adopted in the Structure Plan was too risky, and there was a need to release for development extra, and more easily marketable, land in particular, this is consistent with putting more emphasis on private developments. Secondly, the decisions concerning the prestige development site and, especially, the modification introduced in the Green Belt policy appeared to reflect the traditional strong Conservative commitment to restrictive Green Belt policies, even to the detriment of economic considerations.

From the above discussion it seems obvious that the W.M.C.C. Structure Plan failed to overcome many of the planning disputes associated with the updating of the Regional Strategy. Further this discussion lends support to the notion that, when shaping policies, 'territorial' political pressures were more important than adhesion to the objectives of economic regeneration in the region. The examples of housing land allocation in Solihull and the issue of industrial land provision and Green Belt controls around the N.E.C. support such an assertion. As a senior planning officer of the County Council suggested,

> *It is difficult to take seriously an apparent commitment to economic development in the face of such a decision.*
>
> (Brundell, 1981b, p. 7)

A final aspect upon which it is worth commenting concerns the influence of the Updated Regional Strategy during the process of appraisal and

approval of the Structure Plan. Contrary to what had happened during the Examination in Public of the first wave of Structure Plans for the region, the existence of an 'approved' regional strategy appears on this occurrence to have had little or no influence on the process. Neither the report of the Panel nor the statement relating to the Secretary of State's proposed modifications used the regional strategy to 'justify' or back any of their comments or recommendations. The same happened during the discussion in the Examination in Public.

This fact may suggest two alternative interpretations. Firstly, that the W.M.C.C. Structure Plan adhered rigorously to the regional strategy recommendations. Secondly, that the regional strategy is so ambiguous that it does not provide a definite point of reference to specific planning arguments. Given the nature of discussions during the Examination in Public the second interpretation seems closer to the truth.

Another major consequence of the process of updating of the regional strategy was the breakdown of the existing joint machinery for regional planning in the West Midlands. Of course, the W.M.E.P.C. had been disbanded in July 1979 when Mr. Michael Heseltine anticipated the government's 'open season' on QUANGOs. However, this move per se was not particularly significant as the practical influence of E.P.C.'s on regional strategic matters had been steadily decreasing during the 1970's. The fundamental part of the machinery was undoubtedly the joint monitoring arrangements involving regional offices of government departments through the E.P.B. and local planning authorities through the W.M.P.A.C.. However this machinery has also been dismantled in the aftermath of the Updating exercise.

The future of the J.M.S.G. was put in jeopardy as soon as it became evident that central government was not prepared to support the Regional Economy part of the Updating. The conflicts surrounding the final submission had the effect of exacerbating the existing lines of cleavage between the two main parties involved. Nowhere in the two documents submitted to the Secretary of

State or in his response to the physical planning strategy is there a reference to the continuation of the joint monitoring arrangements. Together with the ongoing changes in the W.M.P.A.C. constitution this lack of specific reference to the future of the monitoring arrangements created an ambiguous situation within the region[121]. Subsequently it became clear that central government, partly because of their general attitude to the problem and partly because of the specific experience in the region, was not interested in continuing the joint monitoring arrangements[122].

This attitude of central government was also a reflection of the evolution of the W.M.P.A.C. particularly after the W.M.E.P.C. was disbanded. As previously mentioned one of the final initiatives taken by the W.M.E.P.C. was to attempt to create a regional employment and industrial development agency (see above, p. 248-9). This attempt failed due to lack of support from the organisations contacted but there was support for the W.M.P.A.C. assuming some of the roles ascribed to the suggested new body. After the dismantling of the W.M.E.P.C. and the division of the Updating output into two separate documents, internal pressures increased for the W.M.P.A.C. to fulfill an economic advocacy role on behalf of the region. Simultaneously it was felt that with the completion of the Updating exercise there was a need for a more flexible and less cumbersome executive structure to achieve a greater degree of responsiveness to changing circumstances.

It was against this backcloth that the Executive Committee of the W.M.P.A.C. produced in March 1980 its proposals concerning the future of the W.M.P.A.C.. In short these provided for the creation of a West Midlands Strategic and Regional Planning Executive which would comprise the Leaders/ Chairmen of the five County Authorities and four other members, two from the

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(121) - Interviewed on January 1981 the Chairman of the W.M.P.A.C. admitted that he did not know whether the Joint Monitoring Arrangements were to be continued or not. Interview with Mr. Eric Whittingham, 9 January 1981.

(122) - Interview with Mr. David Saunders, 5 May 1981.

Metropolitan Districts and two from the shire Districts. This executive body, which would meet regularly as appropriate, was to receive regionwide advice from a West Midlands Regional Forum comprising representatives from all County and District Councils in the region and from the two New Town Development Corporations. This latter body was to meet once or twice a year to receive situation reports and discuss major strategic issues. An Officers Support Group comprising senior executives, planning and finance officers would act as technical advisers to both the Executive and the Forum and in addition there would be a small permanent technical secretariat to progress and integrate the necessary technical work.

In the summer of 1980 these proposals were discussed by the constituent authorities. The principal amendment to the original proposals came from the W.M.C.C. which suggested that, in order to emphasise the strategic planning responsibilities of the counties, membership of the Executive should be restricted to one member from each of the five County Councils in the West Midlands Region. According to these proposals, the five county councils were to be made responsible for establishing firm and formal consultation arrangements with the Districts, and the Executive would have powers to co-opt for specific purposes representatives from appropriate District Councils or other regional bodies.

The original proposals and the alterations suggested to them were discussed at what was described as a 'stormy meeting' of the W.M.P.A.C. in October 1980[123]. The suggestion to reduce the Executive to five members was eventually approved, the Forum was renamed the West Midlands Authorities Regional Conference and a decision was taken to disband the W.M.P.A.C. by 31 March 1981 and to bring the new organisation into force on the first of April 1981. These proposals were approved despite strong protests from some Metropolitan District Councils and a number of individuals who argued that the

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(123) - See Planning 390, 17 October 1980, p. 3.

W.M.P.A.C. was downgrading its commitment to land use planning, on which it had achieved some measure of success in the past, to assume increasingly the role of an economic pressure group on which its track record was rather poor[124]. Despite these disagreements there were initial hopes that these proposals would be implemented and proved successful. One month later, the Assistant Executive of the Metropolitan County Council told an R.S.A. Conference of his optimism concerning the future of regional planning in the West Midlands based on these arrangements (Penn, 1980). He noted, though, that the sucess of these arrangements would depend both on the degree of co-operation established between the County Councils and their District Councils and on the attitude of central government to the new planning arrangements.

The position of central government was soon made clear by means of two Ministerial letters addressed to the last meeting of the W.M.P.A.C. held in February 1981[125]. The Secretary of State for the Environment indicated that in the future the planning role of local authorities should be limited to land-use issues. On behalf of the Department of Industry, in turn, Viscount Trenchard suggested that central government was a better judge of the wisdom of economic policies than local authorities. So, even before its constitution was formally approved, the new body lost a major battle in its attempt to secure recognition and support.

As far as co-operation between Counties and Districts in the new planning arrangements are concerned the situation has also not developed smoothly. Even before the new W.M.A.R.C. held its first conference, all Metropolitan Districts with the exception of Coventry indicated that they did not wish to join the new arrangements. At the inaugural meeting held at Worcester on the 7th April 1981, further problems arose. In fact the shire District Councils staged a 'constitutional coup' according to which the members

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(124) - Interview with Mr. Walter Stranz, 9 December 1980.

(125) - See Planning 405, 13 February 1981, p. 12.

of the Executive would be enlarged to include one representative of a District Council from each of the five counties. The Officers' Support Group membership was also to see its membership enlarged to accommodate Districts' representatives.

Failure to agree to these proposals at the meeting led to them being circulated to all local authorities asking whether they were in agreement with the amendments approved at the meeting and willing to join the new machinery with the revised constitution. Of the Metropolitan District Councils only Coventry expressed support for the revised proposals. The County Councils were, of course, against them as they would involve too many authorities at the executive level and give District Councils a decisive say in its decisions. During the summer of 1981 the Counties decided therefore to dissociate themselves from the W.M.A.R.C. and establish their own association. Staffordshire County Council was keen in involving Chambers of Commerce and the Trades Union Congress in the new body which would perform primarily an advocacy role on economic and employment matters[126]. The final solution, however, contemplated only membership alterations to the W.M.P.A.C. original proposals.

The constitution of the new venture, the West Midlands Forum of County Councils for Strategic and Regional Planning, was approved at a meeting at Stafford, on September 1981, of representatives of the five counties in the West Midlands region[127]. Membershipe of the Forum was restricted to three representatives from each of the five County Councils, though it was entitled to invite to meetings or to co-opt for specific issues additional representatives from the District Councils or other regional bodies. Liaison with the Districts was to be the responsibility of the five County Councils which, for these purposes, were to establish detailed arrangements with the District Authorities.

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(126) - See Birmingham Post, 11 August 1981.

(127) - At the time Warwickshire County Council was still undecided of whether or not to participate in the new arrangements. Later in November 1981 it decided to join.

Further it was decided to hold, annually, a meeting to which all the local planning authorities in the West Midlands Region would be invited. Resolutions passed at this meeting were to be presented at subsequent meetings of the Forum for its consideration.

The objectives of the Forum reflected clearly the bias towards an economic advocacy role. The initial proposals listed as objectives:

a) To take such steps as are necessary to secure the well being of the inhabitants of the West Midlands region and the improvement of its economy, and for this purpose to receive and disseminate views and information as a basis for a regional view.

b) To ensure that a regional voice is expressed within and beyond the West Midlands Region, including the E.E.C.

c) To consider the strategic, physical, transportation and economic planning issues of the region and to be responsive to changes in the West Midlands' regional circumstances.

d) To take such initiatives as are necessary to secure these objectives, either through the policies of the five County Councils or where appropriate, in liaison with other organisations, Government Departments, or planning authorities.

A last minute amendment introduced at the Stafford meeting also tied the Forum to the production, monitoring and updating of the West Midlands Regional Strategy. Whether the Forum will be able to effectively discharge its wide ranging and ambitious functions remains yet to be seen.

II.3.9 - SUMMARY

When, in 1976, the W.M.P.A.C. and the Secretary of State for the Environment decided to Update and Roll Forward the West Midlands Regional Strategy both parties were aiming for the exercise to be rapidly concluded in order to provide a solid basis for the second wave of Structure Plans

presentations in the region.

In the event things turned out to be quite different from what was expected. Firstly, instead of lasting for no more than one and a half years the exercise took in fact more than three years up to the approval of the updated strategy. Secondly, the updated regional strategy - which has, in fact, little in common with A Developing Strategy for the West Midlands - neither seems to have come to terms with the major problems affecting the region nor does it appear to offer a sufficiently clearcut point of reference for it to be used in the solution of eventual plannig disputes between local authorities or between these and central government. Thirdly, as a result of the conflicts which developed during the exercise (and the overall attitude of the Conservative government concerning regional planning) the joint arrangements (comprising central and local government) for regional planning in the West Midlands region were dismantled immediately after the publication of the updated regional strategy.

Almost simultaneously with this development the W.M.P.A.C., mainly as a consequence of conflicts between the Metropolitan County and Districts, decided to cease its activities. Eventually a new body, the West Midlands Forum of County Councils for Strategic and Regional Planning, was formed, this time only with County Councils being represented in its decision-making structures. This body, however, is now seen mainly as having a role of advocacy on behalf of the region with regional planning functions being given secondary importance.

All in all, it is clear that by the end of the period of analysis regional planning in the West Midlands was in a much worse shape than at the beginning of the period. Moreover the immediate prospects do not augur well for the further development of regional planning.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Until the early 1970s regional planning practice in the West Midlands region was dominated by one single question, namely, how to accommodate demographic and economic growth in the region without adding to the problems of urban congestion in its central conurbation. Moreover, not only was regional planning practice almost exclusively concerned with a particular question but also attempts to deal with that question were based on an invariant set of planning principles. In broad terms, these prescribed the containment of the conurbation's physical outward expansion, by means of a Green Belt, and the overspill of industry and population to locations beyond that Green Belt.

These principles expressed, in the first instance, in the West Midlands Plan (M.T.C.P., 1948) set the scene for most planning developments in the region during the following two decades. Throughout the 1950s, and most of the 1960s, the attempt to translate these principles into action led to a succession of planning conflicts between 'exporting' local authorities in the conurbation (in Birmingham in particular) and 'receiving' local authorities in the shire counties. This succession of conflicts did not result, however, in substantial progress being made in the planned dispersal of people and jobs.

The designation of two New Towns in the region (Dawley/Telford and Redditch) during the first half of the 1960s was an attempt to create instruments for increasing the pace of 'overspill'. Though this development reflected a change in emphasis, in terms of policy intruments, it did not constitute a departure from the containment and overspill planning framework. Similarly, the arguments developed around the West Midlands - A Regional Study (D.E.A., 1965) and Patterns of Growth (W.M.E.P.C., 1967) also did not confront the existing planning prescription. The main concern of these arguments was with the location of the developments at which planned overspill should occur rather than with the broad features of the 'regional planning prescription' being used in the

region.

A Developing Strategy for the West Midlands (W.M.R.S., 1971) took this trend a stage further to become the ultimate example of the practical irrelevance of most plan-making in the West Midlands. Based on overoptimistic assumptions and forecasts of demographic and economic growth, the whole exercise addressed the problem of how to accommodate a long-term potential growth that more cautious studies (such as the Economic Appraisal (W.M.E.P.C., 1971) were already arguing would not materialize. After a long period of discussion the final outcome of the exercise was reduced to the confirmation of already committed, and partly built, overspill developments without any substantial revision of the existing regional planning principles (W.M.P.A.C., 1974).

Throughout this period regional planning in the West Midlands was mainly concerned with land-use matters. The effects of the containment-overspill prescription on the region's economic fortunes and on the spatial patterns of regional deprivation were, in practical terms, totally overlooked. These issues would only surface as important regional planning questions in the process of Updating and Rolling Forward of the West Midlands Regional Strategy (J.M.S.G., 1979, W.M.P.A.C. and W.M.E.P.C., 1979). This process also gave rise to the first fundamental challange to the principles on which regional planning practice in the West Midlands had been based. However, the final outcome of this process fell short of providing an operational alternative as it was marked by severe ambiguities.

Ambiguity concerning regional planning outputs in the West Midlands region was more often than not the result of two interrelated elements. Firstly, the existence of basic disagreements between the institutional actors (local authorities, central government departments, etc) more directly involved in the regional planning process. Secondly, there was the lack of clearly defined responsibilities and of a strong locus of power with capacity to unilaterally define and carry through a particular regional planning strategy. The former element related to the origins of localist and central-local government

conflicts. The latter meant that these conflicts, instead of being decided in a clearcut way, often resulted in ambiguous, and unstable, compromises. Two examples will serve to illustrate these statements.

The origins of A Developing Strategy for the West Midlands (W.M.R.S., 1971) lay in an invitation made by the Minister of Housing and Local Government to the W.M.P.A.C., following the uproar generated by the W.M.E.P.C.'s Patterns of Growth (W.M.E.P.C., 1967) which local authorities interpreted as unwarranted interference with their planning responsibilities. Thus, a central-local conflict lay at the roots of the process. However, from the onset, it was also apparent that localist conflicts would create most of the obstacles in the smooth development of the process. Recognition of the potential difficulties was so acute that local authorities agreed, through the W.M.P.A.C., to let the regional planning process unfold with no direct intervention on their part. Even this decision, however, proved insufficient to overcome the effects of localist conflicts.

In the first place, the reluctance of some local authorities, to admit that there would be no sizeable economic and, to a lesser extent, demographic growth in their areas in the foreseable future, led to the adoption of overoptimistic assumptions and forecasts. Secondly, the evaluation of alternative strategies, and the selection of the 'preferred strategy' were significantly distorted by the political necessity of allocating overspill amongst the various local authorities, without putting an excessive burden on any of them, and without implying any disbelief in the existing committed schemes.

This type of approach gave rise to a somewhat paradoxical situation. On the one hand, the long term proposals were clearly out of touch with reality as they were based on overoptimistic growth assumptions and forecasts. On the other hand, the short-medium term proposals amounted to little more than a restatement of commitment to existing overspill schemes. In the end central government intervention led to the long-term proposals being abandonned, and the substantive output of the whole exercise was restricted to those proposals which were both

acceptable to central government, and compatible with the results of localist bargaining.

Given this perspective it may be argued that the single most important result from the seven-year long process leading to the approval of A Developing Strategy for the West Midlands (W.M.P.A.C., 1974) in 1974 was the creation of a commitment to a continuous process of regional planning. This commitment was translated into the establishment of machinery for the monitoring and reviewing of the regional strategy involving central government and local authorities in the region through the W.M.P.A.C.. However, such a statement needs to be qualified. The creation of these arrangements, against a background of disagreements between local authorities, can be considered as instrumental in making them, individually or as a whole (through the W.M.P.A.C.), more vulnerable to central government interventions in the early stages of the regional planning process, that is before the submission of the planning documents for approval.

This line of argument finds some support in the sequence of events during the updating and rolling forward of the West Midlands regional strategy (J.M.S.G., 1979; W.M.E.P.C. and W.M.P.A.C., 1979). Firstly, the commitment of central government to the joint machinery proved to be minimal, when compared with the need to avoid interdepartmental conflicts and confrontation with whitehall policies. Secondly, physical planning proposals were subjected to extensive rephrasing in order that they fitted in with the ideological stance of the political party in power.

It is important to note, however, that any increase in the leverage central government might have over the early stages of the regional planning process could only result in one of two situations. One the one hand, if central government, especially the Department with responsibilities for regional planning, adopted an interventionist attitude, the outputs from the regional planning process would, more likely than not, reflect its attitude towards the planning of the region. On the other hand, if central government adopted a position of placing itself at a distance from the process then the outputs would be more

likely to assume characteristics of the lowest common denominator vis-à-vis the various positions confronted. To a large extent the outputs of the updating and rolling forward of the West Midlands regional strategy corresponded to the latter situation.

The two alternatives just considered provide the backcloth against which it is necessary to assess the balance of the relations between central and local government in the field of regional planning. In the particular case of the West Midlands, the balance of these relations has been particularly unstable, a fact associated with the different positions central government has adopted in relation to regional planning in the West Midlands, and indeed elsewhere in England. Up until the early 1960s, and with the exception of a brief period in the second half of the 1940s, central government retreated from involvement in regional planning in the West Midlands. This was followed by a period of strong intervention from the early to mid 1960s. After that, however, central government retreated, yet again, from responsibility for the initial stages of the regional planning process in the region. It was only when it became apparent, in the early 1970s, that local authorities were not able to agree among themselves about a sensible approach to the region's problems that central government decided to step in, yet again. This interventionist stance was, however, to be later abandonned at the end of the decade.

These concluding remarks have so far emphasised the importance of 'localist' and 'central-local' government relations, and conflicts, in regional planning practice in the West Midlands. Although this emphasis is totally justified, it would be a double error to restrict the analysis to these two dimensions of influence on regional planning practice. It is first of all necessary to bear in mind that, in England, both central and local government are representative, that is to say, organised in accordance with constitutional and democratic principles (see above, pp.70-80). Given this fact relations and conflicts between local authorities, or between them and central government, reflect conflicts between different groups in civil society. 'Localist' and

'central-local' conflicts therefore take place not only within the state apparatus but also within civil society. Secondly, conflicts within the state apparatus develop not only between different local authorities and between local authorities and central government but also, for example, between different central government departments even between different sub-groups within a single central government department. Any appropriate analysis of regional planning practice will have to take into account these aspects as well as those associated with local and central-local government relations and conflicts.

Given this perspective, Part III of this thesis is concerned with critically assessing one type of approach to regional planning practice which attempts to consider, simultaneously, all these aspects - this is the organisational approach to regional planning.

PART III

REGIONAL PLANNING AND
ORGANISATIONAL ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

This Part of the thesis has two major objectives. First of all, it aims to critically assess the rationale and conclusions of 'conventional' organisational approaches to regional planning. Secondly, it seeks to identify the basis on which a satisfactory alternative (political-organisational) to those approaches can be established. As byproducts of these tasks the text deals with alternative ways of conceptualising the operation of the state admnistrative apparatus and presents a critique of the theoretical, methodological and practical shortcomings of conventional organisational, and inter-organisational, analysis.

Earlier in this thesis it was argued that the mechanisms through which the state operates determine, in part at least, what problemes are handled, what type of policies are put forward to tackle them and what chances these policies have of being implemented. (see above, Part I, ch 1). Different theorisations of these mechanisms suggest different interpretations of the characteristics and rates of achievement of the various forms of state activity. Given this perspective, an adequate understanding of the mechanisms through which the poltical-admnistrative system operates in England is of crucial importance in order to interpret the characteristics and evolution of regional planning in this country.

After briefly presenting Weber's ideal-type of bureaucracy, it is contended in Chapter III.1 that the discovery of the existence of bureaucratic dysfunctions within the political-admnistrative apparatus, indicated the need to analyse the operation of that machinery with the help of concepts and theories developed in the field of inter-organisational analysis.

The most influential study of regional planning in England from an inter-organisational perspective was undertaken by Friend et. al. (1974). Although that study was not specifically concerned with regional planning, but rather with public planning in general, its theoretical assumptions and

conclusions were to significantly influence a whole series of research studies which adopted an inter-organisational approach to regional planning problems. Most of these research studies were part of an extensive research programme on regional planning spousored by the Department of Environment (D.O.E.) during the second half of the 1970s. In Chapter III. 2 a detailed analysis is presented of both the work of Friend et. al. (1974) and of the D.O.E. sponsored research studies.

Chapter III. 3 builds on the specific criticisms presented in the previous chapter in order to develop a critique of 'conventional' inter--organisational approaches to regional planning in particular, and 'conventional' organisational analysis in general. This critique comprises three broad dimensions: theoretical, methodological and practical.

Finally, Chapter III. 4 establishes the basis of a critical alternative (political-organisational) to the inter-organisational approach to regional planning. This task is undertaken in three consecutive stages: first, the points of criticism levelled at conventional inter-organisational approaches to regional planning are briefly summarised; second, the methodological, theoretical and practical concerns which must preside over an adequate approach are outlined; third, an account is presented of the attempt made by Benson (1980) to develop an analytical framework for the comparative study of policy sectors.

III.1 - FROM BUREAUCRACY TO INTER-ORGANISATIONAL CO-ORDINATION

Many of the attempts to anlyse the political-administrative apparatus of the modern state use Max Weber's ideal-type of bureaucratic organisation as a starting point. It is therefore appropriate to initiate this discussion by introducing the basic features of Weber's theoretical construct.

According to Albrow (1970), Weber's ideal-type of bureaucratic organisation, comprises a number of characteristics, namely:

a) the staff members are personally free, observing only the impersonal duties of their offices;

b) there is a clear hierarchy of offices;

c) the functions of the offices are clearly specified;

d) officials are selected on the basis of professional qualifications, ideally substantiated by a diploma gained through examination;

e) officials are appointed on the basis of a contract;

f) there is a career structure and promotion is possible either by seniority or merit, and according to the judgement of superiors.

g) officials are subject to a unified control and disciplinary system.

Thus, the ideal type of bureaucracy involves both a number of organisational features (hierarchy, specialisation, professionalisation, etc.) and a specific system of action based on what Weber (1947) calls 'the spirit of impersonal formal rationality'. This system of action is based upon the treatment of issues according to calculable rules and without regard to individual persons. The speed and predictability with which rules are applied is enhanced by specialisation, whilst uniformity is increased by referring complicated cases to officials at the top of the admnistrative hiererchy. Together these elements are seen by Weber as imparting rationality and efficiency in the attainment of organisational objectives and accounting for the technical

superiority of bureaucracies over any other form of organisation. As Therborn (1980) justly remarks, Weber's ideal type of bureaucracy takes as given both the content and the enforcement of the rules to be applied. It postulates a monocratic type of organisation in which all actors are subject to, and comply with, a body of impersonal rules codified in a legal or law-like code. This set of rules, by virtue of the very structure of the organisation, cannot be defined either by the head of the organisation or by any other of its members. The first situation would amount to a personalisation of the rules; the second would constitute a violation of the strict hierarchical arrangements. Both would be contrary to fundamental structural characteristics of the ideal type. The rules have, therefore, to be defined externally to the bureaucratic organisation.

Crozier (1963) provides a possible explanation of how these rules are defined. In his analysis of the French political-administrative apparatus, he conceptualises this apparatus as constituted by three interdependent, but distinct, sub-systems:

a) the administrative sub-system (bureaucracy) - which provides answers to problems that can be tackled by means of existing rules and programmes;

b) the deliberative or political sub-system - which takes on board those problems that cannot be tackled through existing rules or programmes; and

c) the extra-legal or revolutionary sub-system - which provides answers to problems and demands which overflow, or question, the role of the political sub-system.

In this scheme, the political sub-system is seen as providing the rules and impetus for change of the administrative sub-system as this, by its very nature, is unable to adapt to new situations.

> *Centralised bureaucracies are omnipotent at the routine level but powerless to cope with change.*
>
> (Crozier, 1963, p. 304)*

However, as Crozier himself recognised in later works, this scheme fails to take into due consideration the dynamics of change (technological, economic, social, political) in modern societies. In these societies, to use Crozier's terminology, the political sub-systems are overloaded with participants and demands and they have increasing difficulty in mastering the very complexity which is the natural result of their economic growth and socio-political development (Crozier, Huntington and Watanuki, 1975). As a result of these developments, the political subsystem appears increasingly unable to provide the administrative subsystem with adequate operational rules. This inability, in turn, tends to enhance the relative importance of the admininstrative and extra-legal subsystem and to encourage the development of phenomena such as 'personalisation of power' and 'corporatism' (Crozier, 1979).

It is not essential for the purposes of this thesis to follow-up this particular interpretation of the changing nature of relations between the various parts of the political-administrative apparatus. It seems more important to go back and consider two aspects associated with the analysis of the state administrative apparatus as a bureaucratic organisation. In this respect it is first necessary to consider to what extent existing state administrative apparatuses display the structural and operational characteristics portrayed in Weber's ideal type of bureaucracy? Second, does bureaucracy always correspond to the most efficient form of organisation?[2]

(2) - The methodological and theoretical status of ideal-types are the object of much misunderstandings . It is, therefore, important to say a few words about these issues here. According to Mouzelis (1975) the formulation of ideal-types involves:

a) selecting empirical data and then conceptualising them; this selection is determined by the interest of finding typical aspects of a certain type of phenomenon and may involve an inductive process of considering real phenomena;

b) the selected features are exaggerated to their logical extreme; for example, in the ideal type of bureaucracy, formal rules are held to cover each and every possible contingency although in reality, this is never the case;

c) the selection and exaggeration of these features is done in such a way that the complete construct has an interconnected logical consistency and must be empirically possible.

(v.s.)

According to Weber's ideal-type of bureaucracy, administrative outputs can be seen as results of the articulation of 'externally defined rules' with the organisation's structural and operational features. Thus, they are predictable and can be adequately understood through the joint consideration of these three elements. However, many tasks of the modern state cannot be adequately handled by means of general regulative legislation followed by bureaucratic rule-application. As Offe (1975) notes, for example, bureaucracy does not provides an adequate mode of organising the state administrative apparatus in relation to non-allocative areas of state intervention (see above, pp. 45-51). Thus, associated with the expansion of non-allocative forms of state activity went a new mode of organising the state administrative apparatus.

This new mode of state organisation is characterised, also, by specialisation, impersonality and stratified monopolisation of intellectual knowledge by professionals. Though it does not rely to the same degree upon calculable rules and fixed hierarchies. Its rationality is substantive rather than procedural; and,

> *... instead of juridical knowledge, it promotes technical and scientific expertise applied with discretion and consideration of actual effects, rather than with calculable legal precision.*
>
> (Therborn, 1980, p. 54)

Thus the concept of ideal-type can be seen as the best illustration of Weber's methodological principles according to which only partial and one-sided explanations of social phenomena, developed through 'logical purification' of complex social phenomena, are ever possible (Saunders, 1981). From this perspective, if a 'real bureaucracy' does not display the structural or operational features of Weber's ideal-type, it cannot be inferred that this is an inappropriate concept for its study. The only legitimate conclusion is that the organisation does not conform with the ideal-type. As Mouzelis, yet again, argues:

> *For Weber, the ideal type is a conceptual tool which helps us to understand better social phenomena by analysing the discrepancy between their ideal form and their concrete state. In our case the problem should be to compare the ideal type of bureaucracy with a real administration, find out the differences and try to explain them.... So the ideal type, in any case, cannot be a substitute for theory and model building in the social sciences.*
>
> (Mouzelis, 1975, p. 48)

This new mode of organising the state administrative apparatus, which Therborn (1980) calls 'managerial technocracy' did not replace the legal--bureaucratic one. The two coexist, often in uneasy relationships of conflicting competence, procedure and status. The stable admnistrative hiererchy characteristic of bureaucratic organisations, is often bypassed by new state agencies created to deal with particular problems outside the existing bureaucratic machinery.[3] Further, the authority of state officials, which in the bureaucratic ideal-type is strictly attached to positions, is challenged by a new authority claim based on expertise. This situation tends to reinforce existing cleavages and contradictions both within the state administrative apparatus, and between this and its social context (Benson, 1973).

However, it is not only the coexistence of two different organising principles that makes the equation between state admnistrative apparatus and gigantic bureaucratic organisation totally inappropriate. The empirical analysis of public 'bureaucracies' and their comparison with Weber's ideal-type has highlighted the practical importance of a number of organisational phenomena excluded from the ideal-type. Further, it has revealed the potentially contradictory, and inefficient, character of some the features which were supposed to justify Weber's claim of the supreme technical advantages of bureaucracies. There is no need, here, to comprehensively summarise what Albrow (1970) has referred to as 'the debate with Weber'. This has been aptly done by, inter alios, Albrow (1970) himself, Crozier (1963) and Mouzelis (1975). Taking advantage of this fact, it seems possible to concentrate the discussion on a few selected issues with more relevance to this thesis.

In Weber's ideal-type of bureaucratic organisation, individuals were

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(3) - The administrative innovations (creation of the D.E.A., I.R.C., E.P.C.'s and E.P.B.'s) introduced by the Labour Governments in the mid 1960's can all be seen as part of a wider attempt to 'modernise' the British state apparatus (Shanks, 1967). According to authors such as Jessop (1979) and Nairn (1977), the failure of these innovations and the maintenance of an 'archaic state' (Nairn, 1977, p. 21) must be seen, in part at least, as responsible for the continuing slow and cumulative decline of the British economy.

considered as a sort of automata acting in a predictable and consistent way - according to predefined and impersonal rules - within a monocratic authoritarian structure. This type of approach excluded behavioural considerations from the study of organisational structuring and action. However, as authors such as Gouldner (1954) and Merton (1947) show, individual behaviour within bureaucracies is, in part at least, guided by personal values and feelings, rather than by what is defined by Weber as the 'spirit of personal formal rationality'. Further, this fact is not only unavoidable but, also, indispensable. The practical impossibility of devising rules and procedures for every possible eventuality creates the need for individuals to make decisions and act outside existing rules and procedures. The strict adherence to existing rules and the upward reference of all cases which did not fall within existing rules and routines would, necessarily, reduce organisational efficiency or even result in its paralysis.

The fact that individuals do make decisions outside, and eventually against, the existing rules and, therefore, outside the organisation's formal structure, also means that to a network of formal relationships within the organisation is always attached a network of informal relations (Baestlein et al, 1978). The existence of these informal networks makes necessary the consideration of human relations in any study of organisational phenomena. The formal adoption of a course of action cannot be seen as a sufficient condition for its implementation as, for example, hierarchical controls can be bypassed by informal processes of passive disobedience (for example, strict observance of rules) and control over information (Scharpf, 1978).

A second aspect of 'the debate with Weber' worth referring to in the context of this study concerns Weber's conception of bureaucracies as monolithic entities in correspondence with a single set of organisational goals. Used in relation to organisations of considerable scale - for example, public 'bureaucracies' - this idea is of dubious validity. Crozier (1963), for instance, pointed out that the functional and vertical differentiation within organisations, leading to the isolation of different sub-groups, stimulates the development of

partial goals specific to the sub-units concerned. This issue is analysed by Haynes (1980) according to two dimensions: the vertical and the lateral.

The vertical dimension is associated with the hierarchical differentiation within the organisation, and involves the displacement of goals between the organisation as a whole and the various sub-units which constitute lateral strata within the hierarchical pyramid. The lateral dimension of goal displacement is linked with functional specialisation and differentiation within the organisation and the creation of functionally specialised sub-units or departments. As the workload within large organisations increases both in size and diversity, so delegation of decision-making powers to specialised sub-units becomes unavoidable. These sub-units, in order to operate, require a considerable degree of discretion in the use of existing organisational rules and tend to develop their own goals. What is in the best interests of the organisation as a whole, that is to say of its dominant group(s), may be detrimental to the dominant group in the sub-unit, and vice-versa.

> *Thus not only do organisational sub-units have the capability for pursuing their own goals but they often have the incentive for so doing.*
>
> (Haynes, 1980, p. 20)

A typical expression of this problem of displacement of goals is associated with the constitution of organisational 'feuds' and 'clans' linked with individual and group attempts to obtain privileges (for example, extra resources) for their organisation, as a form of magnifying their own importance.[4] These individual or group attempts at social promotion are often based on Potemkin effects, which clearly constitute a mark of inefficiency.[5]

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(4) - See Poulantzas (1978), especially pp. 185 - 196.

(5) - Gregory Potemkin was a Russian nobleman, governor of various provinces of the Russian Empire and a protegé of Catherine II. During one of the Empress' visits to inspect the provinces under his control, and in order to create the impression of great progress, he arranged for gigantic cardboard buildings and public works to be installed on the banks of the river through which the Empress would sail during the visit. This anecdote is told by Hilhorst (1971).

The consideration of these organisational phenomena (action outside rules, existence of informal decision networks, goal displacement) when analysing processes of public planning, involving more than one organisation, has a number of important implications. The possibility that different organisations pursue in the process different, and potentially contradictory, objectives cannot be ruled out by fiat. In these circumstances, the use of Faludi's (1973) rational model of decision making to analyse the process is unlikely to prove very helpful. Further, the analysis of the process cannot be reduced to the study of their formal aspects. It cannot be assumed, for example, that the existence of a hierarchical structure of command will always secure the compliance of the lower levels to the upper levels of the hierarchical pyramid. Moreover, once it is accepted that the organisational context of public planning cannot be treated as a problem of hierarchical ordering; and that the planning process cannot be adequately understood in terms of the rational model of decision making, then it becomes necessary to scrutinise the internal mechanisms of the planning process. In these circumstances, it may seem more appropriate to approach processes of public planning from a different starting point than the one offered by the ideal-type of bureaucracy.

An alternative is to consider these processes in inter-organisational terms (Friend, Power and Yewlett, 1974). From this perspective, the decision system is seen as disaggregated into a collection of sub-systems with limited tasks, competences and resources, where the relatively independent participants possess different bits of information, represent different interests, and pursue separate, potentially conflicting courses of action (Hanf, 1978). Where the bureaucracy ideal-type emphasised unity, cohesion and consensus, the inter-organisational perspective appears to stress fragmentation, competition and conflict.

In fact, as a number of authors in this school of thought argue, the result of a single consistent policy pursued by all organisations is one of the least probable outcomes of planning processes involving multiorganisational

systems (Bish, 1978; Scharpf, Reissert and Schnabel, 1978). In these circumstances the fundamental issue becomes how to provide for effective co-ordination within the network of organisations concerned.

As Hanf (1978) notes, adequate co-ordination is unlikely to stem from the voluntary actions of individual organisations. There is, therefore, a need for some form of 'systemic power' (Lehman, 1969), that is, for some organisational mechanism able to overcome the resistance of individual organisations to the setting of collective goals. However, the creation of effective co-ordinating mechanisms is problematic as in most cases

> ... *interorganisational coordination itself depends in the last analysis, on the willigness of the originally reluctant parties 'voluntarily' to consent to the control measures necessary.*
>
> (Hanf, 1978, p. 14)

A crucial element in this respect relates to the nature of the divergences, and conflicts, between the organisations and actors involved. This is an issue which will figure prominently in the following analysis of inter-organisational approaches to regional planning.

III. 2. REGIONAL PLANNING - THE INTER-ORGANISATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

The origins of the current interest in the use of interorganisational approaches to study regional planning practice can be traced back to the publication, in 1969, of the results of an in-depth study of the decision-making processes of Coventry City Council (Friend and Jessop, 1969).

Curiously, that study was neither directly concerned with regional planning nor with inter-organisational planning processes. However by urging an integrated system of decision-making - corporate planning - to be used for running the affairs of local authorities, it left open the question of how to proceed in situations where no single locus of power existed. Stringer (1967) has suggested that in public policy matters this situation should be regarded as not so much the exception as the rule and Friend and Hunter (1970) enlarge on this theme in their analysis of the multi-organisational aspects of decision-making in the planned expansion of towns. It was the follow-up to this latter study which gave rise to what is certainly the best known and most influential example of the use of organisational analysis in the field of regional planning (Friend, Power and Yewlett, 1974).

III. 2.1. PUBLIC PLANNING - THE INTER-CORPORATE DIMENSION

Starting with a detailed analysis of the decision-making processes involved in the development of the Droitwich (Worcestershire) Town Development Scheme, the study progressively extended its scope to cover broader aspects of regional planning practice in the West Midlands. More generally, the study aimed to examine the mechanisms of public planning of which regional planning, of course, is only one example. The central thesis of the work was that in the field of regional planning, and public planning in general,

> *Corporate planning is not enough ... the making of strategic decisions must be considered not merely as a corporate but also as an interorganisational process.*
> (Friend, Power and Yewlett, 1974, p. xxi)

The case of Droitwich was similar in substance to other Town Development Schemes associated with the West Midlands containment-overspill problem. Though the processes leading to the T.D.S. agreement and the institutional arrangements devised to carry it through were specific to the Droitwich case, the authors were, certainly, correct in arguing that many of the difficulties, uncertainties and conflicts which had to be faced at Droitwich were also to be found in many other public planning processes and situations.

The core of the research focussed on the decision-making processes within the organisational arrangements - Droitwich Development Committee - devised to carry out the town development (Figure 18). This is defined as a multi-organisation, after Stringer (1967), who had used this word to refer to organisations which are formed by a set of parts of several organisations, brought together through the interaction of individuals in the performance of a common task. The analysis involved not only exploring the interrelationships between the various constituent parts of the multi-organisation but also between them, individually or as a group, and the organisations and individuals with which transactions were established in the process of carrying out the town development.

The issues of road construction, housing policy, industrial development, central area redevelopment, neighbourhood improvement and various supporting services provided for the community by more specialised agencies were analysed in detail, in order to systematise the difficulties faced, and the human and organisational relations involved, in the problem solving process. From these analyses, a number of general propositions about public planning were derived. These propositions are summarised below.

a) Exploratory activities which cut across the boundaries between agencies form an inescapable feature of public planning. In the context of centralised systems of co-ordination and control, the

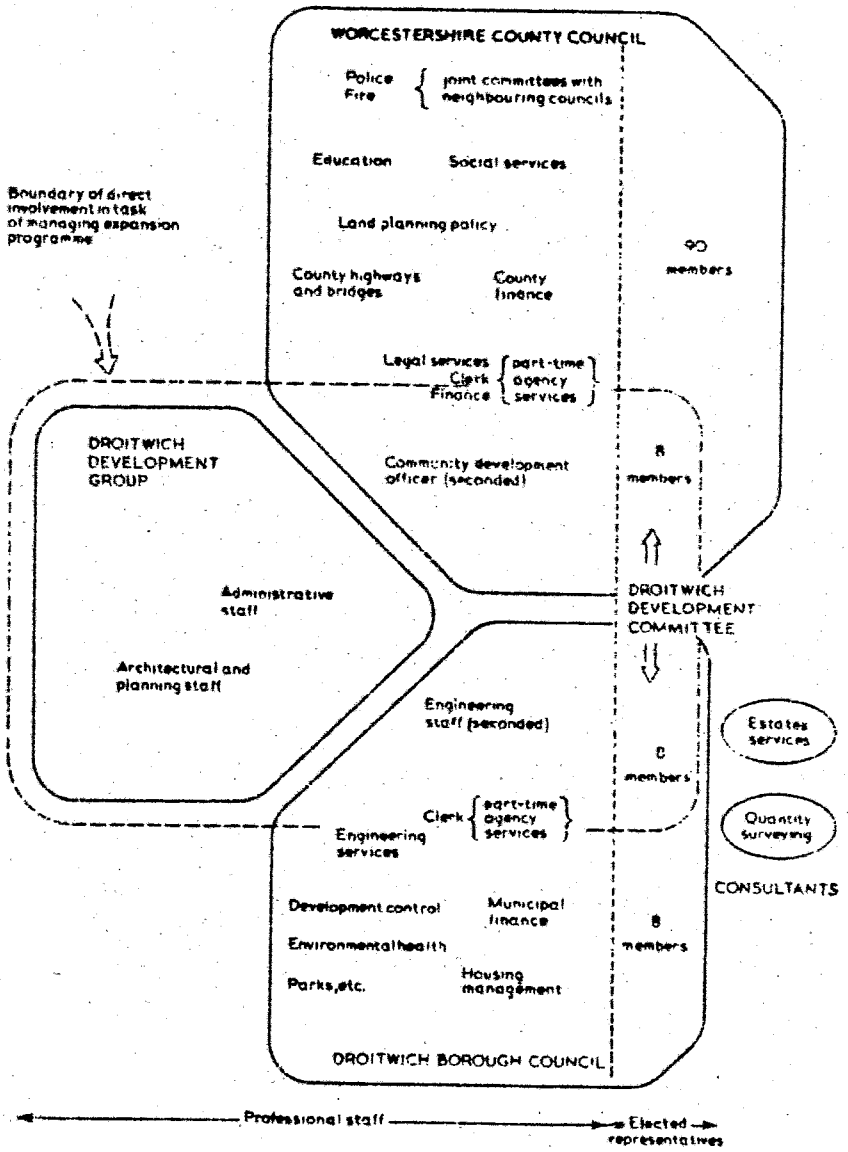

Fig. 18: Multiorganisational Structure of Droitwich Town Development Scheme

(source: Friend et al (1974), Fig. 23)

need for inter-organisational policy-making derives from the fact that distortions are likely to arise from any attempt to apply controls that do not match the complexity of local problem situations. Outside hierarchical control contexts, inter-organisational policy-making may derive from situations when problems transcend the territorial or functional boundaries of agencies, or from a perception of mutual interest on the part of the actors locally involved.

b) As resources for decision-making are finite, communications between actors involved in complex problem situations are necessarily initiated on a selective basis. The mobilisation and management of decision links in an intelligently selective way depends on the capacity to appreciate both the structure of problem situations and the structure of organisational and political relations that surround them - reticulist judgements. The opportunities for an actor to develop and deploy skills of this nature - reticulist skills - are influenced by the configuration of organisational resources that are at his disposal. Among these, the rigth of access to relevant information and the ability to have recourse to a formal expression of dissent are of critical importance.

c) The practical influence of public planning activities on decision-making depends on the disposition among the relevant public agencies of skills and resources instrumental for the selective activation of inter-agency linkages. As the success, or otherwise, of public planning processes can only be gauged in terms of the degree of influence achieved, much comes to depend on the reticulist skills of certain actors occupying crucial positions in the decision network.

These propositions were illustrated by selective evidence from the Droitwich case-study and were followed by prescriptive statements for those concerned with innovations in planning (Figure 19). Further evidence against which to test the scope and adequacy of the propositions were then drawn out from three more general processes: changes in the overall institutional context arising from the local government reform; the variety of institutional arrangements to deal with problems similar to Droitwich; and changes in the process of regional planning in the West Midlands in the late 1960's and early 1970's. The latter example is more developed than the other two and, as it is also closer to the purposes of this study, some reference is necessary to its main conclusions.

The late 1960's were a period of intense experimentation in the English regional planning scene, not least in the West Midlands (see above, p. 158-60). This context led to the creation of flexible and adaptative arrangements for communications between sets of decision-makers directly, or indirectly, concerned with regional planning. The achievement of some degree of co-ordination and consistency within, and between, these decision-networks in a period of experimentation could not rest on formalised systems of guidelines, or rules of procedure. Reticulist judgements and skills of key actores within the decision--networks were, accordingly, called to play an important role in these processes.

Friend et al (1974) identified, as actors occupying the most crucial reticulist roles in the changing regional planning institutional context, the Chairman of the E.P.B. and the Principal Planning Officer of the M.H.L.G..[6] The importance of the latter individual resulted not so much from his hierarchical rank, which, in itself, would not even grant him a place in the E.P.B., but from the technical bias of much of the inter-agency relations. At the time, regional, sub-regional and structure planning exercises were taking

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(6) - See Friend, Power and Yewlett (1974), pp. 398 - 405.

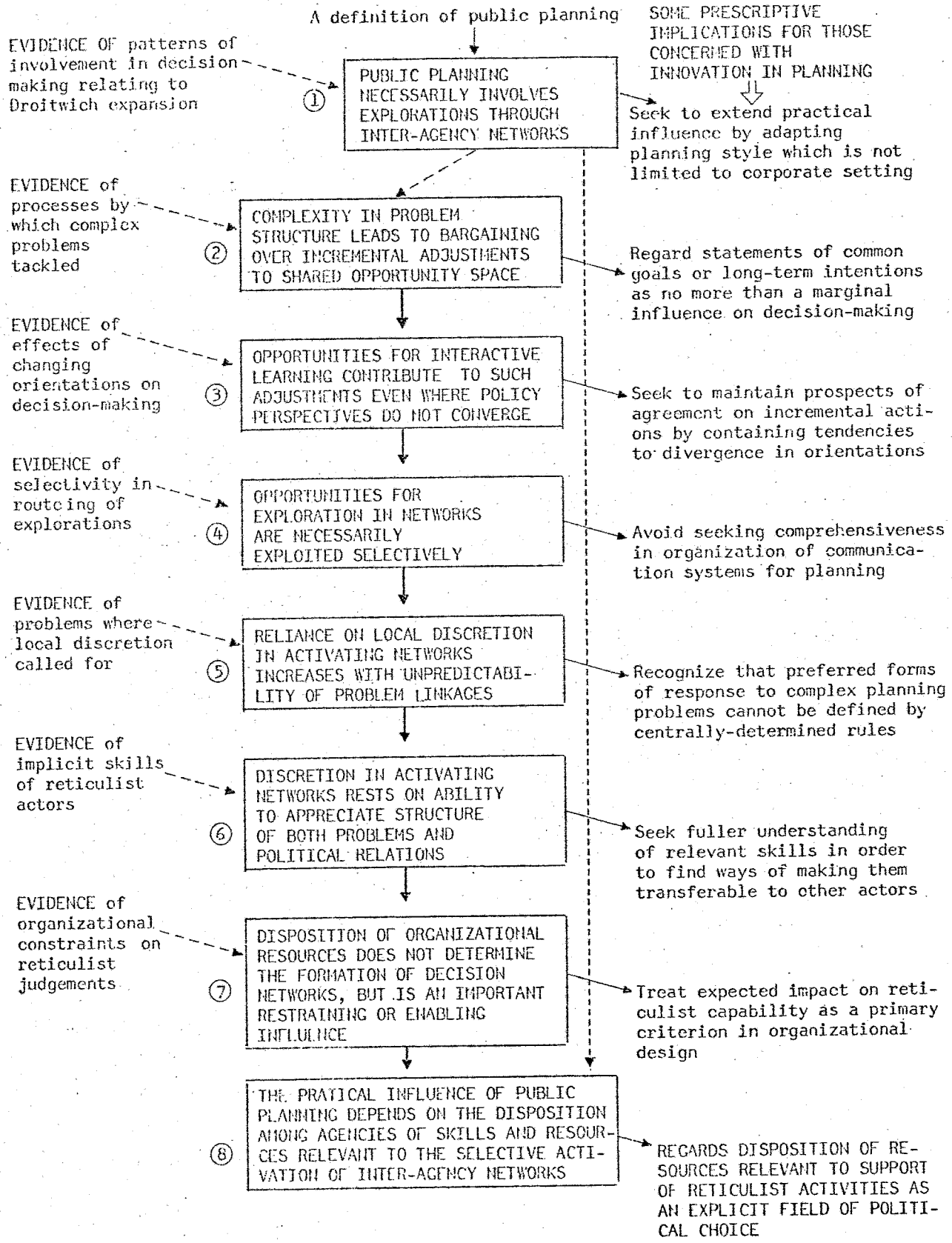

Fig 19 - A Sequence of General Propositions

(Source: Friend et al (1974), Fig 59)

place simultaneously in the region. Thus the professional expertise of this Officer gained him a place in the Steering Committee of the E.P.B. and contributed substantially to his diversified network relationships (Figure 20). This, in turn, helped him to achieve an important position in the regional planning process enjoying influential status vis-a-vis the local authorities' planning departments and the joint study teams (W.M.R.S. and the Joint Team of the Coventry-Solihull--Warwickshire Sub-regional Strategy).

The findings of the empirical research carried out for this thesis give support to some of the arguments, and suggestions, put forward by Friend, Power and Yewlett (1974). They reveal, for example, that the intervention of the Principal Planning Officer of the M.H.L.G. was instrumental in the early launching of the Structure Planning process in the West Midlands. Further, they make it clear that it was the existence of a network of informal relations between key actors which meant that it was possible to avoid a situation of open conflict between central government and local authorities concerning the proposals of a Developing Strategy for the West Midlands. In these circumstances, reticulist judgements and skills were important either to get a process under way, or to stop it being destroyed.[7] The same findings, however, cast doubts on the overall adequacy of some of the general propositions derived by the authors of Public Planning - the Inter-Corporate Dimension. They show, for example, that a few years later and in relation to the Updating of the West Midlands Regional Strategy, reticulist judgements and skills were not sufficient to avoid a split in the presentation of the final outcomes of the process, and the subsequent breakdown of the regional planning arrangements in the region (see above, pp. 249-55). This evidence in no way diminishes the value of the work carried out by Friend et al (1974) as the general propositions were always referred to as quasi-hypotheses to be subjected to further testing. But it raises the question of why their work

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(7) - Personal interviews with Sir Michael Higgs, Mr. William Ogden and Prof. Neville Borg. See also above, pp. 185-8.

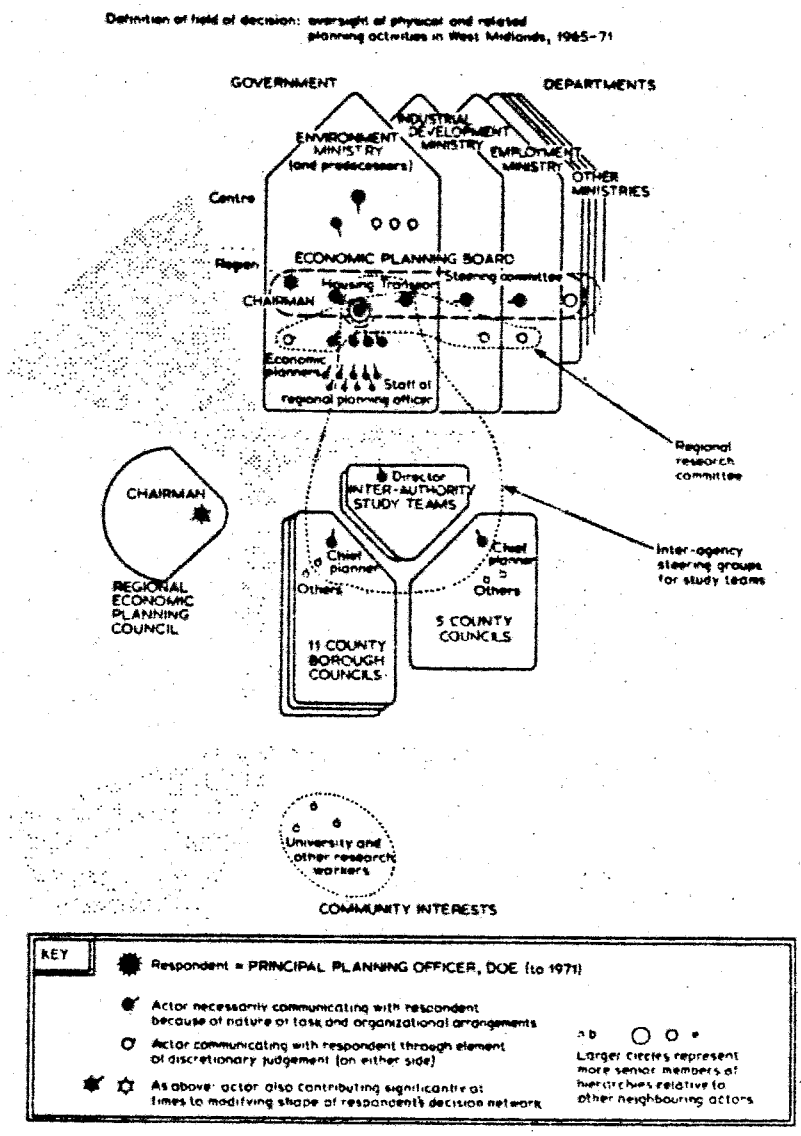

Fig. 20: Regional Planning: Network Relationships of Principal Planning Officer
(source: Friend et al (1974), Fig. 75)

went partially wrong. There seem to be both methodological and theoretical reasons for this situation.

In methodological terms, Public Planning - the Inter-Corporate Dimension was basically a case-study of the planned expansion of Droitwich after a T.D.S. agreement had been concluded. In support of the use of the case-study methodology, the authors quote, with approval, Crozier's (1964) argument that

> *... a clinical approach which bears upon particular cases, and generalises only from an intimate understanding of these cases, can serve us better than a systematic approach that seeks immediately to establish rigorous laws and thus gives the appearence of being more scientific.*
>
> (Crozier, 1964, p. 4)

There is nothing objectionable in this statement. The case-study research method has, like any other, both advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, it is a method particularly appropriate to the study of situations whose complexity is barely understood, or of which a detailed picture is sought. As such its use in the Droitwich study is certainly justified. On the other hand, and as Friend (1980) recently recognised, its use for the study of interagency relations is an especially difficult one, as each experience draws on a particular set of personal, organisational and historical factors, from which it is far from easy to draw clear and widely applicable conclusions. It is argued here that the failure to correctly appreciate the uniqueness of their case-study led Friend et al (1974) to overemphasise the importance of reticulist skills and informal decision networks.

The expansion of Droitwich corresponded to a situation in which there was already a broad agreement concerning the issues to be tackled and the nature and characteristics of the planning solution to be implemented. The decision-making processes studied reflected, therefore, problems of marginal readjustment in relation to a course of action previously agreed upon by the various agencies and actors involved. However, a totally different situation often occurs in regional (public) planning processes. As the updating of the A Developing Strategy for the West Midlands abundantly illustrates, there may well be no agreement on

the issues to be tackled, let alone on the solutions to be advocated. In these circumstances, reticulist skills and judgements can hardly act as a substitute for a strong locus of power and command.

However, regional planning in the West Midlands in the late 1960's was not a process from which this conclusion could be easily inferred. Because of the novelty, and associated lack of definition of the planning machinery, the whole process was very much open to what Wright and Young (1975) describe as 'personality and gentle persuasion' factors. Although, when the novelty of the exercise went away, the situation changed considerably, with the consequence that reticulist skills became a much less critical factor in the determination of the outputs of the regional planning process.

However the analysis undertaken by Friend et al (1974) also suffers from theoretical drawbacks and it is important to briefly identify some of these. First, as one of the authors later recognised, the work uses a number of simplified concepts when analysing relationships between actors and/or agencies (Friend and Spinks, 1978). Relationships between organisations and actors are mapped without distinguishing between the various channels through which transactions take place or between the various types of resources (authority, information, etc.) involved in those transactions. This, of course, meant that it was impossible to produce detailed assessments of the decision-networks identified. Second, and more fundamentally, the analysis and the general propositions derived from the work were based on a crude 'exchange' perspective of interorganisational relations. This perspective, which was first explicitly formulated in relation to organisations by Levine and White (1961), states that voluntary interorganisational transactions occur because it is understood that they will lead to mutual benefits for the organisations involved. Friend, Power and Yewlett (1974), based on the evidence collected in Droitwich, hypothesised that

> *It is ultimately to the mutual advantage of those working in the more powerful as well as the less powerful institutions of representative government to encourage the emergence of more explicit*

processes of connective planning at the inter-agency level.

(Friend et al, 1974, p. 473)

This total reliance on a crude version of the 'exchange model' of interorganisational relations is highly problematic. Cook (1977), for instance, argues that claims of a general validity for the exchange model arise from a failure to understand the'scope conditions' of the theory.

> *No single theoretical perspective will enable us to explain everything about organisational interaction. Every theory has a set of (explicit or implicit) scope restrictions, and thus is limited.*

(Cook, 1977, p. 79)

Postulating the general validity of the exchange model prevents a proper analysis of those situations where interorganisational transactions do not lead to gain for all parties involved. Though, as White, Levine and Vlasak (1975) note, this is often the case when organisations get involved in specific interorganisational relations, in order to preserve their self-interest. The updating of the West Midlands regional strategy provides a clear illustration of this situation . By generalising from a narrow experience, Friend et. al. not only exaggerated the importance of a specific aspect of interorganisational relations - disposition of reticulist skills within the decision-network - but also induced a biased interpretation of interorganisational relations in general.

The above criticisms should not detract from the seminal nature of the work produced by Friend et al (1974). By drawing attention to the importance of the behavioural dimension of inter-organisational relations in the regional planning process, they made an important contribution in opening up a new, and important, area of regional planning research. However, the theoretical shortcomings of their work were to have serious consequences for much of the research which followed in a similar vein.

III. 2.2. ORGANISATIONAL INFLUENCES IN THE REGIONAL PLANNING PROCESS

In the early 1970's, regional planning studies were being prepared for the East Anglia and North West regions and a further exercise was about to start in the Northern region. Two other regional planning studies had, also, been recently completed in the South-East and West Midlands regions. As experience from these exercises began to accumulate, key civil servants in the Development Plans and Regional Policy Directorate of the D.O.E., who had been directly involved in some of these processes (for example, in East Anglia and the South-East) argued that there was an urgent need to scrutinise certain aspects of the experience in the light of the arguments put forward by Friend et al (1974). As a consequence of these arguments, the D.O.E. (Development Plans and Regional Policy Directorate) decided to sponsor a research programme whose terms of reference draw heavily on the seminal work of Friend et al (1974). Further it was decided to commission the studies of that research programme at the Institute for Operational Research (where Friend was based) and at the Institute for Local Government Studies where work was being undertaken along theoretical lines close to those adopted by Friend et al (1974). The decision to employ these two research centres meant that the stream of studies that followed drew, basically, on the same set of theoretical assumptions, research methods and practical concerns.

The first research project included in this research programme which it is necessary to refer to here is a pilot-study that Carter, Pollard and Yewlett (1975) produced on the issue of organisational influences in the regional planning process. As the authors of the study state, this research project resulted from

> *... a recognition within the D.O.E. that policy choices made both in the commissioning and subsequent guidance of regional strategy studies could exert a marked influence over the success, or otherwise, of the teams.*
>
> (Carter et al, 1975, p. 1)

There was not, however, a clear understanding of how these influences operated

and this prompted the commissioning of a research project to look at this problem and make recommendations about how the D.O.E. might intervene in the process in order to increase its efficacy. It was clear that the research would be of an exploratory nature and was to be complemented by further and more specific research.

Drawing on the experience of team members and others connected with the regional strategy work in the North West and East Anglia regions, the study identified seven basic elements of choice in the preparation of regional strategies where organisational considerations were important. These elements of choice fell into three categories. Firstly, those associated with the process of establishing the organisational context in which the team was to operate and its remit. Three elements were seen as relevant in this respect:

a) sponsorship of the process - which agencies should participate in the commissioning structure of the exercise;

b) building of a team - related to the appointment of the Team's Director and the subsequent recruitment of the other staff;

c) formulation of issues - which should be addressed in the strategy by bearing in mind that differing perceptions of the problems and priorities could exist between the sponsoring bodies.

A second broad category of decisions to be taken related to the actual management of the core process of the strategy's preparation. This was seen as involving two main aspects:

d) the organisation of the work within the team - concerning the internal distribution of tasks and responsibilities, co-ordination mechanisms, work schedules, etc.;

e) the handling of external relations - concerning the form and level of interactions between the team, the sponsoring agencies and other relevant bodies.

The final set of elements of decision was associated with the outputs of the regional planning process. Two issues were seen as important in this respect:

f) the presentation of outcomes by the team - referring to issues such as what to say - and what not to say - in the team's main report and at any interin report stages; the extent to which sponsoring bodies should be asked to associate themselves with the outcomes of the team's work, the type of products (visible or invisible. etc.) which the team should emphasise and in which circumstances, etc.;

g) the application to decisions - concerning the degree of support the team's recommendations should receive from the sponsoring bodies in order for them to be capable of influencing the decision-making processes of executive agencies.

Having identified the elements of decision in the regional planning process, the study went on to analyse the potential capacity of central government to influence each of the elements specified.

The main conclusion of the exercise was that all seven elements of decision were open to influence from the D.O.E. through the promulgation of general policy statements, the formulation of general guidelines of an advisory nature, or the more informal influences which staff of the D.O.E. regional offices could bring to bear in more specific regional situations. However, it was considered that the initial and final stages of the process were more open to formal policy statements, while the core of the process could, by and large, be only influenced through more informal processes. Further, it was recognised that considerable variations in the form, strength and effectiveness of influences were likely to occur between regions and over time due to differences in planning experiences, problems to be faced, etc. (Figure 21).

In regard to the sponsorship of the process, Carter et al (1975) considered that the tripartite model was flexible enough to be used in all regions. It was remarked, however, that in some regions its implementation could create substantial organisational problems arising. for example, from the lack of adequate co-ordinating mechanisms between local authorities. The building of the team was

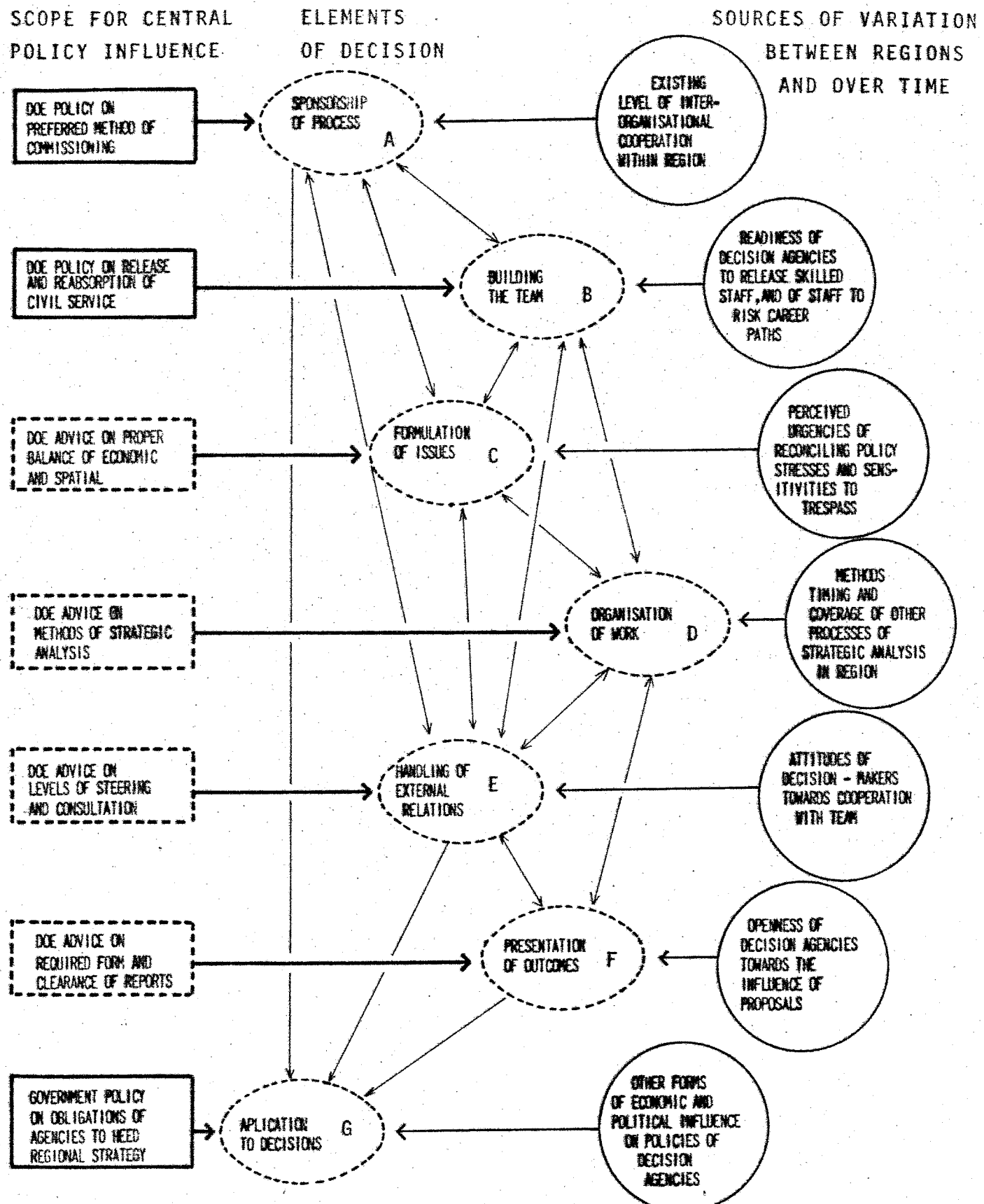

Fig. 21: Central Influence and Regional Variation in the Regional Strategic Planning Process

(source: adapted from Carter et al (1975), Fig 10)

only thought of as raising problems in relation to manpower policies. The one-off nature of traditional regional planning exercises was singled out as a major obstacle to the attraction of the adequate skills and professionals, as in the civil service career rewards are not associated with this type of task. The study suggested that the D.O.E. could improve the situation in this respect by adopting a more simpathetic approach to the question of temporary release and reabsorption of manpower.

In relation to the formulation of issues, it was argued that wide variations between regions discouraged the issue of general policy statements. The exercise of influence in this respect required less formal instruments, such as advisory guidelines on the balance between spatial and aspatial issues, etc. Moreover it was suggested that the relative importance of this element would diminish as long as the regional planning process gained a more continuous character, and ceased to be considered as a one-off opportunity to bid for resources or to express grievances. The internal organisation of the team's work was considered to be particularly difficult to influence not least because clear-cut ideas about regional planning methodology were not readily available. Similarly, guidance on the handling of external relations was considered to be a difficult matter except in terms of general advice on the more formal aspects of steering and consultation procedures.

As far as the presentation of outcomes was concerned, the report suggested that guidance on the format of interim and final reports and the extent to which these should be submitted for clearance to steering bodies might be used by D.O.E. to influence the process. It was recognised, however, that choices in this respect had primarily to be sensitive to local judgements of executive agencies, whose decision-making processes the strategy aimed to influence. Finally, in regard to the D.O.E. influence over the extent to which the regional plan's recommendations were adhered to by executive public agencies in their individual decision-making processes, the study considered that there were serious difficulties in devising a single clear-cut set of central policy guidelines.

These difficulties were seen as resulting from the fact that the recommendations made in regional strategies tended to be somewhat vague and not 'implementable' as such. Further, the study pointed out that, for most executive agencies, these recommendations were considered as only one among the many inputs they had to take into account in their respective decision-making processes. Any attempt to force those agencies to strictly follow regional planning recommendations was seen as being out of touch with reality.

This issue of application to decisions was seen by Carter et al (1975) as the crucial element of choice, upon which decisions in the other areas of choice ought to depend. This position followed from two arguments. First, that without some sense of how the recommendations of a regional strategy team were to be applied in practice, it would be difficult to form criteria for decisions in other areas. Second, that

> *... the extent of application to public policy decisions is the ultimate criterion of the success or otherwise of a regional strategy.*
>
> (Carter et al, 1975, Summary)[8]

The report concluded with suggestions for future research. In this respect, it argued that while the pilot-study had adopted an approach centred on the planning team, future work should concentrate on how the various executive agencies assessed the importance of regional strategies and how far the strategies' recommendations influenced their decision-making processes. It suggested, also, that a secondary area of research could fruitfully develop around the study of the organisational choices made during future regional planning processes. Both of these research directions were explored in subsequent research projects commissioned by the D.O.E.

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(8) - This claim, of course, had already been made by Friend, Power and Yewlett (1974) in relation to public planning in general. See above, pp. 292-4.

III. 2.3. REGIONAL PLANNING AND POLICY CHANGE

The main direction of research suggested by Carter et. al. (1975) concerned the study of the influence of regional planning recommendations on the decision-making processes of executive agencies. It was against the backcloth of this suggestion that in 1976 the D.O.E. commissioned a research project

> *... to suggest guidelines whereby regional strategy teams can most effectively shape their proposals, and their mode of working, so as to be in tune with the processes by which implementing agencies exercise their powers of discretion, whether at national, regional and local levels.*

(Friend et al, 1978, p. 2)[9]

In the course of the work, however, as uncertainties existed about the likely commissioning of tripartite strategies in the near future,

> *... attention moved to embrace also recommendations which could also be relevant for monitoring studies, the ongoing work of the regional offices of government departments and E.P.C.'s; in the process of sponsorship, review and appraisal in central government; and indeed in all other processes of strategic planning and review whether local, regional or national, which cut across the concerns of diverse executive agencies.*

(ibidem., p. 3)

The research report opened with an overall analysis of regional strategies as a source of influence on policy change based on the examples of the recently approved regional strategies for the North-West and East Anglia (Figure 22). Friend et al (1978) argued that as executive agencies experience a number of influences on their decision-making processes, it was difficult to identify whether policy changes derive from the regional strategy, from other sources or both. Within the limitations created by this fact, it was suggested that the reccommendations of regional strategies had had a minimal impact on policy change. This, it was hypothesised, derived primarily from the fact that central government was not prepared to change national policies merely for the sake of

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(9) - Roughly at the same time, the D.O.E. also commissioned a research project concerning the geographical aspects of expenditure planning and looking in particular into how sectoral expenditure planning might be co-ordinated at the regional level. The only published results of this research project are to be found in Raine and Baxter (1978).

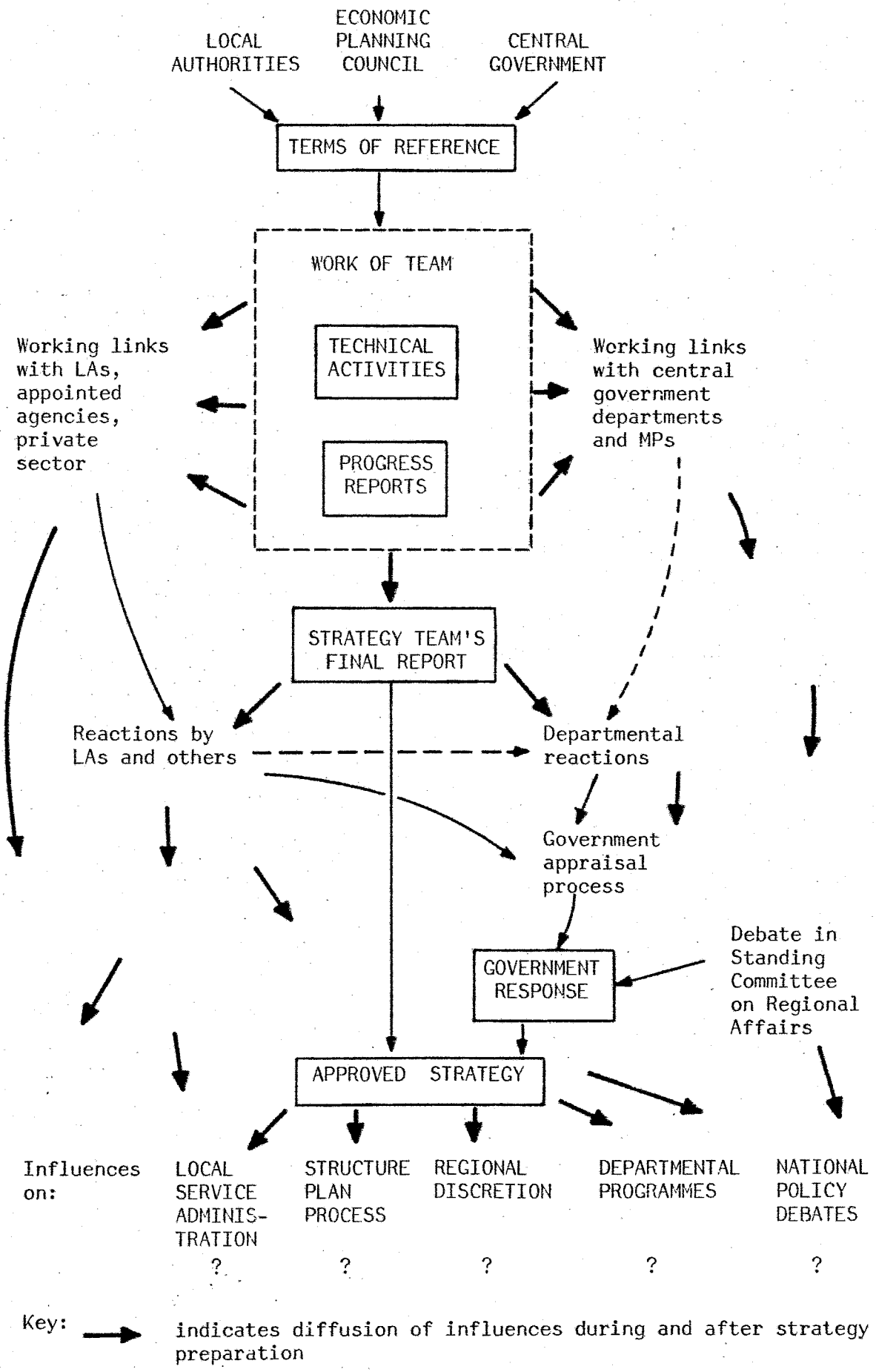


Fig.22: Regional Strategy Preparation and Channels for Influence

(Source: Friend et. al (1978), p. 17)

following the reccommendations of the strategies. But, it was added, the failure to exert influence was also due to shortcomings in the way certain recommendations had been made. Three broad criticisms were presented in this respect:

a) the spatial proposals had been either too vague for specific follow-up or too detailed impinging on the authority of local government;

b) the recommendations concerning social and employment programmes had been made with no assessment of their impact elsewhere;

c) other recommendations, for example, concerning training programmes, had been formulated too vaguely.

Friend et. al. then went on to build up a framework for analysing the use of discretion in the operation of executive agencies. In particular to consider how that discretion could be influenced and what problems would be encountered in the process. Three types of constraints on the use of discretion were identified. First, the guidelines under which the agency operated and which provided a consistent basis for dealing with a range of anticipated cases for decision. These guidelines were seen as varying both in formality and stringency, but it was argued that in most cases, they allowed a fair amount of discretion to be used in their interpretation. The second type of constraints concerned the patterns of accountability of the agency. These rested on the idea, borrowed from Vickers (1965) that public decisions are vested in elected representatives, whose positions are at risk if they take decisions or pursue policies which are not popular with substantial sectors of their constituents. Accountability referred also to the duty to comply with instructions from superiors or with the law. The third type of constraints concerned the structural appreciation of the problems in relation to which decisions were to be made. This referred to the pattern of relationships between particular elements, or to assumptions surrounding the decision to be made.

If influence on the use of discretion was intended then, the research study continued, it would be necessary to understand for each and every situation

how these three constraints on discretion were weighted against each other. This, the study hypothesised, reflected the balance between central control and local autonomy, and had to be carefully evaluated when framing recommendations. According to Friend et al (1978), three types of difficulties were associated with the formulation of recommendations:

a) they needed to be formulated in a form and level of language appropriate to the decision-makers concerned - wavelength;

b) proposals had to be presented at the appropriate point in time, that is to say, in synchronization with corresponding decision-making processes of the varied executive agencies, and

c) in order to be effective, recommendations needed to be addressed to the agencies which had the appropriate accountability and powers to put into effect the desired change - leverage.

In order to test this framework a number of government programmes were selected for analysis. This was necessary because it was felt that the way an organisation works cannot be seen in isolation from the sort of tasks it addresses.

Reflecting the traditional division of government functions into physical, social and economic responsabilities, Friend et al (1978) decided to select one programme to represent each one of these streams of government policy: the national highway programme of the Ministry of Transport (physical); the Training Opportunities Scheme operated by the M.S.C. (social); and the regional policy system of controls and incentives applied, mainly, by the Department of Industry (economic). Further, they decided to analyse 'inner city' policy as representing a series of policy initiatives which cut across the above three conventional areas of government activity. The evidence to test the framework was provided by the perceived influence on these policy systems of the recommendations contained in the strategies for the South-East, North-West, East Anglia and Northern regions. The broad results of the analysis are summarised in Table IX.

The main conclusion of the study was that in relation to the four policy

	HIGHWAYS	INDUSTRY	TRAINING	INNER CITIES
OUTLINE	public infrastructures investment	inducements to entreprises to locate in certain areas	help individuals to acquire marketable skills	a topical policy field cutting across many programmes
SIMILAR PROGRAMMES	water and sewarage; energy supply; rail	agricultural support; office development permits; employment services	social security; education, health care, social services	very diverse, rural deprivation, management of urban fringe
CHANGES OVER TIME	momentum dropping; more emphasis on smaller schemes, substitution of alternative transport measures	increasing range of instruments	high priority; programme experimental and evolving	recently emerged as particular priority within wider concern for urban deprivation
MAJOR FIELDS OF DISCRETION	. national policy . initiation of proposals . route . priority of schemes . design standards . TSG allocations	. policy intent . balance of constraints and incentives . designation of areas for assistance . scale of assistance . eligibility of firms	. scope of programme . scale of spending . relations to education and industry . types of courses . selection of individuals . siting of facilities	. selection of areas . orientation of initiatives . organisation of initiatives . development of linkages . resources deployment . support of projects
GUIDELINES	broad statements: mainly national, plus County through TPP	classification of areas and firms for assistance	national guidelines to regional offices	wide paper: essentially guidelines to local experiment
ACCOUNTABILITY	national government, county council, property interests affected	national government: some support by appointed boards	national government agency (MSC): local linke with LAs and firms	partnerships between centre and districts: responsiveness to local communities
STRUCTURAL APPRECIATION	highway engineering land-use planning transport economics	operation of firms, markets	demands of firms for skills: operation	interactions of physical, social, economic structures: appreciative methods not widely agreed
REGIONAL DIMENSION	RCUs have considerable delegated powers; Regional Controllers link with other transport and land-use questions	regional offices of DI crucial: roles very different in assisted areas, Regional Boards supervise discretion	increased devolution envisaged to regional offices of MSC (ESA/TSA combined)	no regional dimension, except insofar as inner city phenomena reflect forces of regional economy
STRATEGY TEAMS	proposals with varying levels of specificity	tendency to play regional advocacy role, propose innovatory measures	comparatively vague suggestions only	varying degrees of advocacy for inner city aid: contributions to defining innor areas
SYNCHRONISATION	problems of gearing to stages of commitment in schemes, and to structure plans	any current pressures for changing boundaries of assisted areas or basis of aid?	doce an RSTs work schedule relate to major thrust of policy change?	complementarity or conflit with concurrent diagnostic studies at other levels?
WAVELERGTH	can team engage with engineering technicalities?	does team appreciate economics of the firm?	can team engage with subtleties of training services/forms/FE relationships? team's access to MSC officials needs to be actively sought at regional or national level	regional team has cross-cutting view, but not well placed to get on wavelenghth of urban community groups importance of informal links with other diagnostic teams: potential impartial role in defining deprived areas?
LEVERAGE	ready access to RC (R & T), not to RCUs. Direct leverage may be possible via structure plans (but see 10 above)	try to relate to economic advocacy or physical plan route of influence?		

TABLE IX: Regional Planning and Policy Change
(Source: Friend et al.(1978))

areas analysed, the apparent influence of regional strategies had been negligible. The study attributed this failure to the fact

> *... that the patterns of accountability indicate the lack of a substantial regional dimension. So, to a certain extent, these policy systems lack in general regional structural appreciation.*
>
> (Friend et al, 1978, p. 90)

In other words, it was recognised that within the existing institutional structure of government, regional strategies had few opportunities to substantially influence policy, as problems and policies tended to be defined at levels (central and local) other than the regional one. However, short of suggesting major changes in the institutional framework, the study went on to propose a number of minor improvements to the existing arrangements, suggesting:

a) that regional strategies would benefit from being framed at variable intraregional scales depending on the nature of the policy system in question;

b) that the teams should be more selective in the identification of issues in order to enhance prospects of realistic influence over some decision-making processes;

c) that more continuous forms of regional planning (monitoring units, etc.) should be favoured with subsequent enhancement of the importance of invisible products of the regional planning process, aimed at co-ordinating various programmes, and

d) that the process of appraisal of regional strategies in central government, involving the constitution of an inter-departmental working party and the final publication of a letter of response should be changed in order to include the participation of the strategy team's members in the process.

The broad conclusions of the analysis seem correct and the recommendations put forward would certainly improve the regional planning influence on decisions of executive agencies. In neither of these aspects, however, was the study particularly original. Similar conclusions and recommendations had

been suggested some two years earlier by a D.O.E. officer (Stevens, 1976). The major contribution of Friend et al (1978), probably was in the development of a formalised framework to analyse the mechanisms regulating the exercise of discretion in various public programmes and the problems likely to be found when attempting to influence them. However, the framework itself is not beyond criticism. The identification of the sources of discretion was weak as it concentrated on a limited number of relatively formalised issues. The definition of accountability, for instance, appears to assume mechanistic relations of control-response between the electorate and the elected members, and between the various levels of public organisations.

The research methods and techniques used to analyse the influence of the regional planning process on the exercise of discretion within executive agencies further reinforced the shortcomings of the framework. Most of the evidence used in the research came from an analysis of the letters of response from central government to the proposals made in the main reports of the regional strategy documents. This, of course, overlooked any invisible products developed during the regional planning process, and the medium to long term influences in both the content and mechanisms of the programmes under analysis.

III. 2. 4. REGIONAL PLANNING METHODOLOGY

The final piece of research commissioned by the D.O.E. on regional planning practice, to which mention is due here, was concerned with methodologies for regional planning in England.[10] More specifically, the central focus of

(10) - The D.O.E. commissioned two further research projects dealing with regional planning practice to researchers at the Institute of Local Government. The first ended with the presentation of recommendations on how the monitoring of the existing regional strategy for the North-West region might be done (Wedgewood-Oppenheim, Hart and Cobley, 1975). The second was concerned with the use of objectives in regional planning exercises. More specifically, it was concerned with the possibility of drawing up a national set of regional objectives which could apply, with different weightings, to any region in the country, (Hart, Skelcher and Wedgwood-Oppenheim, 1976, 1978).

research was on

> *... the processes and the methods by which that process might be improved.*

(Hart et. al. 1980, para. 1.1)

For the purposes of the study, the word 'methodology' was understood to include the processes of regional planning, the organisational arrangements through which this was undertaken and the products and/or outputs of the activity. The attempt to devise a context appropriate regional planning methodology was concerned with three main issues: how methodology could be related to the planning context; how planning continuity over time could be improved; how co-ordination between different levels and types of planning might be developed.

The first issue was, of course, of fundamental importance and it is fair to say that it had not previously received adequate treatment, either in general terms, or specifically in regard to regional planning. Etzioni (1968) argued that it is of little value to discuss what planning methodology is 'best' in the abstract, since it is the context in which planning is practiced which provides the conditions for judging the appropriateness, or otherwise, of a methodology. Taking the argument a stage further, Faludi (1970) suggested, in a cross-national comparative analysis of planning experience, that the context determines the methodologies to be used.

Hart et al (1980), probably, would not subscribe to the latter suggestion as for them the planning context was seen as providing a series of constraints and opportunities in the design of the regional planning process, but certainly not as determining, in a narrow sense, the outcome of the design process. Conversely, they seemed to corroborate Etzioni's argument as they wrote that

> *... there is no single best methodology which could be uniformly and uncritically applied regardless of regional variations.*

(Hart et al, 1980, para. 1.7)

This understanding of the problem led them to explore how much, and in which directions, regional planning had altered its characteristics in the 1970's.

As a result of this analysis, they concluded that significant changes had occurred in regional planning practice which could be attributed to two types of factors. Firstly, changes in the type of problems which were perceived as being within the ambit of regional planning. This change reflected alterations in the overall socio-economic context (lower population increases than previously expected, mounting energy crisis, lower employment growth rate, lower levels of public expenditure, etc.), and in the definition of regional problems (awareness of problems of inner areas, for example). The second set of changes occurred in the assumptions concerning the extent to which regional planning had direct control over its context and the mechanisms through which it worked to exert that control. In this respect they mentioned the increasing awareness of the fact that regional planning had limited influence, rather than direct and definitive control over the decisions and actions of a number of executive agencies.

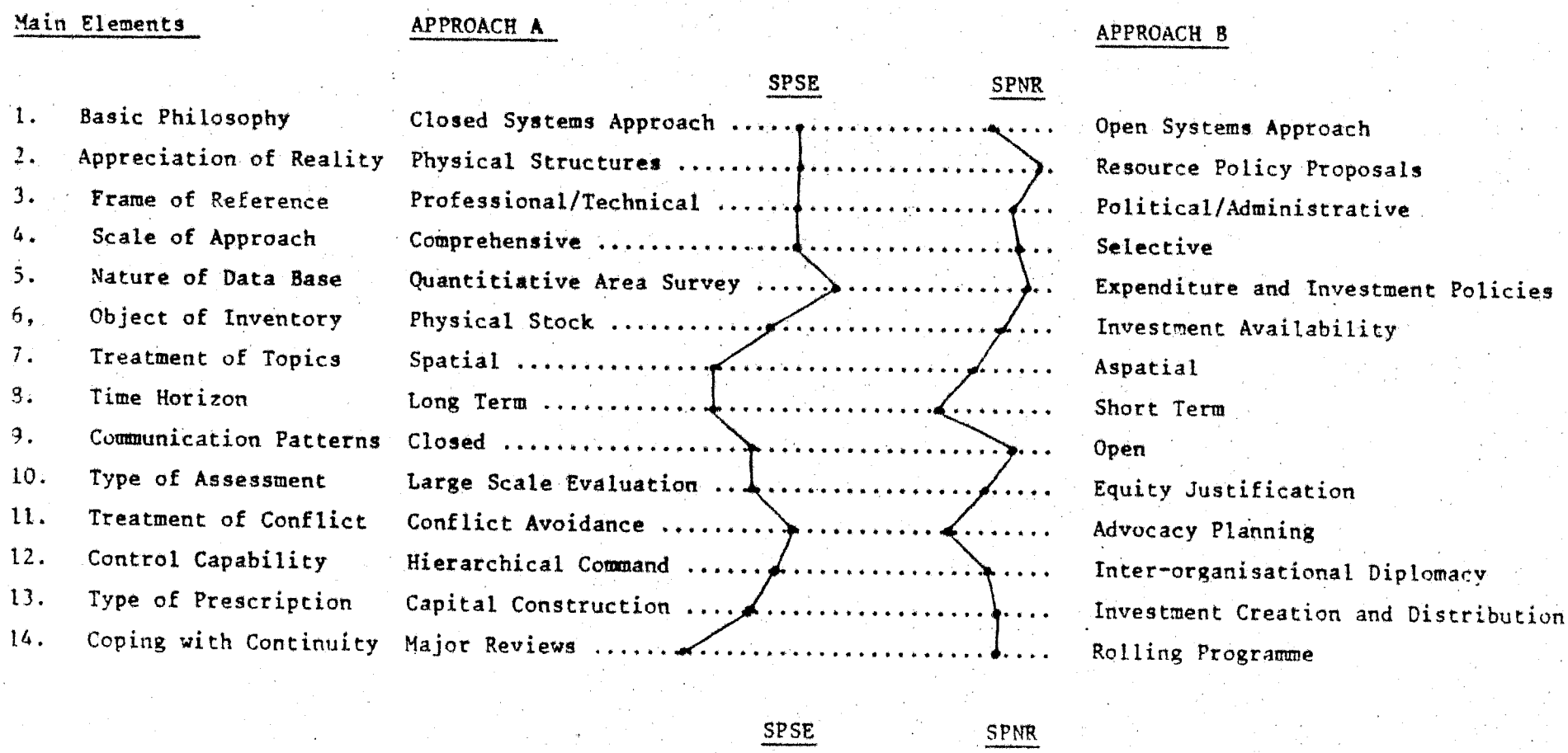
Hart et al (1980) claimed that, as a result of these changes, two trends were apparent in the regional planning process, namely:

a) a shift from consensus over the environmental effects of growth and the politics of spatial distribution, towards analysing and promoting public and private industrial investment and asking for government grants during a period of slow growth;

b) a steady growth in attempts to develop policy implementation programmes as weel as to evaluate the financial implications of these programmes.

Such developments were seen as corresponding to an ongoing shift from one implicit methodological ideal-type to another. This was illustrated by assessing the regional strategies for East Anglia and the North, against the basic parameters of the two ideal-types (Figure 23). It was made clear, however, that this shift could not be taken for granted, either in pace or direction, and that changes in the context could give rise to an acceleration or a reversal of the shift.

Further, methodological choice was related to the definition of tasks and activities which the planning teams were legitimately able to pursue. These



SPSE - Strategic Plan for the South East (1971)

SPNR - Strategic Plan for the Northern Region (1977)

Fig. 23: Two Ideal - Types of Regional Planning Methodology
(Source: Hart et al (1980))

tasks and activities - the planning exercise role - might be defined in terms of co-ordination of policies and programmes; allocation of resources either directly or indirectly through influence over relevant agencies; information provision; management of interorganisational relations between agencies, etc.

Once the role of the regional planning exercise was defined, then contextural considerations assumed particular importance in selecting the planning methodology, which might be defined as context appropriate. In order to operationalise the analytical framework, Hart et al (1980) considered the planning context under three headings:

a) the institutions which related to the activities or policy areas of concern of the planning team or sponsors, including those towards which the team made direct recommendations and proposals;
b) the issues bearing on the regional planning exercise, their substantive content and social importance, and
c) the policies or policy-intentions of those institutions which related to the issues or subject-matter which the process addressed.

By limiting step by step the uncertainties surrounding the roles and context of the planning exercise, it was possible to progress towards methodological choices concerning:

a) the form and structure of the regional planning team - corporate organisation;
b) the nature and extent of relationships and linkages with other agencies and planning systems - intercorporate organisation;
c) the methods and techniques by which the regional planning team carried out their activities and tasks - technology;
d) the products which arose as a result of the planning activity; and
e) the dynamics of the process, in particular the way the various stages of the process were interrelated.

The range of choices open in each area - role, context, methodology -

was, of course, limited by choices made in regard to the other two elements. The process of selecting methodological alternatives was not seen as a linear one since ambiguity over the role(s) of the planning exercise and uncertainties over the characteristics of the context would be only progressively clarified during the regional planning process itself (Figure 24).

Having identified the main elements of decision in the regional planning process, and their interrelationships, Hart et al (1980) used the set of concepts and the analytical framework developed for that purpose in order to give guidance to those involved in regional planning. This guidance took the form of detailed lists of questions which the various parties involved in the process should address in order to shape their actions. The questions to be addressed by the sponsors related to the initial appreciation of the context in which the planning exercise would occur, namely: the definition of the team's remit and broad structure. Further, sponsors were expected to ensure that these elements displayed adaptative characteristics in the face of changes in the overall context. The questions to be addressed by the planning team covered aspects such as the characteristics of the planning context, techniques and methods to be used in the planning process, attributes of the corporate and intercorporate organisation of the team, internal organisation of the planning process, etc.

Finally, the study suggested that the two main questions that a regional planning process raised for executive agencies were: first, how co-operative should they be with the planning teams; second, to what extent could they influence the development and outcome of the process. A more detailed listing of the questions to be addressed by the sponsors and the regional planning team is provided in Table X.

II. 2. 5. CONTEXT APPROPRIATE REGIONAL PLANNING METHODOLOGY

The research report prepared by Hart et al (1980) was based on a case study of regional planning in the West Midlands region during the updating and

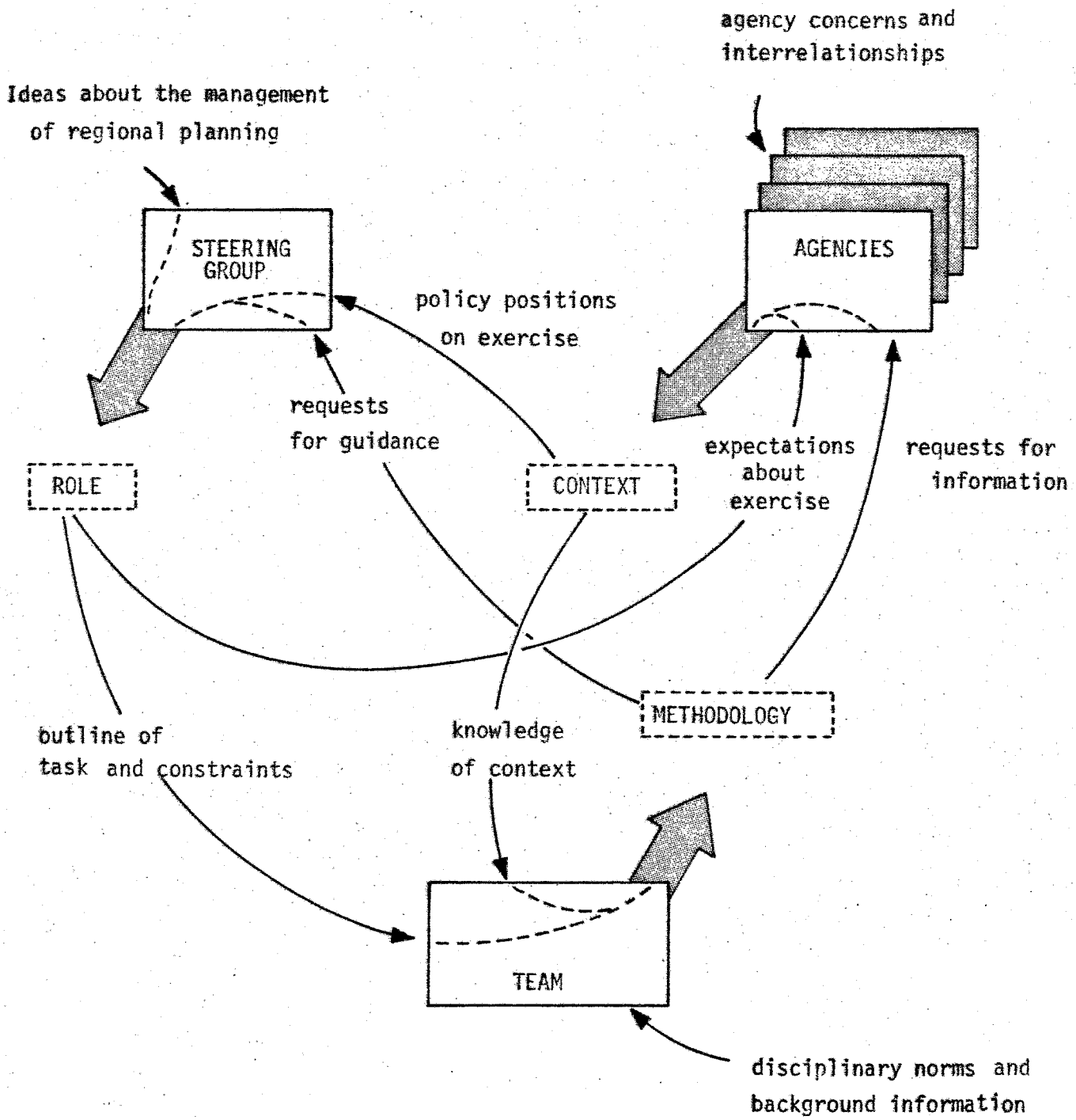


Fig. 24: An Overall View of Interactions in the Regional Planning Process
(source: adapted from Hart et al (1980), p. 38)

SPONSORS	TEAM
1. Appreciation of the Context	1. Context Appreciation at Operational Level
1.1. What issues should be placed in the agenda of the team?	1.1. What institutions are critical for the activities of the team?
1.2. What is the status of the issues?	1.2. What is the climate for the regional planning exercise?
1.3. What policies are involved?	1.3. What policies are under stress and open for revision?
1.4. What are the prospects for progress?	1.4. What access does the team have to agencies?
2. Setting The Remit	2. Designing the Form of Products
2.1. What role should the exercise have?	2.1. What sort of products are likely to influence key decision processes and individuals/agencies in the region?
2.2. What degree of independence should the team have?	2.2. What orientations should the products have?
2.3. What form of steering and reporting mechanisms are appropriate?	2.3. What timing of products is appropriate?
2.4. What time span should the exercise cover?	3. Organisation, Technology and Process Issues
2.5. How should the work be structured?	3.1. How can the team best organise itself to maintain a relationship with the context and deliver appropriate forms of product?
2.6. What skills should the team have?	3.2. What types of technology (hendling of tasks/methods) should be employed?
	3.3. How should the process be structured?

TABLE X:- An Agenda For Developing Context-Appropriate Methodology

(Source: adapted from Hart, Hickling, Norris and Skelcher (1980), pp. 3 - 8.)

rolling forward of the existing regional strategy. The fact that the final research report hardly mentioned the empirical basis of the research, and was phrased in very general and abstract terms, suggests that the research findings were not particularly encouraging. One of the members of the team who carried out the research project has produced a number of independent works which throw considerable light on this question (Skelcher, 1979, 1980, 1982). Basically, his work challenges some of the theoretical assumptions upon which the research was based. These assumptions, as already mentioned, were heavily influenced by the seminal work of Friend, Power and Yewlett (1974), who in relation to the planned expansion of Droitwich, suggested that the existence of a multiorganisation - the Droitwich Development Committee - favoured the development and exercise of reticulist skills by key actors in the decision network. This, in turn, was seen as having positive effects on the effectiveness of the planning system controlling the T.D.S. At a more general level, Metcalf (1978) argued that when conflicts exist between organisations within an organisational network, the creation of an organisation specifically concerned with the management of interrelationships between organisations within the network, would help the development of a shared perspective on how to deal with the areas of conflict. The main advantage of this type of organisation, which Berry, Metcalf and McQuillan (1974) had previously labelled 'network organisations', is considered to be their capability to create a mechanism to explore potential points of contact between the organisations involved and thus enhance the chances of mutually acceptable solutions being achieved.

Bringing together these two analyses, Skelcher (1979) set out to analyse the work of the J.M.S.G. as a network multiorganisation with the aim of assessing its impact on the updating of the regional strategy. The underlying assumption was that the existence of a network multiorganisation would increase the context-appropriateness of the planning methodology of the exercise. This, in turn, would enhance co-operation among the various organisations involved in the process and secure the resolution of eventual conflicts during the process.

At this stage, it comes as no surprise that the conclusions of the Skelcher study do not lend support to this hypothesis. On the contrary, the research findings indicate that instead of co-operating in the achievement of mutually acceptable solutions, through the J.M.S.G., individual agencies acted in such a way as to dramatically constrain the network multiorganisation activities. In this context, the importance of reticulist skills also diminished in importance.

This conclusion led Skelcher to question the theoretical approach used by Friend et al (1979) and Metcalf (1978), both based on a crude exchange model of interorganisational relations. In its place, Skelcher (1979, 1980) uses a refined version of the exchange model previously developed by Benson (1975), the 'political economy' approach to interorganisational relations. According to this approach, interorganisational networks and relations can be conceived as a 'political economy' concerned with the distribution of two scarce resources: money and authority. Within this context, the basic action orientations of the admnistrators of state agencies are seen to be guided towards the protection or expansion of the existing flow of resources, to their respective organisations. Any action which appears to curtail the domain of authority of the organisation or the financial resources forthcoming for its activities is, therefore, likely to be resisted. Depending on the resources available to the organisation, the interorganisational network's structure and the external linkages of the organisation concerned, it may react either in terms of attempting to avoid certain issues being raised, or of attempting to dilute as much as possible the substantive outcomes of that action, so as to prevent direct challenges to the flow of resources it commands.

Skelcher (1979, 1982) argues that in the process of updating the West Midlands regional strategy, these two types of behaviour were visible. First of all, in the dispute concerning the definition of the Middle Ring, the process of interorganisational interaction resulted in the definition being as ambiguous possible due to the action of certain local authorities. Indeed, different definitions of the Middle-Ring were adopted for statistical and policy purposes

and the analytical conclusions based on the statistical defenitions were used to justify policy recommendations for the differently defined policy Middle Ring. Secondly, in the discussion concerning whether, or not, specific economic reccommendations should be included in the final report, the behaviour of the D.I. representatives in the planning arrangements was clearly directed towards excluding from the report policy reccommendations which might be seen as challenging its previous actions as well as its control over the economic policy field (see above, pp. 249-50).

The work of Skelcher constitutes a direct challenge to previous inter-organisational approaches to regional planning in one fundamental aspect - the interpretation of interorganisational conflicts. Both in Friend, Power and Yewlett (1974) and Friend, Norris and Carter (1978) interorganisational conflicts are interpreted in behavioural terms. This fact is reflected in the importance attributed to elements such as reticulist skills and communication factors (wavelength, synchronisation and leverage) in the solution of conflicts by Friend et al (1974) and Friend et al (1978) respectively. Associated with this perspective went a vision of interorganisational relations according to which all participants might eventually benefit from the interorganisational relations.

On the contrary, in the political economy perspective, to which Skelcher adheres, interorganisational relations are seen as a 'zero-sum game' in which gains for one organisation, or actor, involve losses for another. Though not rejecting behavioural considerations, conflicts are analysed, mainly, in political terms, that is, as outcomes of power differentials between the organisation and actors involved. The idea of a context-appropriate regional planning methodology can be seen, in its most lucid formulation (Skelcher, 1982), as an attempt to design the methodology - the structure and organisation - of the regional planning process so that it relates more closely to key features of the context, viz, the power relations in the relevant interorganisational network.

These two perspectives correspond , loosely, to Singelmann's (1980) 'functional' and 'political' models of analysis of interorganisational conflicts

respectively. The shift from a functional to a political perpective constituted, undoubtedly, significant analytical progress. However, on its own, this shift did not overcome all the flaws associated with previous interorganisational approaches to regional planning. Some of these short-comings were associated with a somewhat restrictive understanding of what regional planning is about. Others stemmed from general faults associated with most organisational analyses of public planning and policy-making. Before introducing the case for a political-organisational approach to regional planning, it is necessary to consider these two issues.

III. 3. A CRITIQUE OF THE INTER-ORGANISATIONAL APPROACH TO REGIONAL PLANNING

According to Gillingwater and Hart (1977), three apparently alternative ideal-typical interpretations of what constitutes the raison d'etre of regional planning have been put forward. In all three alternatives, regional planning is perceived as a framework for the steering and management of social change at some intermediate level between central and local political administrations. However, they differ in the way this basic idea is operationalised. The first interpretation understands regional planning as being concerned with the initiation, articulation and implementation of public policy between central and local political administrations - policy ideal-type. The second sees regional planning as being involved in political and administrative processes associated with the exercise of control between central and local administration - control ideal-type. Finally, the third interpretation argues that regional planning is about the initiation and opening up of communication and information channels between central and local administrations in order to enhance the co-ordination of their actions - communication ideal-type. (see Table XI)

A comparison between the characteristics of these ideal-types and the concerns and proposals expressed in the literature analysed in the previous section, suggests that this literature is closely associated with the communication ideal-typical interpretation of regional planning. The work of Friend, Power and Yewlett (1974), for example, develops around the idea of the importance of the behaviour - reticulist skills and judgements - of certain key actors in decision networks, in order to achieve the resolution of conflicts and co-ordination of actions within and between policy systems. The subsequent report on Regional Planning and Policy Change focusses, in turn, on how regional planning recommendations should be formulated so as to be able to influence the powers of discretion of decision-makers in a co-ordinated way (Friend, Norris and Carter, 1978). In this context, the recommendations of regional plans are considered not

Explanatory Levels	Policy	Characteristics of Approaches Control	Communication
Focus of Political Attention	Ex ante Control	Ex post Planning	Coordination
Decision-making Emphasis	Anticipatory	Authoritative	Facilitative
Administrative Style	Formal/Discrete	Ad hoc/Continuous	Informal/Continuous
Institutional Control	Partial	Substantial	Marginal
Problem Orientation	Specification	Resolution	Articulation
Orientation of Planning Processes	Consultative	Compliance	Negotiation
Temporal Emphasis	Longer-term	Short-run	Present-orientated
Focus of Intervention	Consequences of Past Change	Ordering Future Change	Awareness of Present Change
Prescriptive Objective	Inducement of Change	Dynamic Equilibrium	Conflict Mediation
Method of Operation	Evaluation Analysis	Contextual Control	Administrative Discretion
Organisational Output	Strategic Policy Statement	Control Instruments	Communication Channels
Implementation Procedures	Comprehensive-'Open'	Complete-'Closed'	Partial-'Iterative'
Image of Reality	Relatively Uncertain	Relatively Certain	Constrained
Ideological Values Base	Consensus Formation	Coercion Maintenance	Conflict Resolution

TABLE XI:- Regional Planning: policy, control and communication

(Source: Hart (1977), Fig 4)

so much in terms of their capacity to tackle problems, but rather in terms of their ability to influence decision making processes in a co-ordinated way. As a result of this approach, the procedural aspects of the activity are overemphasised to the detriment of the substantive elements.

However, as Gillingwater (1978) remarks, the three ideal-types need not, and should not, be considered as mutually exclusive alternatives. They refer rather to complementary aspects of regional planning. Restricting, in practical, or analytical terms, regional planning to one of the ideal-typical interpretations would represent an arbitrary curtailment of the complexity of the activity. This develops unevenly over time and space. If, on one occasion, the creation of controlling devices, or the opening-up of communication channels, appears to override concerns with policy-making, this should not be understood as meaning that this will always be the case. Rather it should be seen be seen as a specific moment in an ongoing process of interaction between complex sets of devices and procedures, associated with the policy, control and communication dimensions of regional planning.

But the interorganisational approaches to regional planning, analysed in the previous section, not only seem to overemphasise the communication dimension of regional planning but appear, also, to offer a restrictive interpretation of the latter. They concentrate on the problems faced by central government when attempting to co-ordinate public planning systems. This is done to the detriment of the study of the relations between regional planning and the planning systems of local authorities and public corporations. The fact that most of the research studies are the result of - or originated in - research projects commissioned by a central government executive department (the D.O.E.) goes a long way towards explaining this problem.

The same fact is, also, responsible, in part at least, for the pragmatic concerns of the research studies. Research was undertaken and conclusions were put forward with the overriding concern of generating practical solutions to pratical problems. This type of orientation appears, however, to be common to most

organisational analyses. As Benson (1977) points out, research question have consistently been posed from the standpoint of a powerful actor concerned with the essentially technical adjustments necessary to enhance the effectiveness of the organisation or network of organisations.

Further, not only has this been the dominant orientation of most organisational studies, but it has also been posited as the positive prescription for research. Scharpf (1978), for instance, argues that

> *... the end product of policy analyses should be the formulation of one or more prescriptive models of 'good' policy - good in the sense that they would be feasible within given constraints of the policy system and that they would be effective in solving, or at least reducing, the underlying problems.*
>
> (Schapf, 1978, p. 349)

There is, of course, nothing intrinsically wrong with the attempt to provide solutions to perceived problems. These type of concerns only become theoretically objectionable when they induce the analyst to take for granted a 'given' definition of the problem being considered. In these circumstances, the relevance of the whole analytical endeavour can be endangered from the very start. This point can be illustrated by referring to the attempt to develop a context-appropriate regional planning methodology made by Hart, Hickling, Norris and Skelcher (1980)

As Skelcher (1979, 1982) notes, the idea of developing a context-appropriate regional planning methodology was associated with the assumption that the use of such a methodology, in regional planning practice, would enhance the impact on the context of planning actions. In other words, context appropriateness was seen as instrumental in increasing the 'environmental effectiveness' (Metcalf, 1976) of the regional planning activity.

But there are two different processes of enhancing environmental effectiveness. One is to modify the context to enhance its compatibility with the goals and processes of the planning activity. The other is to reshape the planning methodology so that it relates more closely to the key features of the context. The work of Hart et. al. (1980) focusses exclusively on the second alternative.

This corresponds to unreservedly accepting as given a context which in many respects appears at odds with the form and objectives of the regional planning activity. In these circumstances, it is not surprising that they end up by calling into question the usefulness of the regional planning activity itself. [11]

There is certainly a case for questioning whether that type of approach can contribute to increasing the 'environmental effectiveness' of regional planning. More categorically, it is possible to say that it can hardly serve to advance the theoretical understanding of the relations between the regional planning activity and its social context. Implicit in that type of approach is a conservative functionalist theory of social engineering as a basis for social change. Social reality is conceptualised as an ordered and regulated state of affairs which is to be maintained. Conflicts resulting from 'dysfunction' or scarcity of resources, are to be avoided and/or solved, through adaptive processes of structural re-adjustment (Bailey, 1975).

The dominance of functionalist social theories over organisational analysis has been indicated by various authors (Bacharach, 1978; Benson, 1977; Burrel and Morgan, 1979; Morgan, 1980). Within the broad 'functionalist paradigm' (Burrel and Morgan, 1979) coexist different perspectives on organisational functioning and conflicts, interorganisational relations, etc. All these perspectives, however, share a basic pluralistic understanding of organisational phenomena in which no party ever gains the ability to dictate the rules of organisational formation. The problem with these approaches, and with functionalist social theories in general, is that they can only adequately 'explain' self-regulation and adaptive actions and phenomena. Outside these circumstances, such as in a situation of dramatic organisational change, they are useless. In this type of situation the only alternative open to functionalist analyses is to

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(11) - After describing what they considered to be unfavourable developments in the context (institutional, policy, etc.) of regional planning, they concluded *"it must be a problematical question whether or not a regional exercise as such will be particularly rewarding"* (Hart, Hickling, Norris and Skelcher, 1980, para. 5.3).

explain change as a result of 'external' forces (Sfez, 1973). The explanations provided by these approaches are, therefore, either tautological or ideographic. In both cases it is dubious whether they can provide adequate guidance to policy making except in terms of defense of the general status quo. They are, in stricto sensum, essentially conservative.

In methodological terms most of the research studies, analysed in the previous section, also suffer from a number of shortcomings associated with positivist methodology. Thus, organisational phenomena were often interpreted with the exclusive help of accounts of those phenomena provided by individuals who had been directly involved in them; and without much concern about the possible biases involved in these accounts. Further, the neutrality and externality of the researcher, in relation to the phenomena studied, has also been taken for granted; as has the objective nature of the explanation provided. Such assumptions are particularly difficult to accept in situations in which the actors involved have interests to defend in regard to the usefulness of the processes being studied, and in which the researcher has a direct influence on - and suffers the influence of - developments in the activity being studied (Horowitz and Katz, 1975). This was exactly the situation in most of the research processes from which the interorganisational literature of regional planning originated.

Finally, most of the literature reviewed presents the important methodological flaw which Wright Mills (1959) labelled 'bureaucratic abstracted empiricism', by which is meant the accumulation and usage of data whithout proper regard to the total socio-economic context in which it alone has meaning. Thus, research has been focussed on organisational issues - interorganisational conflicts and co-ordination, decision-making processes, etc. - without proper consideration of the ongoing wider processes of institutional and social change. Most organisational literature considers the organisations - or the interorganisational networks - as distinct boundary-maintaining entities and environmental influences as external forces which more or less frequently affect them. In this process of reification, the organisations are transformed into the theoretical objects of analyses.

However, as Karpik (1978) argues, organisations are mere empirical realities and their study cannot define a self-contained theoretical problematic. Rather it must be used as a springboard for analysing the historical processes of institutional and social production and reproduction of which organisational phenomena are, perhaps, the most expressive manifestation.

Two major shortcomings derive from this 'abstracted bureaucratic empiricism'. Firstly, with the exception of the study of bureaucratic 'dysfunctions' organisational analysis is undialectical and static, that is to say, generally unable to adequately interpret past changes and predict future evolution. Secondly, as Benson (1980) notes, this type of analyses tends to have a limited operational value as it frequently yields propositions which cannot be easily related to concrete situations. These points can be illustrated by referring to the question of the interpretation of inter-organisational relations and conflicts in the discussion of regional planning.

Earlier in this chapter, it was noted that most of the interorganisational approaches to regional planning draw their assumptions from a crude exchange model of interorganisational relations. The assumptions on which this model is based posit, for example, that organisations have a basic equality of status and that interactions between organisations are voluntary and bring benefits to all parties involved. The adhesion to these assumptions prevents an adequate understanding of interorganisational relations in which the parties involved pursue antagonistic objectives. In these situations, interorganisational relations are best seen as a zero-sum game in which gains for one party involve losses for another.

Skelcher (1979), and the 'political economy' theorists in general, interpret these relations as a political economy, that is, as processes of competition for scarce resources. Further, they see the outcome of these processes as being influenced by the initial distribution of resources between the organisations concerned. Thus, resources constitute the object of the disputes and the basis for the power mechanisms that determine the outcome of the disputes.

They assume, however, that each organisation has a continuing ability to renegotiate its position in the network and in relation to each dispute. Thus, for Skelcher, and the 'political economy' theorists in general, the inequality in the distribution of resources is considered in static and descriptive terms and not as a moving force behind changes in the patterns and processes of interorganisational relations.

This failure to take into account the potential dynamic effects of inequalities in the distribution of organisational resources is an important one. In fact, as authors such as Emerson (1975) and Zeitz (1980) note, in processes where the assumptions of the exchange model do not hold, interorganisational relations tend to promote and/or reinforce patterns of control (power) and dependence between the organisations concerned. Although the real nature of these patterns might not be apparent, due to the existence of a consensus in the action orientations of the organisations involved, or the temporary lack of definition of responsibilities, this is bound to happen whenever one of the parties enters in conflict with another. Salencik (1979) refers to this issue as the latency characteristic of dependency relations.

The idea of 'unequal exchange' of resources (Zeitz, 1980) between organisations, entailing patterns of control and dependency, casts doubt on the assumption of a continuous process of interorganisational bargaining. If one organisation is totally dependent on another for its operational resources, then it seems plausible to assume that, unless it seeks self-destruction, its ability to challenge the action orientations of the other organisation is somewhat limited.

The above argument assumes that all interorganisational relations involve resources transfer, that is, the exchange and/or appropriation of resources between organisations. There are, however, interorganisational relations which do not directly involve resources transfers. These correspond to what Scharpf (1978) called volitive communications; and these include offers, demands, commands and their acceptance. This type of relation is of particular importance

when analysing relations between state organisations. In this case, the pattern of interorganisational relations is governed not only by the existence of resource inequalities between the organisations concerned but also, in most cases, by the need to comply with more or less formalised sets of rules. In these latter situations, relations are neither voluntarily determined nor do they, necessarily at least, derive from the existence of patterns of control/dependency created by an uneven distribution of resources; rather they result from rules which allocate rights, duties, prerogatives, etc. between organisations.

These rules are not static. Further, they are open to interpretation and negotiation, in part at least, at any given point in time. The operation of the political-administrative apparatus requires, nevertheless, a minimum of stability in operational rules (admnistrative routines) and that, in general, relations between state organisations comply with existing rules. In the absence of this, the whole political-administrative apparatus, and the state itself would collapse.

The need to comply with these rules means that organisations enter in relation with others not from a position of equality, but from a position of advantage or disadvantage which is, in part at least, rule-induced. Thus, local authorities operate in the regional planning process in conditions of severe 'dependency' vis-ā-vis central government (D.O.E. in particular) since existing admnistrative routines prescribe that it is up to the latter to 'approve' the regional plan (see below, pp. 381-2).

It is important to note that admnistrative routines (rules) are themselves the product of power relations. As Saunders puts it:

> *... if power is founded in rules, then the rules are themselves dependent upon the exercise of power; the relation is dialectical.*
>
> (Saunders, 1979, p. 62)

In this respect, it is relevant to stress that the dominant party in power relations has, naturally, a greater ability to bend or modify the 'rules of the game' (Crozier, 1970). This can be done, for example, through formal

expressions of dissent or by failing to respond to the demands of the dependent party. Examples of this ability, in relation to regional planning practice, are clearly apparent as when the central government side of the J.M.S.G. unilaterally decided not to subscribe to the report on the regional economy; or when central government decided not to respond to the final report of the N.R.S.T.

More generally, the superior ability which dominant organisations have in not only establishing, but also bending and altering admnistrative routines tends to generate an organisational mobilisation of bias. By this it is meant that admnistrative routines tend consistently to favour certain organisations at the expense of others. Further, this mobilisation of bias operates not only in terms of favouring certain organisations to the detriment of others, but also in terms of concentrating attention on certain problems and solutions to the detriment of others. As Schattschneider puts it:

> *All forms of political organisation have a bias in favour of the exploitation of some kinds of conflict and the suppression of others, because organisation is the mobilisation of bias. Some issues are organised into politics while others are organised out.*
>
> (Schattschneider, 1959, p. 71)
> (underlined in the original)

Power relations between organisations must, therefore, be analysed in terms of resources, rule-governed interaction and organisational mobilisation of bias.[12] By considering power relations between organisations only as the result of static resource differentials, Skelcher (1979), and the political economy school in general, fail to take into account other power mechanisms which govern inter-organisational relations within complex interorganisational networks. Further, they do not provide explanations for the existing distribution of resources and for changes in this distribution over time.

From the previous discussion, it seems safe to conclude that the strict pragmatic orientation of most interorganisational approaches to regional planning,

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(12) - See Rhodes (1981), pp. 48 - 60 for a similar approach. This analysis of power relations between organisations can be seen as an organisational counterpart of the tridimensional view of power developed, among others, by Lukes (1974). See, also, Appendix D below, pp. D-6—10.

based on social theories and methodologies of dubious validity, has led to the systematic neglect of important issues. These analytical flaws, it was noted are not exclusive to the interorganisational approach to regional planning; rather they are common to most organisational and interorganisational analyses. In these circumstances an adequate organisational approach to regional planning can only derive from a critical alternative to the assumptions, methods and theories inbuilt in most organisational an interorganisational analyses. This is the theme of the following section.

III. 4. THE BASIS OF A CRITICAL ALTERNATIVE (POLITICAL-ORGANISATIONAL) TO THE INTERORGANISATIONAL APPROACH TO REGIONAL PLANNING

In recent years, a number of authors have adopted a critical stance vis-à-vis the assumptions built into most organisational and interorganisational analyses. As a result of this fact, there is now a rapidly expanding volume of literature which can be referred to as critical organisation analysis (for example, Bacharach, 1978; Batley, 1980; Benson, 1977; 1977a, 1980; Burrel, 1980; Clegg and Dunkerley, 1980; Goldman and Von Heuten, 1977; Heydebrand, 1977; Karpik, 1978; Morgan, 1980, Singelmann, 1980; Zeitz, 1980). However, as one of these authors remarks, the literature stemming from this critical upsurge

> *... is of variable quality, differs in its declared manifesto, labels itself by a variety of names and is internally differentiated along a number of dimensions. What it has in common is a highly developed awareness of the limitations of the orthodox approach to organisation theory.*
>
> (Burrel, 1980, p. 91)

In practical terms, this means that it is easier to define the critical literature by reference to the aspects it rejects in the 'orthodox' approaches than by any clearly identifiable set of alternative characteristics. The shortcomings of 'orthodox' approaches were the object of discussion in the previous section. The criticisms, it is worth remembering, were introduced at three levels

a) Methodological - analyses have been dominated by positivist, especially empiricist research methods. Organisational phenomena (structures and processes) have been portrayed and analysed with exclusive reference to phenomenological aspects, as presented by the participants or observed by the analyst. The way in which these aspects were produced and reproduced by both the participants and the analysts have been largely disregarded.

b) Theoretical - the field has been dominated by analyses which consider the organisation (or network of organisations) as

their theoretical objects and not as mere empirical expressions of underlying social phenomena. A logical corollary of this reification process has been the attempt to explain organisational patterns and outcomes as the result of goal-seeking tendencies of the organisations. This has been done with two main consequences. First, the isolation of organisational phenomena from the social context in which they are embedded. Second, their transformation into static structures outside a process of social construction determined by both 'internal' and 'external' tensions and contradictions.

c) Practical - analyses have overwhelmingly adopted a narrow pragmatic orientation, more concerned with suggesting 'feasible solutions to concrete problems' as perceived by powerful actors, than to question the raison d'être of these problems and the nature and effects of existing organisational patterns and outcomes.

Underlying this identification of the flaws of the 'orthodox' approaches lie the elements upon which an appropriate approach might be based. They include the following interrelated assumptions.

a) Methodological - organisations are phenomenological expressions of underlying social relations (power, exchange, etc.) which are by no means reducible to their visible dimension. For example, the analysis of the state cannot be reduced to the analysis of its organisational reality - the state apparatus, it must also include an inquiry into the social relations which influence its mode of operation, role in the wider social context, etc. These aspects are not, generally, accessible through direct empirical observation, rather they must be conceptualised through a selective process of abstraction from the 'real and concrete'.

Given this perspective, the role of the participant, or the analyst, in the production and reproduction of organisational features cannot be disregarded.

b) Theoretical - individual organisations, or networks of organisations, are historically constructed through social processes. It is as important to analyse existing patterns and features as to discuss how, and why these elements change over time. This assumption has two corollaries. First, there is the need to analyse the tensions and contradictions between actors within organisations, and how these shape the characteristics of organisational patterns and outcomes. Second, there is the need to understand organisations not only as loci of tensions and contradictions but also as parts of a wider and contradictory social totality whose structures constrain and influence the social action of the organisation's actors.

c) Practical - the role of a critical approach to organisational analysis is not only pointing out the shortcomings of existing analyses but also indicating alternative ways to restructure organisational patterns making clear, in the process, the wider contexts in which each of the alternatives presented might be possible.

Having identified the methodological, theoretical and practical concerns which should inform an adequate alternative to orthodox organisational analysis, it is necessary to clarify how these assumptions might be used in developing a coherent analytical framework for the study of the organisational dimension of regional planning. The work of Benson (1980) provides a useful starting-point in this endeavour.

Central to his work is the concept of policy sector which he defines as a multi-levelled social structure in which public policies are defined, co-ordinated and implemented. Policy sectors are understood as comprising three

levels of structures:

a) Morphological or Administrative Structures (Level I) - consisting of the array of organisations and programmes operative within the sector. This morphology is held together, in part at least, by various types of resource dependencies between organisations with resources being defined as inputs such as money, authority and legitimacy which an organisation requires for it to meet the conditions for its survival and/or performance. Thus, in morphological terms, the structure of a policy sector can be defined by the organisations by which it is constituted, by the patterns of resource dependencies between organisations and by the formal and substantive contents of the programmes and specific measures operated.

b) The Interest Structure (Level II) - consisting of those social groups whose vested interests are involved in, or are affected by, the morphological structure of the policy sector.

c) The Rules of Structure Formation (Level III) - defining permissible solutions to the problems of interest representation and morphological configuration within the policy sector. These rules derive from tensions between and within policy sectors and, more fundamentally, from the requirements of reproduction of the total social formation.

The relations between the three levels are seen as complex with the deep structures (levels II and III) determining, within limits, the range of variation of the surface level (level I). However, Benson (1980) argues, relations must be understood in dialectical terms. For example, the practical operation of a specific programme may threaten the dominance of the coalition of interests prevailing in a given policy sector. This situation can either lead to rearrangements being made in the policy sector interest structure or, more frequently, to the weakening and/or abolition of that specific programme. Bearing

this in mind, it is important to consider in greater detail the various structural levels.

Starting with the surface level, it is important to emphasise that, for Benson (1980), a policy sector is defined not only through formalised relations of resources dependencies, but also through the informal relations developed during the process of operation of the policy sector itself. The consideration of the relations between organisations within a policy sector raises three questions concerning: the process by which linkages between organisations are forged; the forms of control operating within the policy sector; and the nature and degree of specialisation between its constituent organisations.

Benson (1980) argues that these questions can be analysed by reference to three dichotomous typologies. First, linkages between organisations may be developed by design, i.e. by purposive planning and implementation of a coherent system or, alternatively, they may be developed through a continuous process of separate and limited negotiations among autonomous (or partially autonomous) units. Second, control between organisations can either be the product of the dominance of centralised and hierarchised control mechanisms or, alternatively, they may result from processes of decentralised - market - bargaining between autonomous organisations. Finally, there is the question of the degree and nature of the specialisation - division of labour - between the organisations of the policy sector. Concerning the first dimension of the question, the possible variation ranges from a situation in which all units do, basically, the same things with no specialisation of function - aggregation - and an alternative situation in which every unit has a distinct task - differentiation. In this latter case, the division of labour can be organised either in terms of different units performing different functions or by introducing a separation between policy-making and implementation units.

On the basis of the three dicotomies above, Benson (1980) identifies two alternative holistic ideal-types of administrative structures. The first is characterised by: Design, Hierarchy and Differentiation and corresponds to the

Weberian ideal-type of bureaucracy discussed earlier in this Part of the thesis (see above, pp. 280-8).The second is characterised by: Negotiation, Market and Aggregation and corresponds to the ideal-type of 'negotiated order' put forward by Strauss (1978). The interorganisational approaches to regional planning analysed earlier in this chapter had implicitly assumed a representation of the administrative structures of the activity in terms of this latter holistic ideal-type. However, given the nature (ideal-type) of these two concepts, it is worth remembering that any specific policy sector will never totally assume the characteristics of one, or other, ideal-types. Further, its position in relation to the two ideal-types will, commonly, change over time and the interpretation of this evolution is of greater importance for the understanding of the policy sector than the analysis of its momentary location vis-ã-vis the two holistic concepts. It can be argued, for example, that the decline in the importance of behavioural elements (reticulist skills and judgements) in the regional planning process corresponded to a shift of the administrative structures of the activity towards the bureaucratic ideal-type of administrative arrangements. In any case, an adequate interpretation of this type of shift is only possible by reference to the changing nature of the deeper structures of the policy sector concerned.

Moving now to consider the interest structure of policy sectors this provides the most direct influence on its surface level. The interest structure corresponds to the various social groups which participate and/or are affected by the operation of the policy sector. How these groups should be categorised need not be considered at this stage, as this will depend on the particular characteristics of the policy sector being studied. In any categorisation, however, it is important to bear in mind that groups are not, in most cases, mutually exclusive and that overlapping membership is bound to occur. What is necessary to emphasise at this stage is that these groups provide the basis for the creation and evolution of the policy sectors. They differ, however, in their relative ability to influence the characteristics and pace of these developments, and in the way they exercise their influence. These differences are related, in

the first instance, to the quality and amount of resources each group can potentially command for their action. The emphasis on the word 'potentially' indicates that it is not the actual resources on which a group can lay its hands during a specific process of policy-making which counts, but rather the amount and quality of resources it might command if need be.

Finally, for Benson (1980), the distribution of resources between interest groups can only be understood by reference to the relations of power between different social groups within the wider social formation. For him, it is the dynamics of these relations which create and modify the so-called rules of structure formation. Benson distinguishes between two broad sets of rules. Firstly, negative selection rules which indicate courses of action which are not permitted, and establish limits for the operation of particular programmes and organisations. Second, positive selection rules which indicate the broad characteristics which the policy sector should assume in order to conform with the existing social context and the broad articulation of policy sectors. Drawing on the works of Habermas (1976), O'Connor (1973) and Offe (1975), Benson argues that these rules are not wholly consistent; rather, he sees them as partially contradictory, reflecting the contradictory characteristics of the operation of the state apparatus as a whole. Thus, instead of creating a clear framework for the operation of administrative structures, they often give rise to tensions and conflicts within and between policy sectors.

These contradictions make the characteristics of policy sectors intrinsically unstable. The structural level which is most prone to changes is, not surprisingly, the administrative one. Conversely, major changes in the rules of structure formation tend to be few and far between. This is hardly surprising since any given set of rules allows for a variety of administrative structures. Further, it should be acknowledged that any policy sector to exist with a minimum of viability requires a relatively well defined and stable set of principles to which the actors involved subscribe voluntarily, or by coercion. In the absence of this, a weakening, or destruction of the policy-sector is likely.

The analytical framework developed by Benson (1980) has considerable heuristic value and has already been used by Stewart and Underwood (1981) in relation to the inner city policy. The distinction it establishes between administrative structures (phenomenological level) and deep structures make it possible, for example, to avoid the shortcomings associated with organisational analyses which see power relations between organisations as the mere result of inequalities in the distribution of resources in the interorganisational network.

SUMMARY

In recent years an increasing number of authors have used concepts and theories developed in the field of organisational and interorganisational analysis to study regional planning practice. This development reflects two factors. First of all, a recognition that the institutional context, and specific arrangements for regional planning, play an important role in shaping the form and contents of the activity. Secondly, an awareness of the shortcomings of traditional juridical-admnistrative approaches to regional planning; these tended to overemphasise the importance of hiererchical admnistrative structures, and formal relations between institutions, to the detriment of other types of admnistrative structures and inter-institutional relationships.

After the seminal work of Friend et al (1974), a series of research reports commissioned by the Department of Environment established the inter-organisational perspective as one of the most fruitful approaches to public planning in general and regional planning in particular. From this perspective various aspects of the regional planning activity were studied, namely: the issue of organisational influences in the regional planning process; the relationships between regional planning and other planning systems operated by central government, local authorities and non-departmental public bodies; and, alternative regional planning methodologies.

The findings of the research reports commissioned by the D.O.E., and of the subsequent studies which proceeded along the same lines of enquiry, clarified the nature and extent of a series of shortcomings and ambiguities which had plagued regional planning practice in the past. However, these studies failed, themselves, to overcome a number of methodological, theoretical and practical insufficiencies. Thus, and in spite of their undeniable merits, their conclusions fell short of providing an appropriate basis for the study of the institutional dimension of regional planning practice. As noted in the previous chapter, such a

basis can only be built upon alternative methodological, theoretical and practical assumptions. Recent 'critical' organisation literature due, inter alios, to Benson (1980) gives precious hints of how to escape from many of the shortcomings associated with 'conventional' organisational and inter-organisational analyses of public planning in general and regional planning in particular. Its use for the analysis of regional planning requires, however, a number of reformulations and additions. These issues will be explored in Part IV of this study.

PART IV

A POLITICAL ORGANISATIONAL APPROACH TO REGIONAL PLANNING

INTRODUCTION

This Part of the thesis builds on arguments and conclusions from earlier chapters of the study in order to develop an analytical framework for the study of regional planning. Further the usefulness of that framework is tested by using it to analyse political and organisational aspects of regional planning in England, especially in the case-study area of the West Midlands region.

With these objectives in mind Chapter IV.1. opens with a discussion of how regional planning can be characterised in the context of the various policy sectors operated by the state. After clarifying this point the remainder of the chapter is used to present the main elements of a political-organisational framework for the study of regional planning. In the course of the discussion two alternative methods for the study of regional planning practice are identified and an assessment is made of their pros and cons.

In the sequence, Chapter IV.2 initiates the process of detailing, and putting into practice, the analytical framework presented in the previous chapter. Regional planning is characterised as an activity involving, and resulting from, the interaction of a large number of state organisations. After identifying the various types of state organisations involved in regional planning the analysis moves on to consider their inter-relationships insofar as these concern regional planning practice. Finally, various aspects of the changing institutional context of regional planning in recent years are analysed.

The discussion moves then to a more specific level and Chapter IV.3. is concerned with the administrative structures of regional planning in England during the period 1964 - 1980. These structures are considered in two stages: first, the different organisational arrangements used during the 1960s to produce regional plans are analysed; second, the tripartite model of regional strategic planning employed in most English regions during the 1970s is considered in some detail.

The next section, Chapter IV.4. shifts the discussion to the political level and provides a preliminary assessment of the role played by different actors in the specification of regional planning outputs. In order to carry out such a task a detailed classificatory scheme of actors in regional planning is developed; and the point is made that the role those actors play in regional planning can only be properly evaluated through the consideration of the specific action orientations they adopt vis-à-vis the activity.

Finally, Chapter IV.5. looks at the political dimension of regional planning from a different perspective, that is, through the consideration of the various types of power relations and constraints which determine the characteristics of regional planning outputs. Examples form regional planning in the West Midlands are again used to illustrate the discussion, which concludes with a brief synopsis of the major analytical findings concerning the political dimension of regional planning.

IV.1 - A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS (II)

The analytical framework described in the previous section was developed by Benson (1980) for subsequent application in the context of comparative analyses of different policy sectors. Given this fact its use for the analysis of regional planning needs to be preceded by some considerations concerning whether regional planning can be considered a policy sector, and whether the framework might be used outside the analytical domain in which it was originally devised.

Benson's (1980) definition of policy sector encompasses both a political and an organisational dimension. In political terms, policy sectors are defined as arenas in which public policies are decided and implemented; they are associated with the substantive aspects of much of the political debate (e.g. housing, health). In organisational terms, policy sectors are understood as networks of organisations connected to each other by resource dependencies, and empirically distinguishible from other networks by breaks in the structure of resource dependencies.

From these definitions it is clear that the identification of policy sectors is not a matter of theory but rather one of taxonomy. In other words, the identification of policy sectors derives from a process of partition, and classification, of the whole field of public policy into separate categories according to some intersubjective criterion of differentiation. Bearing this in mind, how can regional planning be characterised? Is it a policy sector, a part of a policy sector or something else?

In their research which deals with an area of state activity with some similarities with regional planning Stewart and Underwood (1981) found it possible, with some qualification, to analyse inner city policy as a policy sector in Benson's terms. The extension of the concept to cover regional planning appears, however, problematic. Like inner city policy, regional planning operates

by bringing together at a specific geographical scale elements of previously distinguishble policy sectors. Further, the interorganisational relations associated with the two activities involve, in both cases, organisations belonging to the two main levels of the political-administrative apparatus.

There are, however, two basic differences between the activities. Inner city policy is a 'statutory' activity and commands resources (money, authority) of its own. Regional planning is neither statutory nor does it command, generally speaking, specific resources[1]. Further, while inner city policy has a clear implementation dimension - Stewart and Underwood (1982) attribute fundamental importance to this dimension of the policy - it is problematic whether it is possible to talk about implementation in relation to regional planning (Hart, 1978)[2]. One of the most important conclusions of the D.O.E. sponsored research, reviewed in Part III of this thesis, is that most regional planning outputs were best seen as inputs-usually not fundamental ones - into the planning processes of a variety of organisations and policy sectors. In these circumstances it seems possible to talk about an influence dimension of regional planning but not about an implementation dimension (e.g. Carter et al., 1975; Friend et al., 1978).

Given this perspective it seems appropriate to think of regional planning as a cross-sectoral policy planning activity the outputs of which act as inputs into the planning systems of a number of policy sectors. The outputs of the activity involve cross-sectoral policy plans (e.g. regional plans and strategies); operational decisions which might have been included in those policy plans; and a continuously changing cross-sectoral policy planning network of organisations which provide the basis of support for the ongoing activity[3]. The

(1) - Decisions on New Towns and on major planning inquiries, which in the context of this thesis are considered to fall in the domain of regional planning are the exception to this rule. See below pp. 356-8.

(2) - *"I have no clear idea what (implementation) means ... at the level of a regional strategy which can be quite stratospheric"* (Hart, 1978, p. 10)

(3) - See the definition of regional planning in Part I of this thesis. See also the characterisation of 'outcomes of network policy planning' provided by Ranson et al. (1980)

question which needs now to be answered is whether this network, and associated activity, can be studied with the help of the analytical framework developed by Benson (1980).

The answer to this question must rest in the affirmative. As Benson himself asserts the aim of his framework was to

> *guide(s) research to important issues and locate(s) specific research problems in relation to more encompassing concerns (by providing) a framework of concepts and propositions at a macrolevel*
>
> (Benson, 1980, p. 2)

This approach applies equally well to the study of policy sectors as to the study of regional planning. In these circumstances, it seems legitimate to draw on Benson's framework when developing an analytical scheme for the interpretation of regional planning practice. The following scheme maintains the crucial distinction between 'administrative structure' and 'deep structures' but introduces a number of modifications in the way these levels, and the relations between them, are to be analysed.

In this scheme the admnistrative level of regional planning is considered as comprising the organisations, and organisational networks operative within the activity; the relations between the organisations, and organisational networks; and, finally, the substantive or practical orientations of the activity.

Because of the multisectoral and multilevel characteristics of regional planning, a large number of organisations are involved in the activity. Any attempt to consider the admnistrative level of regional planning must, therefore, begin by identifying the set of organisations involved in the activity. This examination must be complemented by an analysis of the organisational division of labour within the activity. By this it is meant the breakdown of the patterns of differentiation and control over specific process in the overall activity. To put it more succintly, it is necessary not only to identify which organisations are involved but also to clarify what role each individual organisation plays in the whole process.

Insofar as they are involved in a common activity the organisations

constituting the 'regional planning network' interact with each other. These interactions can be classified in relation to the two broad types of interaction identified by Scharpf (1978). On the one hand, there are volitive communications involving offers, demands, commands and their acceptance. On the other hand, there are resource transfers including the exchange and/or appropriation of resources between organisations. Interactions can be voluntary and mutually advantageous or, at the other extreme, they can be for the exclusive benifit of only one of the parties involved and occur as a result of hierarchical control or coercion. They include, therefore, both relations of exchange and power/dependence. The latter only partially result from resource dependencies between organisations. They derive, also, from the existence of 'rules of the game' which govern particular interorganisational relations and, more generally, from situation of 'organisational mobilisation of bias' which establish the broad conditions in which concrete inter-organisational relations take place[4].

The manner in which interactions develop, the pattern of control within the network of organisations and the nature and extent of the organisational division of labour constitute a specific 'admnistrative structure'. This can be analysed with reference to Benson's (1980) two holistic ideal-types of admnistrative structures ('bureaucracy' and 'negociated order').

In order to analyse the patterns of interaction between organisations involved in regional planning it is necessary to bear in mind two aspects. The first is that, for most of the organisations concerned (central government departments, local authorities, etc.), the interactions developed in relation to regional planning are only a part - arguably minimal - of the overall set of relationships existing between them. Given this fact, it is necessary to analyse the specific interactions developed in relation to regional planning within the whole complex of relationships between the organisations concerned. As most of the organisations involved in the activity belong to the state political-

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(4) - See Rhodes (1981) esp. pp. 48 - 60 for a similar approach.

administrative apparatus, it is necessary to locate these relationships within the field of intergovernmental relations[5].

The second aspect which is necessary to bear in mind is that, in the regional planning activity, relations between organisations occur both as a result of formal admnistrative arrangements and informal processes of consultation, negotiation, etc. In these relations individual actors are mainly involved in their capacity as representatives of organisations. However, they also bring with them to these relations personal and professional beliefs, attitudes and interests, which together constitute the actor's action orientations[6].

In order to advance these action orientations actors develop strategies of action. The 'behaviour' of organisations in interorganisational relations is determined, in part at least, by the action orientations, and strategies, pursued by the 'dominant coalition' of actors within the organisation. This idea of 'dominant coalition' actors should, however, be treated with care. It refers not necessarily, to a single group of actors, dominant in relation to each and every process, but rather to a number of different coalitions of actors, which in relation to specific relations and issues manage to determine the course of action to be adopted by the organisation. Although within each organisation, the various 'dominant coalitions' are unlikely to vary dramatically in relation to different relationships, and issues, it would be wrong to postulate the existence of an all powerful 'dominant coalition'.

The third dimension of the administrative level of regional planning which needs to be considered concerns the extent to which the stated and actual

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(5) - The expression intergovernmental relations is used here with a clear recognition that the designation is more commonly associated with relations between parts of a federal state, or between states in some form of 'regional organisation' such as the European Communities.

(6) - Also in this respect the position adopted by Benson (1980) appears too restrictive as he reduces, in pratical terms, the action orientations of actors to the promotion and defense of self interests. See also Appendix D below, pp. D-10—20.

orientations of the activity coincide. Both in specific and overall terms regional planning processes are usually accompanied by declarations of intent, stating the objectives and practical uses of the activity. Whether these declarations match up with the reality of the processes is a totally different matter. For a number of reasons the difference between what is said and what is done is often substantial. The analysis of the gap between 'discourse' - what is said about the activity - and reality - what is done - provides a convenient mechanism for relating the 'admnistrative level' of the activity with the corresponding 'deep structures' (the 'interest structure' and the 'rules of structure formation').

In order to understand the interest structure of regional planning it is important to bear in mind that the operation of state organisations in general, and government organisations in particular, cannot be analysed and interpreted in the same way as the functioning of organisations belonging to the civil society. In the latter, decisions and actions are taken on behalf of those (shareholders, employees, etc.) who constitute the organisation. In the case of a state organisation, however, decisions and actions are taken on behalf not only of the elements constituting the organisation but also of the constituency represented by the level of political admnistration to which that organisation belongs. Thus, central government departments' decisions and actions are taken on behalf of the whole 'national'community, local government decisions on behalf of the 'local' community, etc[7].

This basic difference has a number of major implications as far as the analysis of 'public sector' decisions and actions are concerned. While in the case of organisations of the civil society decisions and actions can be interpreted with exclusive reference to the 'interests', 'goals', etc. of the individuals and groups (dominant individuals and groups) constituting the

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(7) - The fact that in practical terms this is an increasingly difficult distinction to be made does not affects the theoretical rationale of the distinction.

organisation, in the case of state organisations the interpretation must look beyond those individuals and groups directly involved in the organisations concerned. To use the terminology developed by Benson (1980) the 'interest structure' associated with the 'admnistrative level' of the activity is always larger than the structure of interests within the organisations which constitute the 'admnistrative level' of the activity. Further, in the study of state decisions and actions the definition of the 'interest structure' associated with them is not a 'given' in the research, rather it has to be progressively defined during the research process itself. To put it more succintly the study of the interest structure of regional planning requires:

a) the identification of the individuals, institutions, etc, which intervene in the determination of regional planning outputs (these individuals and institutions belong to both the state and the civil society);

b) the study of the rules, mechanisms and processes through which the 'interests' and 'goals' of competing actors and institutions are translated into regional planning outputs.

The consideration of these two aspects constitutes the traditional object of 'political science' (Duverger, 1972).

A 'political science' approach to regional planning can be carried out at two different levels, namely: the study of regional planning outputs and the study of regional planning outcomes. Because the concepts of output and outcome do not command an unambiguous meaning it is important to clarify the meaning with which they are used in this thesis. Here, following Burnett (1981), outputs will be defined as the authoritative decisions and actions of public authorities and the regulations, facilities, etc, associated with them. Regional planning outputs include, as noted earlier, cross-sectoral policy plans, operational decisions and the reproduction of the structural patterns and processes which constitute the activity. Outcomes are the consequences and impacts (immediate and longterm, direct and indirect, intended and unintended) of these outputs on those

actors (individuals, groups and institutions) who participate in the activity or are, in some way, affected by it.

It is obvious that the two levels of analysis are by no means mutually exclusive. Indeed, they are best seen as complementary and, as far as possible, they should proceed in parallel. There are, however, a number of theoretical and methodological difficulties associated with each of the two levels of analysis. As the relative importance of these analytical difficulties varies according to the characteristics of the activity being studied it is important, in each concrete situation, to undertake a preliminary assessment of the advantages and disadvantages associated with each level of analysis.

Turning first to the analysis of political outcomes, two main analytical difficulties have to be faced when assessing the consequences, and impacts, of regional planning outputs. The first major difficulty corresponds to what Allison (1978), in his evaluation of post-war town and country planning, calls the counterfactual argument. By this is meant the difficulties associated with the need, when assessing the effects of any decision or action, to compare the situation as influenced by that decision, with the likely situation in the absence of that decision or action. Comparative and forecasting studies can be used to reduce the problems associated with the counterfactual argument. A total elimination of the uncertainties associated with the argument cannot, however, be possibly achieved[8].

In the case of regional planning the definition of the relevant counterfactual appears particularly problematic. This situation derives from the fact that with a few exceptions (e.g. New Towns and the decisions and actions associated with public enquiries) regional planning outputs serve, mainly, as inputs into other policy planning processes. Given the difficulty of evaluating how far these latter decision-making processes are influenced by regional

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(8) - For example the evaluative studies of regional policy conducted during the 1970s all rely on some form of forecasting methodology; see Armstrong and Taylor (1979)

planning outputs or by other inputs it is extremely difficult to evaluate what the outcomes of regional planning really are.

The second major difficulty associated with the study of outcomes can be referred to as the evaluative measuring problems. This problem can be divided into two broad questions. Firstly, there are the questions of what, and how to measure. Variations in land values, and in monetary incomes of individural actors and institutions can, with more or less difficulty, be directly measured. However, some of the most important outcomes of the regional planning activity are intangible (e.g. changes in the behaviour of individual actors; modifications in environmental variables associated with 'quality of life'). Attempting to evaluate these intangibles, and all the other 'measurable' variables, using an unique standard measure (e.g. monetary values) is, as Self (1976) shows, a totally arbitrary exercise. However, ignoring them on the grounds that they are difficult, or impossible, to measure would be 'like imitating a drunk who having lost his watch in a dark alley insists on looking for it under the street light at the entrance to the alley because it is the only bright spot he can find'[9].

Secondly, there is the value judgement problem associated with any evaluative exercise. It would probably be impossible, and certainly irrelevant, to undertake an evaluation of regional planning without introducing in the exercise subjective assessments of what is considered to be good (beautiful, economically appropriate, etc.) and what is held to be bad (ugly, economically inappropriate, etc.). Although the open statement of the values used in the assessment might clarify the subjective dimension of the evaluation, it cannot reduce its arbitrary (subjective) character (Myrdal, 1958)[10].

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(9) - Joke told by an American political scientist and quoted by Duverger (1972), p. 6.

(10) - Even at a more restricted level such as 'urban politics' (Saunders, 1979) and 'urban planning' (Simmie, 1981) evaluative exercises do not escape, despite the claims of their authors to the contrary, this arbitrarianess (See Appendix D). Broad evaluative analyses of town and country planning have, in turn, ended up as more (Allison; 1975, 1978) or less (Hall et al; 1973) subjective assessments and their conclusions are still very much open to debate (Broadbent, 1977).

There is no need, here, to further enlarge on these points. At this stage it is already clear that an assessment of the outcomes of regional planning would entail more than its fair share of difficulties. The two general problems associated with evaluation of outcomes (counterfactual argument and evaluative measurement problems) would be compounded in the case of regional planning by the intangible nature of a significant proportion of its outcomes. Moreover they would be affected by the difficulty of assessing whether, or not, regional planning outputs could be held responsible for specific outcomes. Given this perspective, it seems more feasible for this thesis to concentrate on the analysis of the political outputs of regional planning.

Having settled for a less ambitious, and more specific, objective it would be unwise to underestimate the difficulties to be faced in the pursuit of even this objective. In broad terms the difficulties to be encountered concern three issues: first, the identification of the political outputs themselves, and their characterisation; second, the identification of who (individual actors, groups, institutions, etc.) determines the outputs and by what processes; third, the definition of the constraints within which the outputs are determined and the relations between these constraints and the outputs themselves. It is important to consider these issues in further detail.

The analysis of regional planning practice in the West Midlands region developed in Part II of this thesis revealed beyond reasonable doubt the fact that the boundaries of regional planning are neither clearcut nor static. At any given point in time a neat separation of, for example, structure planning from regional planning decisions is probably impossible. Further, the practical orientations of the activity change over time and this necessarily entails variations to the limits of what may be considered regional planning outputs. Instead of embarking on spurious disputes concerning subject-boundary definition, it seems more fruitful to accept a broad definition of regional planning outputs - as that provided earlier in this section - and to recognise that only the empirical analysis of concrete situations will make it possible to decide whether,

or not, a specific output constitutes a regional planning output.

It must be clearly understood, however, that by regional planning outputs is meant a much wider set of decisions than the policy recommendations included in regional plans. They include also: decisions concerning the regional planning agenda (the types of issues to be adressed by the activity, the types of recommendations that can be made); the determination of the organisational mechanisms and methodological features of regional planning processes; the specification of regional planning operational decisions (with or without reference to existing regional plans), etc..

These outputs result both from processes of exchange and power. In this respect it is worth emphasising that regional planning outputs are determinad by all varieties of power relations identified by the tridimensional view of power[11]. These include: first, decisions taken in relation to situations of overt conflict between two or more social actors (Dahl, 1961), second, the three types of non-decision - making identified by Bacharach and Baratz (1970); and thirdly, situations of what Lukes (1974) calls 'systemic mobilisation of bias'[12].

The second issue upon which it is necessary to make a few preliminary comments concerns the identification and characterisation of actors (individuals, institutions) and processes through which regional planning outputs are determined. In advanced societies, organisations provide a basis for power relations and constitute the main agencies of social interaction. This is particularly evident in the case of regional planning in which the definition of the outputs of the activity results from various forms of organisational interaction[13]. As noted earlier, however, the operation of organisations can only be understood in relation to the action orientations of the human elements (individuals, groups) by which organisations are, in part at least, constituted.

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(11) - See Appendix D below for a discussion of the tridimensional view of power.

(12) - Whether the latter type of power relations is, or not, best considered as 'constraints' is discussed below, see pp. 358-9.

(13) - The role of unorganised social actors is discussed below, see pp. 466-73.

In brief, this issue raises questions concerning power distribution in the regional planning activity, the action orientations of relevant participants and the strategies they use to foster their 'action orientations'. The political level of analysis cannot, therefore, be neatly separated from the organisational one[14].

Moreover, it is important to stress that the analysis of regional planning outputs has little to do with what might be called 'a study of power at the regional level'. Two main reasons account for this fact. On the one hand, the definition of regional planning activity adopted in this thesis fells rather short of embracing all forms of state intervention in the evolution of regions, let alone the complex multiplicity of power relations which affect the region's social life. The structures of power at the regional level cannot, therefore, be 'derived' from the study of the power relations concerning regional planning[15]. On the other hand, the analysis of regional planning practice in the West Midlands strongly suggests that the basis of power relations associated with the regional planning activity only sporadically appear to be situated at a regional level. On the contrary, conflicts appear to take place mainly at both 'national' and 'local' levels of political administration, and between these two levels.

The third issue which is necessary to comment upon concerns the question that not only power relations internal to the regional planning activity have a say in the determination of its outputs. Regional planning does not exist in a social vacuum and its outputs are shaped not only by the power relations internal to the activity, but also by a variety of contextual constraints (social, economic, political) which are themselves, in part at least, the output of wider

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(14) - In his analytical framework Benson (1980) establishes too sharp a distinction between the 'organisational' and the 'political' levels of analysis.

(15) - Simmie (1981) and to a lesser extent Saunders (1979) can be criticized for attempting to derive the structure of 'urban politics' from the study of power relations concerning urban planning matters. This would only be possible if a single hierarchy of power existed in society. As the discussion in Appendix D reveals, power relations do not reflect a single structure of power.

power relations. Thus, while political outputs are 'internally determined' by the power relations associated with the activity they are also, 'externally conditioned' by constraints which act as invisible power mechanisms[16]. The relations between 'outputs' and 'constraints' should however be understood in dialectical terms. On the one hand outputs suffer the effects of existing constraints. On the other hand, however, they are themselves active elements in changing the context.

A final, and important, set of remarks must be made in relation to this last issue. This concerns the need to distinguish the power relations internal to the regional planning activity from the power relations in society in general. If this distinction is not made, and the effect of these wider power relations goes unnoticed, than there is a fair chance that the outcomes of the wider power relations will be mixed up with the specific outcomes of the activity being studied. For example, regional planning may be held responsible for phenomena (e.g. social polarisation in space) which result mainly from the operation of market mechanisms. This would, of course, make a mockery of the counterfactual argument which must be a cornerstone of any political analysis. Neverthless, in relation to this issue it is important to note that the characteristation of constraints - 'rational' and 'structural' (Lukes, 1977) - varies according to the set of power relations being studied. For example, the distribution of responsabilities between the two main levels of political admnistration, or the principles of a 'mixed economy', are only 'rational constraints' as far as power relations in the society as a whole are concerned. However, they act as 'structural constraints' as far as the power relations specific to the regional planning activity are concerned. There is simple no way in which the regional planning activity, per se, can override these constraints. Their effects upon regional planning outputs should, therefore, be understood not in terms of power relations but rather of constraints.

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(16) - The concepts of 'internal determination' and 'external conditioning' are due to Lefebvre (1973)

The main features of the analytical framework developed above are summarised in Fig. 25.

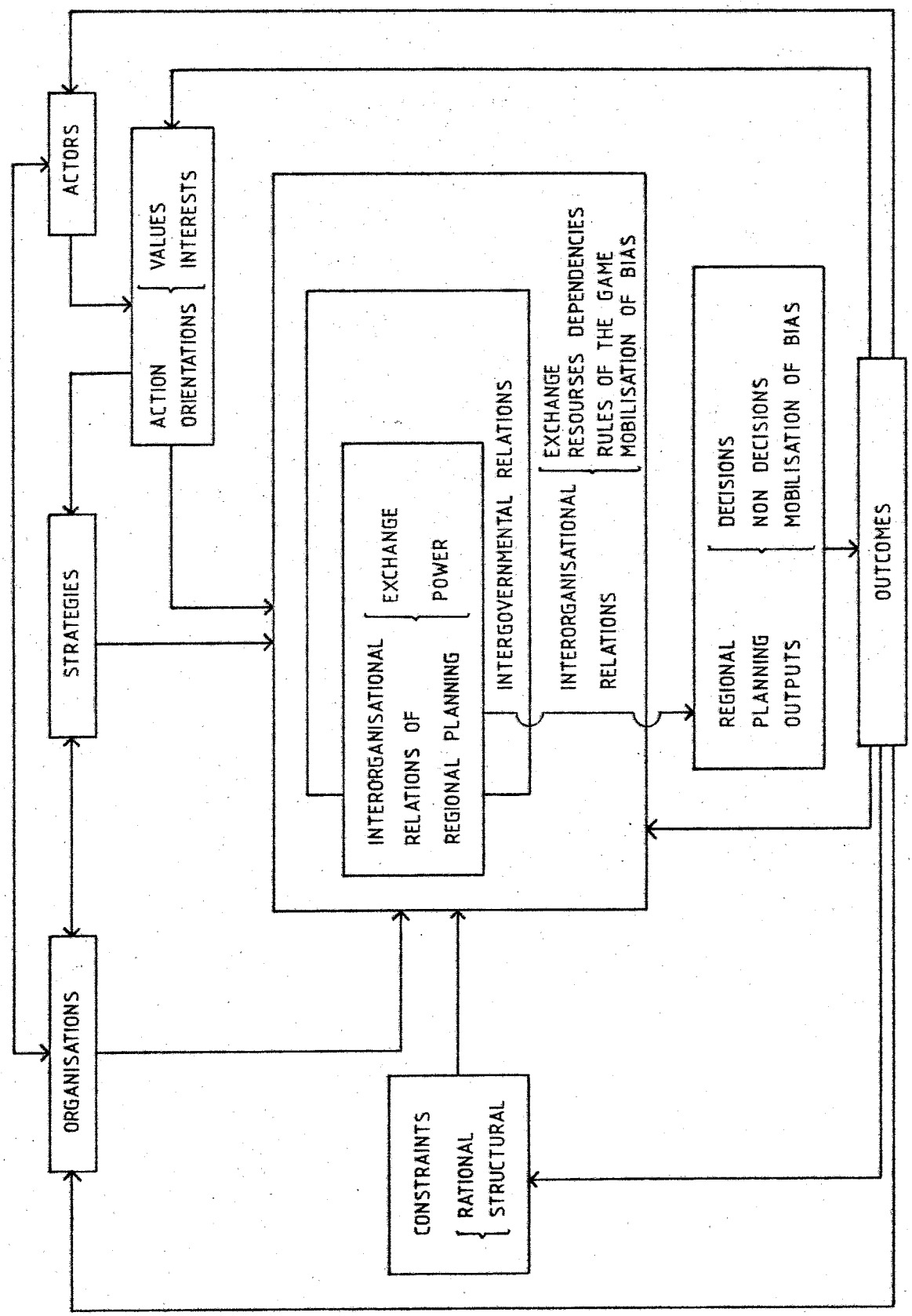

Fig. 25: Regional Planning - a framework for analysis (II)

IV.2 - STATE ORGANISATIONS, INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS AND REGIONAL PLANNING

As a form of state activity regional planning is directly determined by the actions of, and interactions between, state organisations. For most of these organisations, however, regional planning does not constitute the main reason for their existance and operation. Further, intergovernmental relations developed in relation to regional planning constitute only a minimal part of the whole field of intergovernmental relations. In order to understand the role of the various government organisations, and their interactions, in relation to regional planning it is important to consider the broad institutional context of regional planning. The remainder of this chapter attempts to provide a broad perspective on this context and on some of its recent developments.

IV.2.1 - STATE ORGANISATIONS AND REGIONAL PLANNING

In the United Kingdom the whole apparatus of government derives in law from decisions made in Parliament, including the creation, retention or abolition, of other governmental bodies and the formal framework of relations between them. In the case of England it is possible to distinguish between three main types of governmental organisations: first, there are central governmental departments headed by Ministers in whom all responsabilities for the functions performed by the departments are formally vested; second, there are local authorities whose formal powers and functions are vested in elected councils; finally, there are non-departmental public bodies which can be broadly described as appointed public agencies established by statute or ministerial decision to perform tasks in place of central government departments or elected local authorities. It is useful to consider each of these types of state organisations in turn.

Central Government Departments and their Interrelations

At the central level, although all government powers are vested in individual Ministers, day-to-day work is carried out by civil servants within a departmental structure devised along functional lines. Coordination between the various branches of central government action is undertaken - under the ultimate supervision of the Cabinet and the Prime Minister - by a complex cabinet committee system backed up by a parallel network of interdepartmental committees constituted by senior civil servants. The detailed membership of these committees and their terms of reference are not disclosed but, to use the words of two experienced commentators, the intrincacies of the system

> *defy all but the most psychadelic imagination*
>
> (Heclo and Wildavsky, 1981, p. 4)

There is no need here to comment on the intrincacies of the system as a whole. Time is more fruitfully used to briefly consider two specific aspects: the regional organisation of central government, and the characteristics of the department with specific responsability for regional planning - the D.O.E..

Most of the main departments operate nowadays under some form of regional organisation. However, reflecting the tradition of dividing admnistration vertically by function rather than horizontally by area, the regional organisation of the various departments differs considerably, both in terms of the boundaries used for delimiting the areas of influence of regional offices (Hogwood and Lindley, 1980) and in respect of the nature and extent of the deconcentration of powers from headquarters to regional offices (Keating and Rhodes, 1982). In spite of these differences it is, certainly, correct to say that, in general, regional considerations play little part in departmental decisions (Stevens, 1976) and that regional controllers consider themselves more as managers implementing within their regions centrally determined policies, rather than initiators of such policies (Clements, 1971; Wright and Young, 1975).

This situation does not mean, however, a lack of effort in coordinating the regional action of central government. Attempts have generally materialised

under the format of regional committees and their constitution, functions and evolution is well documented (e.g. Smith, 1964; Keating and Rhodes, 1982). These committees, however, never carried responsibilities of their own and each department maintained exclusive responsability for its own actions.

Perhaps the most significant development in this respect was the creation in 1964 of the system of R.E.P.B.s. Cross (1970) argued that their creation facilitated deconcentration of powers to the regional offices and that this, in turn, provided for more horizontal coordination. However this view was strongly challanged by Self (1975) who argued that this increased coordination was, at best, merely reflected in adjustments to matters of detail. During the 1970s the latter view increasingly gained currency and at this stage it seems sufficient to quote from a recent Parliamentary report wich stated that:

> *R.E.P.B.s did not seem to provide the level of coordination between departments and areas of policy achived by the Scottish and Welsh Offices for their respective countries.*
>
> (House of Commons, 1980, para. 4)

Turning now to briefly consider the role of the D.O.E. two issues deserve specific treatment: the overall structure and functions of the department and the role played by its regional offices. In relation to the former question, it is important to note that the creation of the D.O.E. was part of a wider attempt, in the early 1970s, to foster policy coordination at central government level through departmental integration of closely related responsabilities (Draper, 1977). The perceived advantages and disadvantages of the process have been extensively discussed (Town Planning Review, 1978). From this discussion it seems generally agreed that the sheer size of the department created enormous problems of internal policy coordination. Painter (1980) analysed this issue in some detail and concluded that initial efforts at centralised coordination of the Department's actions were progressively abandonned, and a more loose style of coordination adopted. This, in turn, has fuelled claims that the various functions are not sufficiently integrated at D.O.E. headquarters[17]. That being

(17) - Letter from Staffordshire County Council of 1 April 1980 to the House of Commons enquiry 'D.O.E. and the West Midlands Region' (House of Commons, 1980).

the case regional planning would be one of the activities most likely to suffer.

The second issue on which it is necessary to comment concerns the role of the D.O.E. regional offices, in the light of the division of labour within the department. Because of the overall responsability of the Department for regional affairs and local government, its regional offices perform a wider range of functions than similar offices of other departments. Young (1982) identifies seven main functions of the D.O.E. regional offices including: formal executive responsabilities; active promotion of government policies; arbitrator of conflicts between local authorities; directly influencing local authority policy making etc. It is also important to note that the D.O.E. regional controller acts as chairperson of the R.E.P.B.s.

The division of labour between regional officers and headquarters diminishes, however, the ability of the regional offices to provide a strong point for spatial coordination of policies. A number of important D.O.E. functions such as responsabilities for New Towns and the Water Industry are, in all major respects, dealt with only at headquarters level. This creates obvious problems of coodination. For example, in evidence submmitted to a recente House of Commons enquiry the County Councils of Hereford and Worcester, and Salop, argued that the D.O.E. regional office appeared to have very little influence over New Town decisions. Given this situation, these (and other) authorities complained that in respect to a number of issues (e.g. New Towns, investment programmes requiring ministerial approval) the action of the D.O.E. regional offices appeared mainly to delay decisions and constituted a barrier to the level in the department where decisions were effectively taken[18].

Local Authorities and their Interrelations

In England as a result of the Local Government Act of 1972 local

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(18) - See written Evidence submitted by Hereford and Worcester County Council (12 March 1980), Salop County Council (10 March 1980) and the West Midlands County Council (11 March 1980) to House of Commons (1980).

authorities are organised on a two tiers basis: the Counties and Greater London at one level and the Districts (or Boroughs) at the other. There is, however, no hierarchy of local authorities - the Counties do not have, generally speaking, a superior or supervisory role with regard to the Districts. Local authorities are responsible for the discharge of a wide range of government functions including education, highways and public transport, housing, town and country planning etc. The distribution of functions between the two levels of local authorities has varied over time as a result of different influences, and a synoptic vision of the allocation of functions is provided in Table XII.

Most functions are allocated exclusively to one of the two levels of local authorities but a few are split between the two levels; one of such functions is town and country planning. Following the Local Government Act of 1972, land-use planning and, to a lesser extent, development control matters were split between the two levels of local authorities. County Councils and the Greater London Council are required to prepare structure Plans for their areas, setting out the main planning policies which are to be followed in the ensuing years. District (or Borough) Councils, in turn, are charged with the preparation of local plans of various types which are supposed to translate into more specific planning proposals the broad policies of the Structure Plans. These Plans, unlike the Structure Plans which require Ministerial approval, are adopted by the respective District (Borough) Councils. However, the relevant County Council must certify that they do conform generally with the Structure Plan. The preparation of Structure and Local Plans within a County may be regulated by a Development Plan Scheme agreed between the County and Districts establishing the detailed arrangements for preparing these plans[19].

Development control is also split between the two levels of local authorities. The Districts have the main responsability for development control,

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(19) - In some cases conflicts develop anyway, as in the recent review of the West Midlands Structure Plan in relation to the County Council attempt to encourage the promotion of small offices and workshops in some residential areas. See above pp. 259-60.

	Metropolitan Areas		Non-Metropolitan Areas		Greater London	
	County Council	*District Council*	*County Council*	*District Council*	*Greater London Council*	*London Borough Council*
Planning						
structure plans	●		●		●	
local plans		●		●		●
development control		●		●		●
country parks	●	●	●	●		
national parks	●		●			
derelict land	●	●	●	●	●	●
Transport						
transport planning	●		●		●	
highways	●		●		●	●
traffic regulation	●		●		●	
road safety	●		●		●	
parking	●		●		●	●
public transport	●		●		●	
Education		●	●		● inner London	● outer London
Social Services		●	●			●
Housing		●		●	●	●
Fire Service	●		●		●	
Police Service	●		●			
Consumer Protection	●		●			●
Environmental Health						
building regulations		●		●	● inner London	● outer London
clean air		●		●		●
control of disease		●		●		●
food hygiene		●		●		●
refuse collection		●		●		●
refuse disposal	●		●		●	
street cleansing		●		●		●
Libraries		●	●			●
Museums and the Arts	●	●	●	●	●	●
Recreational Facilities	●	●	●	●	●	●
Encouragement of Tourism	●	●	●	●	●	●
Cemeteries and Crematoria		●		●		●
Footpaths	●	●	●	●		●
Smallholdings	●		●		●	
Allotments		●		●		●

Table XII: Distribution of Local Government Functions post 1974

but up until very recently all planning applications which might conflict with a fundamental provision of the Structure Plan had to be referred to the County Council[20]. In order to clarify what planning applications might be considered to fall within this category many County Councils, in consultation with District Councils, have prepared a non-statutory Development Control Scheme which sets out the more detailed arrangements for handling applications.

Relations between Counties and Districts in regard to town and country planning matters are, arguably, responsible for the bulk of the relations between the two tiers of local authorities. The field of relations between local authorities, however, also includes: first, an enormous amount of informal bilateral contacts in relation to other government functions (e.g. highways and public transport (Mulvehill and Morran; 1980)); second, relations within the framework of the central organisations of local authorities (A.C.C., A.D.C., A.M.A.); third, relations within the framework of Standing Conferences or similar bodies (e.g. B.O.C. and the W.M.P.A.C.). Standing Conferences are important elements of the regional planning activity and it is, therefore, relevant to say a few words about them at this stage.

A fundamental feature of Standing Conferences is that they represent purely voluntary arrangements between equals. There is, broadly speaking, no way in which a Standing Conference as a whole could impose its will on individual member authorities. Further, in order to safeguard the existance of the organisation, Standing Conferences tend not to interfere in disputes between constituent local authorities. For the same reason, decisions are generally taken by consensus and this either prevents the tackling of sensitive issues or imposes the adoption of 'maximum common denominator' decisions. As a former senior officer of the W.M.C.C. pointed out with some irony, Conferences are

> *so democratic and representative as to find it almost impossible to ever agree on major issues*
>
> (Liggins, 1978, p. 8)

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(20) - The Local Government Planning Land Act 1980 substantially reduced the number of cases in regard to which Counties are involved.

In a number of cases, Standing Conferences are backed up by a permanent team of officers which act as Technical Units and Secretariat to the Conferences (e.g. the W.M.R.S. in the West Midlands Region).

Non Departmental Public Bodies

The expression non-departmental public bodies covers a wide range of agencies performing tasks of different nature and operating at different levels according to various models of organisational structure. The common element in these agencies is that they are managed by boards, or other forms of decision-making structure, constituted by members appointed in the majority of cases by Ministers alone, or by Ministers and local authorities. An important distinction can be made between executive and non-executive bodies.

As a further division executive agencies can be divided into:

a) Corporate bodies in charge of the nationalised industries (e.g. British Rail and National Coal Board). These are trading bodies characterised by two main features: first, each industry is publicly controlled, by this is meant that the whole or the majority of its board of management is appointed, directly or indirectly, by the Minister responsible for the department sponsoring the industry; second, the management board is a corporate body empowered to manage its affairs without, in theory at least, detailed control by Parliament or government-although there is a general formal obligation to break even financially. Within the context of this 'arm's length' doctrine the management boards have powers to borrow (within limits laid down by Parliament) and maintain their own resources.

b) Agencies carrying out devolved central government functions (e.g. Regional Water Authorities). For example, after the Water Act 1973 ten R.W.A.S. took over direct responsibility for conservation, supply and distribution of water; sewerage and sewage

disposal; land drainage; water pollution control; water based recreation and amenity and fisheries. The Authorities' members are appointed partly by the Secretary of State for the Environment and partly by local authorities. R.W.A.s, have specific responsabilities as to their financial arrangements and charges, and wide discretion in how they discharge them.

c) Bodies set up to carry out a specific task (e.g. New Towns Development Corporations). N.T.D.C.s, for example, are set up by ministerial order and are responsible for drawing up the Master Plan for the New Towns, and for executing it after being approved by the Secretary of State. The corporations have responsabilities for the construction and administration of houses, shops, factories, etc. and further to this they may generally do anything necessary or expedient for purposes of the new town. All their members are appointed by the Secretary of State and although they have a separate legal existence they are responsible to him and subject to his control.

As far as non executive non-departmental public bodies are concerned these encompass a wide range of organisations (regulatory, advisory, etc.) and any attempt to undertake a classification is likely to prove extremely difficult. For the purposes of this thesis, however, no such classification is offered as only the E.P.C.s need be considered in any detail.

The E.P.C.s, disbanded in 1979, were initially conceived of as advisory bodies of central government. Further they were entrusted with the task of encouraging local authorities and other public agencies to adopt a 'regional perspective' to common problems (Peterson, 1966), and to mobilise popular support for the policies devised to tackle those problems (Clements, 1971). Their role was therefore a mixture of advise and advocacy (Painter, 1973).

With the exception of the chairperson, who received a small fee for the post, the E.P.C.s were constituted by unpaid part time members and there was a

high rate of membership turnover. It has been argued that, as a result of these factors, the work of the Councils tended to be determined by specific requests from the Boards and that the quality of the studies they produced was disappointing (Hall, 1977). Neither of these criticisms, however, seems to be of general validity. The experience of the West Midlands, for example, reveals that the E.P.C. often opposed the E.P.B. on major issues and indeed was responsible for one of the most thoughtprovoking documents on the region's economic future (W.M.E.P.C., 1971). Stewart (1979) has also credited the Councils with valuable research work in areas such as leisure, tourism and population mobility.

Each E.P.C. comprised twenty to thirty individuals who were representative of different types of experience within the region (industrialists, trade-unionists, academics, local authorities' members etc). Although representatives of both sides of industry were appointed after consultation with the regional offices of the C.B.I. and the T.U.C., all members sat as individuals and not as delegates of any agencies or interest groups[21]. This had the widely acknowledged effect of allowing for a high-degree of consensus to be reached at the meetings of the Councils, where decisions were generally taken without the need for voting procedures (Clements, 1971; Painter, 1973; Storer, 1971)[22]. But it also meant that the organisations to which the Council's members belonged were by no means committed to the Council's decisions.

Finally, it is important to note that because the Councils had no executive powers whatever, their ability to engage the support of other regional agencies depended on the assessment, made by the latter, of their influence on the decision-making processes of executive bodies[23]. In a bottom-up approach this meant primarily their influence over central government decisions, either through the recommendations put forward in the studies published by the Councils, or

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(21) - Interviews with Mr. P.D. Malcolm 22.1.81 and Sir David Perris 27.1.81.

(22) - Also interviews with Dr. Ian Gibson 21.1.81, Sir Michael Higgs 23.1.81, Mr. James Mason 20.1.81 and Sir David Perris 27.1.81.

(23) - See Painter (1973) and below pp. 406-8.

through the confidential advice they gave to Ministers. This influence always seemed to be marginal. On the one hand central government often responded negatively, if at all, to recommendations and proposals made by the Councils. This happenned in the case of issues such as: granting Development Area Status and promoting the West Dock scheme for developing the port of Bristol in the South West region (Clements, 1971); giving financial assistance to firms moving to overspill areas in the West Midlands region (Painter, 1973) etc.. On the other hand the Councils were often excluded from important decision - making processes such as those relating to the third London Airport and Channel Tunnel in the South-East region (Hall, 1977) and the decisions to treble the population target of Telford (Dawley) N.T. and create the North Worcestshire overspill scheme in the West Midlands (see above, pp. 137-42). The weakenesses of the Councils in this respect were widely acknowledged by their members who tended to accept that the Councils had not been a major influence on any particular decision concerning the region (Clements, 1971; Hall, 1977; Lomas, 1979; Painter, 1973; Stewart, 1979; Storer, 1971)[24].

As a result of this perceived lack of influence the Councils were completly bypassed in specific lobby exercises (e.g., location of the N.E.C. in the West Midlands Region) and planning initiatives (subregional studies of the late 1960s).

Having identified the main types of state agencies involved in the institutional context of regional planning it is now important to briefly consider the nature of the relationships between them.

IV.2.2 - INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS AND REGIONAL PLANNING

It is beyond the scope of this thesis, and the ability of the author,

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(24) - This was generally supported by a number of interviews which the author made with members of the W.M.E.P.C. namely: Dr. Ian Gibson, 21.2.81; Mr. Francis Graves, 21.1.81; and Mr. E.C. Whittingham, 9.1.81.

to provide a comprehensive picture of intergovernmental relations in England. In any case such an exercise has already been undertaken (Bains, 1979)[25]. Attention here will concentrate on those aspects of the relations more directly relevant to the regional planning activity. However, even with this narrowing of focus it seems necessary to consider three main types of relationships: a) relations between central government departments and non-departmental public bodies; b) relations between local authorities and non departmental public bodies; and, c) central-local government relations. It is useful to consider each of these relations in turn.

a) Relations between central government departments and non-departmental public bodies.

In order to understand the relations between central government and non-departmental executive public bodies it is important to briefly consider why certain governmental functions are provided by bodies other than central government departments or local authorities. According to Johnson (1979), the best currency idea in this respect is that the increase in the functions of government and their diversification requires both different skills and experiences from those found in government departments or local authorities, and more flexible structures than those developed within bureaucracies[26]. This view has, certainly, some explanatory power but it appears to overemphasise the importance of admnistrative and technical convenience, to the detriment of political and ideological aspects.

Hogwood (1982) for example argues that the restructuring of both the National Health Services and the Water industries in the early 1970s was strongly influenced by the pressure of professional groups. Further, he claims that the creation of executive public bodies allows Ministers to 'distance' themselves

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(25) - See also the extensive bibliographical appendix in Rhodes (1981).

(26) - This 'good currency' idea has an obvious resemblance with some of the arguments put forward by Offe (1975) concerning the different mechanisms of policy formation required by 'allocative' and 'productive' state activities; see above, pp. 45-51.

from sensitive issues acting, therefore, as political cushions. From a different perspective Hood (1980) suggests that the creation of these type of bodies serves to bypass direct political control, whether at a central or local government level, and enhance the power of officialdom.

All these arguments - and others, such as the attempt to mitigate the effects of centralization - have certainly a ring of truth about them. However, none of these arguments can on their own possibly provide a full explanation for a process which is characterised by diversity, and, partly at least, ad hoc attempts to fit admnistrative structures to perceived new problems. Having said this, it is important to illustrate some of the aspects of these relations with the help of the three types of non-departmental executive bodies selected for exemplification in the previous section, namely nationalised industries, regional water authorities (R.W.A.s) and new towns development corporations (N.T.D.C.s).

In the United Kingdom the broad features of the relations between central government departments and nationalised industries are dominated by the 'arm's lenght' doctrine. Within this context the government of the day has, neverthless, a number of ways in which to influence the actions of nationalised industries. These are laid down in the statutes of the industries and generally include: first, ministerial powers of approval over lines of capital investment, over borrowings, the management of reserves and management of surpluses; and, second, ministerial powers of general direction in the national interest. The way in which these powers are used do not always conform with the arm's length doctrine. Indeed the idea that nationalised industries should act according to sound business criteria often conflicts with the view the government of the day has of the national interest. This has led successive governments to interfere, quite strongly, with relatively minor management decisions of the boards of nationalised industries (Hudson, 1981). Whether sponsoring Ministers would be prepared to interfere in the management of nationalised industries only for the sake of bringing their decisions in line with regional planning outputs is a different matter altogether.

Ministerial powers of influence and control go much further in relation to the water industry than do the powers of the sponsoring Ministers in relation to the nationalised industries. The Secretary of State for the Environment may give directions 'of a general character' either to all, or specific, authorities and also has powers of direction in regard to charging options, charging schemes, allocation of reserves, etc.. More important the water authorities borrowing for capital expenditure requires ministerial approval and this provides central government with the necessary leverage in discussing with each authority expenditure levels, priorities and financial policies. In one case, at least, the Secretary of State has used this opportunity to impose a particular change in policy of the Severn - Trent Water Authority[27]. It is difficult to see, however, Ministers imposing their authority on water authorities only to make these comply with regional planning reccommendations.

As far as N.T.D.C.s are concerned the problem is a different one. Further to the approval of the general outline of development (Master Plan) all development by a N.T.D.C. needs planning permmission which must be obtained from the Secretary of State (not from the local authority). Moreover, all monies, required by a N.T.D.C. are provided by the exchequer and have to be agreed separetely by the D.O.E. and the Treasury. Finally, the Secretary of State has powers to alter the overall pace of development and/or modify the original Master Plan. In the case of the West Midlands and in relation to Telford N.T. alone, Ministers have altered no less than three times the Target population and rate of development of the New Town[28]. The basic problem with these alterations

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(27) - In 1977 the Secretary of State imposed a requirement that in setting its charges for the subsequent year, the Severn Trent Water Authority should make full use of expected surpluses on appropriation account. This was contrary to the Authority's intention of utilising such surpleses to relieve charges over a period of years and led to high percentage increases in charges in 1979/80. See evidence of the Severn-Trent Water Authority (11 March 1980) to House of Commons (1980)

(28) - The first time this happened was in 1967 when the original population target was more than trebled to a figure of 225,000 by 1991. The second time intervention took place occurred in August 1975 when, in the aftermath of the approval of the Orange Book, the Secretary of State wrote

is that in two out of three cases they were made without previously consulting local authorities in the area or the W.M.E.P.C. and the Development Corporation itself[29]. All these decisions were taken in Whitehall and with little or no input from the regional offices or indeed from previous regional planning outputs[30]. The problem with relations between N.T.D.C.s and the department responsible for New Towns policy (currently the D.O.E.) is therefore one of intradepartmental coordination.

As far as the relations between the E.P.C.s and central government departments are concerned the first thing that is necessary to note is that the abandomnent of medium-term economic planning in the late 1960s and the subsequent abolition of the D.E.A. rendered part of their 'terms of reference' unnecessary. However, these were not modified and there was no attempt to suppress them at that time; with a major local government reform in the pipeline it was considered more appropriate to suspend judgement on this matter.

In 1972 in response to a question in Parliament, the Minister responsible for the Councils - Peter Walker - stated that he could easily have got rid of them but that he believed.

> *that they could provide a very useful manner of gathering together leading people ... to give a broad view on what they considered were important factors in the future development of their regions*[31].

Thus in the 1970s the role of E.P.C.s was progressivly restricted to that of advising Ministers (Young, 1981). In this role, however, their activities were often resented by senior civil servants and it was, probably, with the approval

to the chairman of the N.T.D.C. asking him to work on a target population basis of 145 - 155,000 to 1986 with an ultimate target of 220,000. Both these alterations were made without previously consulting local authorities in the area or the Development Corporation itself. Finally in August 1977 the population target was further revised downwards - this time after consultation with local authorities, the W.M.E.P.C. and the N.T.D.C. - to 130,000 by 1986 and 150,000 by 1990.

(29) - Interviews with Dr. Ian Gibson, 21.1.81; Mr. Marshall, 14.1.81; and Sir Michael Higgs, 23.1.81.

(30) - For example the 1977 alteration was introduced during the very early stages of the updating of the West Midlands regional strategy.

(31) - Hansard, vol. 834, col. 1537 of 13 April 1972.

of the latter that the E.P.C.s were abolished in 1979[32].

b) Relations between local authorities and non-departmental public bodies

The relationships between local authorities and nondepartmental executive public bodies are extremely variable in form and importance. In the case of nationalised industries the situation could almost be described as one of indirect influence without interaction. Investment, or disinvestment decisions of nationalised industries can have dramatic effects on certain local authorities areas but there is little chance of them being influenced by local authorities[33].

As far as R.W.A.s are concerned, however, the situation is completly different. A majority of the members of R.W.A.s are appointed by the local authorities of the areas concerned. Further, R.W.A.s when drawing up their plans have the statutory duty 'to have regard' to structure and local plans and are obliged to consult with local authorities in their areas during the respective planning processes. Moreover, under the water Act of 1973 local authorities are statutorily entitled to carry out the discharge of certain functions as agents of R.W.A.s, and auditing, and complaints of maladmnistration by water authorities, are pursued through the relevant local government machinery.

The role of R.W.A.s in land-use matters has been hotly debated ever since the reorganisation of the water industry. As Capner (1975) noted in an early contribution to the debate, specific water authority investments may increase the attraction of particular areas for housing or industry purposes and by so doing induce particular patterns of land-use. Although this argument has

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(32) - In the aftermath of the disbanding of the Councils the former Chairman of the Northern E.P.C. went on record as saying that the Secretary of State for Employment - Jim Prior - had told him that *"civil servants think that you (E.P.C.s) are expendable, that you serve no useful purpose"*. Quoted by Michael Parkins, Guardian of 26.7.1979. It is important to note that in some regions e.g. South-West and Yorkshire and Humberside the E.P.C.s assumed responsabilities for regional planning studies throughout the 1970s.

(33) - In metropolitan areas Passenger Transport Executives provide for some coordination between the transport policies of local authorities and the action of British Rail and National Bus Company.

been recently restated by Gray (1982), Stanley (1975) seems to have correctly defined the general attitude of water authorities when he wrote that in general terms their aim is to respond to demand, rather than to determine the location of that demand in the first place. In a period of limited growth and financial stringencies, however, the whole discussion appears to be somewhat outdated. In fact, as Payne (1978) suggests, and the experience of the West Midlands confirms, the influence of R.W.A.s over land-use is unlikely to be of primary importance except in in very specific and localised development. Further this influence is likely to result from the characteristics of water as a scarce resource.

From the R.W.A.s point of view the fact that Development Plans do not, in general, establish priority areas for development and that planning permissions do not always coincide with Development Plan proposals has led them to adopt a lukewarm approach to the Development Plan system (Hickling et. al, 1979). This situation, which is doubly valid in relation to regional planning, derives from the fact that in making investment decisions R.W.A.s require detailed informations and the certainty of commitment to development. In this respect they tend more often to rely on Housing Investment Programmes (H.I.P.s), distribution of planning permmissions, etc, than on regional planning outputs.

Moving now to consider the relationships between N.T.D.C.s and local authorities, these can be of particular importance for some local authorities. For example, in the recently approved Salop C.C. Structure Plan the expected population growth in Telford N.T., in the period 1976-1991, is estimated to account for no less than 90 per cent of the forecast growth in population in the whole county for the same period. In order to overcome short-term financial problems that might ensue from situations of this sort the New Town Act 1965 allows N.T.D.C.s to contribute financially towards the cost of local government services, and to construct infrastructure which are subsequently transferred to the appropriate local authority. In spite of these arrangements there are no formal liaison arrangements between local authorities and N.T.D.C.s. In any case it is important to remember that, as noted earlier, decisions about the New Town

population targets, and rate of development, are taken by central government often without consulting either local authorities or the N.T.D.C.s (see above, pp. 137-8).

As far as relations between local authorities and E.P.C.s are concerned it seems fair to say that they were never particularly smooth. Local authorities resented the fact that E.P.C.s were made responsible for preparing regional plans (even if these were to be primarily economic) and this prompted the Standing Conferences of Local authorities in the South East and the West Midlands to unilaterally prepare regional plans for their areas in parallel with E.P.C.s (see above, pp.154-8). Further, the advisory role of E.P.C.s carried out largely under constraints imposed by the Official Secrets Act was also resented by local authorities. In order to improve relations between them, the D.E.A. went as far as to suggest that

> *the confidentiality of official information provided to E.P.C.s should not be overstressed*
>
> (D.E.A., 1968, p. 4)

It is certainly fair to say, however, that local authorities' members never fully backed up the E.P.C.s work nor were they particularly vociforous in their criticisms of the decision to abolish them[34].

c) Central-local government relations

Central government (when the expression is used as to include Parliament) can alter the functions and powers of local authorities or even terminate their very existence (see above pp.363-6). This is not the case when one is using the definition of central government which refers only to Ministers and their departments. Ministerial power is based on statutes and such powers are subject to the ultra vires rule. This rule which applies both to the procedural

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(34) - Painter (1973) quotes a number of local West Midlands councillors who all agreed that E.P.C.s did not represent the 'interests of the region'. This attitude had a counterpart in claims of other members (academics, trade-unionists and industrialists) that the councillors members of the W.M.E.P.C. tended to be 'parochial' in their approaches to the region's problems. Interviews with Dr. Ian Gibson, 27.1.81; Mr. James Mason, 20.1.81; and, Sir David Perris, 27.1.81.

and substantive aspects of action taken, states that a public body cannot act in a way which is beyond its legitimate powers as defined in the relevant statutes. As these powers have never included unlimited rights of intervention in local government affairs, any specific control that central government has, requires statutory backing.

In recent years the issue of central-local government relations has attracted a great deal of public and academic debate, in particular associated with the contradictory views that central government has been unable to control local government expenditure and that there has been an increasing control of central government over local authorities (S.S.R.C., 1979). Although the discussion in Appendix C below goes some way towards exploring the complexities of the debate, it is not possible to do full justice to its intrincacies in the context of this thesis. Here, after a short summary of what appear to be the major conclusions of the debate, attention will concentrate on the central-local government relations associated with Structure Planning.

Two essential contributions to the debate on central-local government relations were the Layfield Report on Local Government Finance (G.B., 1976) and the study of the Central Policy Review Staff on central-local relations (C.P.R.S., 1977). The overall conclusions of these reports, as far as central-local government relations are concerned, suggest inter alia, that:

a) central government departments in making and implementing policies act for the most part in isolation from each other and thus put conflicting pressures on local authorities;

b) responsabilities are greatly confused by uncertainties about the respective responsabilities of central and local government;

c) central government efforts to control local authority capital expenditure in the short term have proved inflexible and reinforced compartmentalisation between programmes;

d) despite a multiplicity of overlapping channels of communication the information available on individual services remained patchy;

e) central-local government controls over local authorities have been used for purposes other than those originally envisaged, etc.

Both reports tended to accept that in recent years centralisation has increased to a certain extent but as Rhodes emphasises,

> *the picture which emerges is less one of central control and more one of an ambiguous and confused relationship in which neither level of government is clear about its relationships*
>
> (Rhodes, 1981, p. 174)

Indeed the ambiguity and confusion of the overall relations derive, in part at least, from the number of controls that central government departments have over local authorities. A recent count made by the national associations of local authorities listed more than 1,000 separate instruments of control and influence (A.C.C. et al., 1979)[35].

These instruments can be divided into two broad groups: financial and non-financial. The latter include: the issue of regulations, circulars, memoranda and directions; powers of confirmation, consent and approval over local authorities decisions; authority to hold appeals and public enquiries, the enforcement of statutory duties laid on local authorities, etc[36]. The financial instruments, in turn, relate to the amount of grant made available each year to individual authorities and local authorities as a whole, the operation of borrowing consent powers and the setting of cash limits on capital expenditure of local authorities[37]. Although financial relations between central and local governments have an important indirect effect on regional planning (Raine and Baxter, 1978) it is the relationship established in regard to Structure Planning which provides, arguably, the most direct and significant influence on regional planning. It is therefore important to consider this relationship in some detail.

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(35) - In the sequence of this count some 300 controls were abolished (G.B., 1979). Some of them, in fact, had never been used!

(36) - These instruments are described in some detail in Appendix C with illustrations provided by reference to D.O.E. functions, planning in particular; see esp pp. C-5—13.

(37) - See Appendix C for details esp pp. C-5—13.

The Town and Country Planning Act 1971 (Section 7, (4)) requires that

> *In formulating their policy and general proposals (in their Structure Plans) the local planning authorities shall... have regard (a) to current policies with respect to the economic planning and development of the region as a whole.*

Central government, and the D.O.E. in particular regard regional plans (strategies) as one way in which such policies are expressed. Given this perspective, and although regional strategies are note binding on the local authorities:

> *justification of any proposal in the Structure Plan which departed from the strategy would clearly be called for* [38].

This has created a somewhat paradoxical situation, in which documents (regional strategies) which have had no explicit place in the statutory planning system have appeared as directly influencing the approval of the cornerstone of that system (Structure Plans). Indeed the modifications introduced in the first wave of Structure Plans in the West Midlans region were justified by reference to the existing regional Strategy (see above, pp.221-30). However, the modifications introduced by the Secretary of State are only the tip of the iceberg as far as the influences which the D.O.E. brings to bear on local authorities during the preparation of Structure Plans[39].

The regional offices of the D.O.E. are involved in steering and advising the preparation of structure plans right from the beginning of the process. In the first wave of Structure Plans, largely due to the lack of expertise in the process, the work of the local authorities was almost paralleled by similar work at the regional office. More recently, during the review of some Structure Plans the involvement of the D.O.E. regional office has been reduced, reflecting the greater expertise local authorities have of the process and the

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(38) - Evidence by the D.O.E. to the House of Commons Expenditure Committee Enquiry on Planning Procedures (23 June 1976) (House of Commons, 1976).

(39) - The following description is based on the West Midlands experience and draws on various sources namely Roberts (1976), the D.O.E. evidence to House of Commons (1980) and interviews with Mr. Colin Davies (30.1.81), Sir Michael Higgs (23.1.81), Mr. M. Marshall (14.1.81), Mr. David Saunders (5.5.81) and Mr. Robert Smith (12.10.80). See also Appendix C esp. pp.

policy of the current Conservative government to disengage central government from the detail of Structure Planning.

Once the local authority agrees on a draft Structure Plan there is a 'presentation meeting' involving local authority members and officers on the one side and central government officers (D.O.E. and eventually other departments) on the other, to alert and advise the local authority as to matters which need to be reconsidered. Subsequently to this meeting it is normal practice for the D.O.E. regional office to write a letter to the local authority detailing points of criticism and identifying possible areas of conflict. After the local authority has agreed the final Structure Plan proposal this has to be submitted to the Secretary of State for approval. On submission of the Plan the regional office has the responsability of steering through the various stages to its approval. This involves, in the first instance, receiving comments and objections and then appointing a Panel to conduct an Examination in Public (E.I.P.) of the Plan. This Panel of three members, two of whom belong to the D.O.E., is then briefed by the regional office about the issues that need to be considered at the E.I.P.. In consultation with the members of the Panel the regional office prepares a list of issues to be discussed at the E.I.P., and of the persons and organisations to be called to give evidence. As outside bodies and individuals cannot come to the E.I.P. and speak on the matters they choose, the rules of procedure mean that it is possible for important issues to be ignored, and interested persons not heard, if the D.O.E. regional office so decides. In recent E.I.P.s due, in part, to the government commitment to speed up planning procedures the process has taken precisely these characteristics[40].

After the E.I.P., the Panel secretary (an officer of the D.O.E. regional

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(40) - For example in the West Midlands the joint E.I.P. of the Structure Plans for the County Boroughs of Birmingham, Dudley, Walsall, Warley, West Bromwich and Wolverhampton lasted for about two months, and some 90 participants were involved in the discussion. More recently, reflecting the overall approach of the Conservative government to planning procedures the situation has been changed dramatically. The Examination in Public of the West Midlands Structure Plan review lasted less than a week and no more than thirty people were involved in the discussion.

office) drafts the report of the E.I.P.. In the light of this report the regional office prepares a letter which is sent for headquarters for consultation and review. Proposed modifications are then published in a draft form for comments (especially by the local authority concerned), and after eventual alterations the list of modifications is approved by the Secretary of State and published by the D.O.E. regional office.

From this account of the process it is clear that the D.O.E. has considerable scope to influence, and in the last resort control, key aspects of the Structure Plans such as ensuring their consistency with the relevant regional strategy. The fact that at the end of the day the regional office acts as 'judge' and 'jury' during the E.I.P., and finally advises the Minister on how the Plan should be modified, means that informal influences exerted during the early stages of the process have considerable force.

From a central government perspective, it can be argued that the existence of an 'approved' regional strategy particularly if prepared with the cooperation of local authorities, acts as an additional form of legitimation of its interventions in the structure planning process. Indeed Young goes as far as to suggest that regional strategies in the 1970s were used not because they were a sensible and desirable mechanism in their own right but because they:

> *offered a means of helping sort out another problem which was there for the first time in the 1970s - controlling the content of structure plans*
>
> (Young, 1981, p. 17)

This might seem a jaundiced view but there is certainly, some truth in it. But this is to anticipate the discussion in the following chapter. Before entering into that discussion it is necessary to briefly consider some recent changes in the institutional context of regional planning.

IV.2.3 - THE CHANGING CONTEXT OF REGIONAL PLANNING

Because of the crossectoral and multilevel characteristics of the

regional planning activity, its admnistrative structures are particularly prone to change. The sources of change can be either specific or structural. Taking first of all the specific sources, these fall into two main types. On the one hand changes in the nature and characteristics of problems which are perceived as being within the domain of regional planning. Such changes derive not only from modifications in the socio-economic context of regional planning but also from shifts in the ideological-political and theoretical perspectives from which that context is considered.

In recent years changes in the regional planning problematic have included, for example, the emergence of the 'inner city' problem and concerns with the inter-regional distribution of public expenditure within the perceived domain of regional planning. On the other hand it is necessary to consider changes in the theories - substantive and procedural - and prescribed solutions as to how to organise and steer the regional planning activity to tackle the problems which are seen to exist in its domain. Changes in this respect concern, for example: the relative emphasis attributed to the co-ordination of the plans and activities of public agencies at the regional level, vis-ã-vis the definition of specific regional planning priorities; the role to be played by New Towns and other types of 'new communities' in the solution of metropolitan problems, etc.

No less important, but more often overlooked, are the 'structural' changes imposed by alterations in the institutional and policy context of regional planning. These changes can be summarised along four main dimensions.

a) Changes in central government - these include changes in the distribution of functions between, and within, central government departments; in the extent and characteristics of the deconcentration of powers to regional and local offices; in the procedural-admnistrative arrangements and methods through which policies are formulated and admnistered (management structures included).

b) Changes in local government - these may assume a number of forms

and include alterations to one, or more, of the following elements: boundaries of local authorities, distribution of functions between local authority tiers (districts, counties, etc.); level of discretion in the use of available resources (authority, money, etc.); management structures; arrangements for joint action between various local authorities, etc..

c) Changes in non-departmental public bodies - these include the setting up, disbanding or reformulation of the various types of non-departmental public bodies. Reformulations encompass: alterations to the boundaries under which they operate; changes in the functions they perform and in the levels of discretion available to carry them out; modifications in their political constitution and membership.

d) Changes in intergovernmental relations - these include changes in all types of intergovernmental relations considered in the previous section. In most cases changes in these relations do not derive from major formal political or admnistrative reorganisations but rather from different emphases being placed on existing channels of communication and control.

The second source of structural change consist of modifications to the orientation, or priorities, of the policy sectors and planning systems which interact with regional planning. In this respect it is necessary to bear in mind that, in addition to functionally defined policy sectors, there are policy sectors (e.g. regional policy, inner cities policy) and policy planning systems (e.g. structure planning) which, like regional planning, operate through spatially based considerations. Obviously, changes in the boundaries of assisted areas; in the nature and strength of instruments used for regional policy purposes (financial incentives, locational controls, etc.); in the scope and procedural mechanisms through which structure plans are prepared; all these can influence the various dimensions of the admnistrative structure of regional planning. Less

visible changes in the management structures, or in the orientation, of functionally oriented policy sectors (housing, transport, etc.) can also substantially modify the context within which regional planning is developed.

At this stage three points of clarification must be made. Firstly, the relations between 'specific' and 'structural' sources and mechanisms of change should not be understood in 'structuralist' terms. In other words, it is not argued here that structural constraints predetermine specific changes. The relation between these two orders of change is a dialectical one, in which specific changes are not only influenced by structural changes but can also singificantly influence the latter. In the mid 1960s, for example, the idea that regional economic planning might contribute towards a better management of the national economy led to the creation of a system of regional economic planning councils and boards which, evidently, modified the institutional context of regional planning.

Secondly, and in line with the previous observation, the various sources and mechanisms of change should be considered in relation to each other. As an illustration it can be shown that the creation of the R.E.P.C.s and boards was, in part at least, responsible for the establishment, later in the same decade, of Standing Conferences of local authorities at the regional level. This happened in spite of the fact that, formally at least, neither the Councils nor the Boards constituted a threat to the local authorities' prerrogatives or responsabilities.

Finally, the point needs to be made that what was refered to as structural (institutional and policy) sources and mechanisms of change are in themselves byproducts of wider societal changes. They represent, on the one hand changes in the internal organisation of the state apparatus (institutional changes) and, on the other hand, modifications in the mechanisms of the exercise of state power (policy changes). However, as was shown in Part I of this thesis neither the structures, nor the actions, of the state can be adequately understood in isolation from the civil society with which it constitutes a given social formation. This makes necessary a consideration of the broad socio-economic and

political-ideological context of the activity in any analysis of changes in its institutional and policy context.

In Part II of this thesis the broad features of the regional planning context were discussed in relation to the analysis of regional planning practice in the West Midlands region. There is no need for repetition at this stage and so only a synoptic table of the evolution of the regional planning context is offered (Table XIII). Given the objectives of this thesis it is important, however, to consider in some detail a number of recent institutional changes which have had a significant impact on the regional planning activity. These changes relate to all four sources of institutional change outlined earlier and the analysis now moves to consider them in turn[41].

As far as central government is concerned the changes which are worth referring to here relate to the broad issue of control of public expenditure. Until the mid 1970s the overall control and distribution of public expenditure was determined along the lines suggested in the Plowden Report on the Control of Public Expenditure (G.B., 1961). After the publication of this report the U.K. government adopted a system of medium term public expenditure planning, through rolling five-year expenditure programmes subject to annual interdepartmental review within the framework of a complex network of committees, usually referred to as Public Expenditure Survey Committee (P.E.S.C.).

The broad ideas behind the creation of this system were to increase the coordination of departamental expenditure whilst, simultaneously, ensuring that public expenditure expanded at a rate consistent with the long-run growth of the U.K. economy. However throughout the 1960s and early 1970s the system proved incapable of achieving the latter objective due

> *partly to the persistent overestimation of the future growth of the economy and partly to the persistent underestimation of public sector demands on the available resources"*
>
> (C.S.E., 1979, p. 36)

(41) - The introductory sections to the chapters in Part II of this thesis provided more detailed considerations in relation to other changes.

Period Influences	MIDLE 1940's - EARLY 1950's	EARLY 1950's - EARLY 1960's	EARLY 1960's - MID-LATE 1960's	MID-LATE 1960's - MID 1970's	MIDLE 1970's ONWARDS
SOCIO ECONOMIC CONTEXT	- Moderate economic growth but subjected to a large number of constraints (price controls, restrictive practices) in the period imediately after the war - steerling currency area crisis (balance of payments) leading to a wage freeze in 1948 and devaluation in 1949 - progressive diminution of the 'national solidarity' spirit created by the war period.	- 'stop-go' cycles in the British economy Recession / Boom 1952-53 / 1954-55 1956-57 / 1958-59 but GDP rate of growth only half of other major european countries - labour shortages but low level of domestic investment associated with wage rises above level of inflation - emphasis on market economy and on fiscal instruments of macro-economic management - rapid changes on the demographic features and in the patterns of personal mobility.	- continuation of stop-go cycles and mild growth - balance of payments problems and low productivity increases - overheating in Southern industrial areas coupled with structural unemployment in the Northern parts of the country - desideologisation of Civil society and popularity of technocratic ideologies.	- continuation of slow economic growth coupled with periodical balance of payments crisis, low productivity increases and investment. Devaluation of the sterling in 1967 followed by deflationary budgets leading to budget surpluses - property boom in the early 70's - various attempts to curb power of trade unions and shop-floor militancy, leading to overspread social unrest	- Major world economic recession, zero or minimal growth coupled with rising inflation. - monetarist policies introduced in 1975 in order to combat inflation, protect sterling (government ideologically committed to cut-back public expendeture) tightening of monetary controls leading to rapid growth in unemployment. - labour 'social contract, broke down in the ' 1979 winter of discontent '. Conservatives committed to curb down power of unions. Increased level of ideological struggle.
POLITICAL INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT	- 1945-51- Labour Government - massive state intervention and control (nationalisation programmes) - creation of 'welfare state' (NHS) - progressive dwindling of consensus politics - extensive regional organization of Central Government.	- 1951-59- Conservative Governments - 'cold-war' and conolization of the British Empire - rejection of direct state-interventions in production (some denationalisations) - strong organization of working class at shop floor level - progressive dismantling of regional organisation of central government	- 1960-64 Conservative Government 1964-66 Labour Government - wide acceptance of the need for long-term indicative economic planning both national and regional - Labour Party adoption of technocratic ideology (The inovators) - building up of planning machinery on a tripartite basis, specially during 1964-66- Lab. Government - growth in the number of non-departmental public bodies and in the regional organisation of central government - local government reform in London in 1963	- 1966-70 - Labour Government - 1970-74 - Conservative Government - failure of the 'planning' experiment and return to traditional short-term economic management - In the early stages of conservative government 'free-market' ideology important (Selsdom man'). Later, there was a return to state intervention in industry. (nationalisation of Rolls-Royce, IA1972 etc.) - reorganization of central and local governments - increase in number and variety of non-departmental public bodies - adhesion to the EEC - reorganisation of water industry and N.H.S. - rise of nationalist movements in Scotland and Wales - rise of protest movements.	- 1974-79- Labour Government - 1979 → Conservative Government - labour government adopted initially mix of pragmatism (social contract, incomes policy managing the crisis) and 'corporatism' (planning agreements, NEB etc.). Later, after the 1976 IMF intervention, labour cut-back in real wages, public expenditure, etc. Failure of 'corporatism' - rise of 'new right' within the Conservative Party emphasising ideological and economic considerations over social ones. - increase of 'planning systems' and of the number as non-departmental public bodies. - abolition of REPC.
POLICY CONTEXT	- initial Consensual support for planning of land-use (TCPA 1947) - attack on the problems of compensation and betterment of land development - emphasis on council housing building but slow progress, due to financial and other (shortage of labour and materials, etc.) difficulties - regional policy aimed to tackle inter-regional unemployment disparities, but its importance was severely diminished by the 1947 sterling crisis. Location controls were relaxed and advanced factory building decreased in importance.	- relation of planning controls - progressive repeal (1953 and 1954) of the financial provisions of TCPA 1947 and return to full market values for land in 1959 - rise in house building rates but progressive shift to private sector house building and owner occupation - increasing 'industrialization' of council housing and lowering of standards (high rise blocks of flats) - priority to motor way construction (inter-urban) and road building - little emphasis on regional policy.	- return to more active role of central government in planning matters (HTs etc); a trend reinforced by the 1964 - 66 - Labour Government. - land-prices boom followed by the introduction of a ' betterment levy' by the Labour Government - renewed emphasis on council housing for wholesale redevelopment - redevelopment of city-centres for commercial purposes and developed by the private sector - emphasis in private transport (motor car mainly) and in urban motorways building - rapid increase in roads expenditure ('Buchanism') -'Growth-point' policies for relieving regional problems. Back winners approach to regional policy.	- reorganisation of land-use planning system (TCPA 1968) streamlining of planning machinery - initial attempt to increase council-house building plagued by financial problems. Conservatives emphasised owner occupation and 'fair rents' policies - progressive movement towards urban renewal instead of wholesale redevelopment - rapid growth in regional policy assistance without selectivity. Conservatives increased selectivity and introduced policy of backing winners (although with noticeable changes in course). Increase in productivity but not employment. - initial steps towards inner city policy.	- initially strengthening of planning powers (CLA 1975) but progressive move towards less committing instruments. - redirection of resource allocation towards inner areas. - increasing importance attributed to owner-occupation (Conservatives introduced in 1980 sales of council housing) and to the support of private rented sector - regional policy became increasingly selective . Under the Conservative Government the map of assisted areas was progressively reduced and resources cut back - launching of the Inner City policy under the Labour Government. Under the Conservative Urban Development Corporations were set up and 'Enterprise Zones' established to attract private investment to 'black-spots'.
PRECEIVED REGIONAL PLANNING PROBLEMS	- urban congestion (coupled with strong regional imbalances) - urban sprawl and encroachment into rural areas via speculative ribbon development - housing shortage and overcrowding in major urban areas	- as in the previous period except less attention to regional imbalances, due to full employment and increased attention to protection of suburban rural areas.	- increased attention to regional problems within the context of the 'overheating argument' - recognition of the failure of 'overspill by agreement' - concern about wholesale redevelopment and high rise building - problems of 'traffice in towns'	- increasing perception of regional problems in political terms (Scotland, Wales) - concern with efficient use of public resources - growing attention to redistributive effects of planning and to decline of older urban areas	- widespread unemployment - inner city problems (multideprivation) - spatial redistribution of manufacturing employment - shortage of public funds to face new scale of problems - increasing attention to productivity issues (sectoral over spatial ones)
PROCEDURAL AND SUBSTANTIVE REGIONAL PLANNING THEORY	- 'blueprint' indicative planning based on 'space standards' - survey-analysis-plan approach to plan formulation - 'ecological determinism' approach to land-use planning - 'ruralist ideology' emphasising the advantages of self-contained and balanced small communities	- as in the previous period except - emphasys on negotiated planning between local authorities - adoption of ad-hoc solutions (planning inquiries and decisions) to planning disputes.	- shift towards more rational and comprehensive planning processes - making plans more flexible to changing circumstances (PAG report) - increasing importance attributed to external economies, potential for growth, agglomeration economies, etc. - experiments in urban form design	- 'systems approach' to planning - incorporation of a whole series of statistical and economic methods and techniques in the planning process. - reaction against normative planning and increased emphasys on post-planning activities - incorporation of public participation in planning	- increased emphasis put on 'coordination', rather than planning. Use of 'intercorporate' models of the planning process. - increased bias in favour of procedural, rather than substantive thinking - growing attention attributed to owner occupation, the 'informal sector' and services, to the detriment of manufacturing industry - proliferation of theories with little pratical implications.
BEST REGIONAL PLANNING DOCTRINE	- New Towns - Green Belt (urban containment) - urban redevelopment at low densities - industrial redistribution and control of location - segregation of land-uses - 'overspill' of surplus population from the major urban areas	- as in the previous period except - Town Development Schemes to replace New Towns - increased emphasis on Green Belts, rural conservation, etc.	- tripartite arrangements for indicative economic planning (REPC, NEDC etc) - return to New Towns designations, not only as reception areas for overspill but also as 'growth centres'	- concentration on procedural aspects as planning - improvements in the regional planning process and in the method as selecting strategies so as to maximise efficiency in the use of public resources (financial) - progressive descredit of the doctrine of urban containment and overspill	- coordinative forms of 'planning' - inner cities policy (regeneration) but giving progressively ground to 'facilitative' instruments — (Enterprise Zones, streamlining of planning procedures, relaxation of IDCs) - proliferation of 'local economic development initiatives

TABLE XIII : Regional Planning - major sources of change in the post-war period

To these largely technical explanations should be added a lack of political willingness to cut-back public expenditure in real terms.

The main problem with the P.E.S.C. system was that it was supposed to plan resource use and assumed a fair degree of stability in the outside world. Thus when the rate of inflation accelerated dramatically in the mid-1970s spending departments had to resort to increasingly large cash outlays in order to maintain the level of services planned within the P.E.S.C. framework. As Heclo and Wildavsky stress:

> *what is real in resources terms could easily become unreal for the purposes of controlling pounds and pences*
>
> (Heclo and Wildavsky, 1981, p. XXV)

An obvious alternative to this situation was the introduction of cash limits on public expenditure and this course of action was adopted in 1976 (G.B., 1976a). In operational terms public expenditure is divided in terms of specific functional programmes (e.g. housing, transport, defence) and for each of these programmes the government indicates the maximum amount of cash it proposes to spend, or authorise, during the following financial year. From the cash limits (currently covering more than 60 per cent of all public expenditure) are only exempted those items which can vary due to factors not directly under the control of government, such as the overall amount of social security benefits.

As far as regional planning is concerned these developments cannot be seen as favourable. First, the new mechanisms weaken the ability of planning in general terms. Expenditure in the current year becomes the immediate basis for decision and firm investment decisions are made only for the following year. Second, the operation of the system tends to increase the sectoral compartmentalisation of public expenditure planning by programme and this, of course, runs against the general requirements of regional planning which, by its very nature, cuts across functionally based divisions in order to secure grographical integration. (Raine and Baxter, 1979).

Turning now to consider changes in the structure and functions of local government, the main development in this respect was the reform introduced

by the Local Government Act of 1972. The 'best currency' interpretation for the reform was outlined earlier in the thesis (see above, pp. 90-1) and although a number of authors (e.g. Bennington 1975; Cockburn, 1977; Dearlove, 1979) have challanged its underlying assumptions it is more important here to concentrate attention on the main effects of the reorganisation.

The system which was introduced by the Local Government Act of 1972 differed in a number of important respects from that suggested by either the majority or the minority reports of the Royal Commission on Local Government in England (G.B., 1969 a). Two of these differences are of particular importance as far as regional planning is concerned. The first concerns the allocation of local government functions. Contrary to the suggestions made in the Reports, the Conservative Government dismissed the unitary principle and adopted a two level system of local government. As a consequence of this position the responsabilities for the operation of the Development Planning System introduced by the Town and Country Act of 1968 were split between the two levels of local authorities (see above pp.365-9).

The second major departure of the Conservative Government from the proposals of the majority reccomendations of the Royal Commission concerned the definition of local authority boundaries in metropolitan areas. Contrary to the suggestion of the Report, the Local Government Act of 1972 drew these boundaries very tight around the cities on the grounds that this would facilitate the control of urban sprawl and that urban and rural communities have different life-styles, values and needs; and that such variations should be catered for by different local authorities (Honey, 1981).

In the particular case of the West Midlands, however, these two arguments are insufficient to account for the way the Metropolitan County boundaries were drawn (see Fig. 26). This applies in particular to the extension of the eastern end of the boundary to take in Coventry and leading, incidentally, to the inclusion in the county of a sensitive part of the Green Belt in the Solihull area. Two different interpretations have been put forward

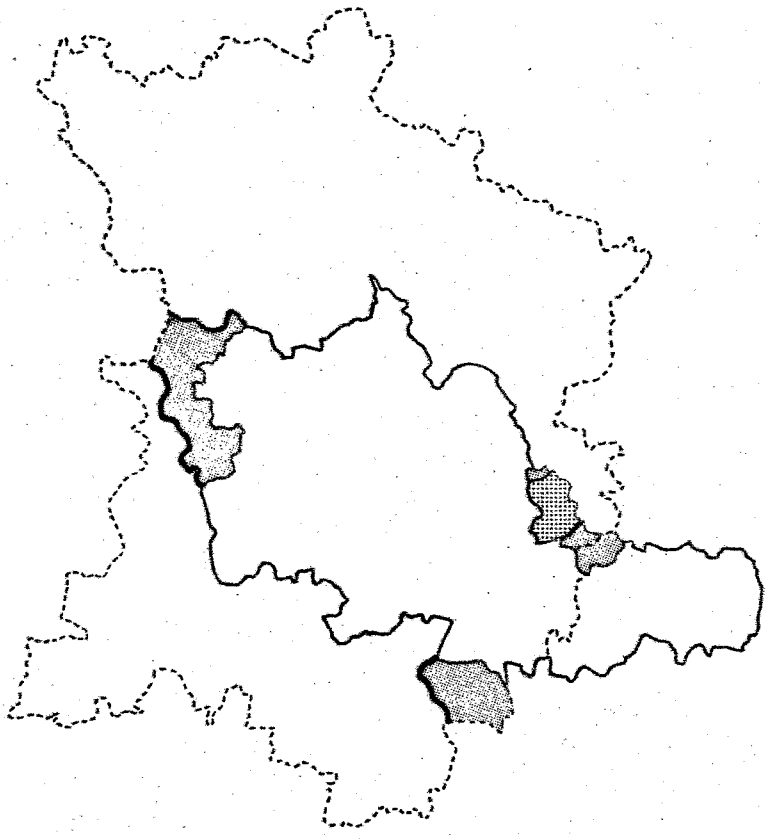

Fig. 26: Local Government Reform - boundaries of the West Midlands Metropolitan County
(source: Honey (1981))

to account for this 'anomaly'. One interpretation suggests that this decision was due to lobbying from Coventry City which wanted to retain control over its education and social services; this would not have occured if it had been included, as a District, in a non-metropolitan County[42]. The other interpretation alludes to party political considerations. If Coventry had been included in the Warwickshire County this would, almost automatically, have amounted to a shift in the political majority of the Council to the Labour Party which, not surprisingly, was not very attractive to Conservative legislators[43].

This problem of interpretation is a curious one but should not deter us here. The relevant point to bear in mind is that this development detached Coventry from its Northern and Southern neighbouring areas, creating extra problems in following up the reccommendations of the then recently approved Coventry-Solihull-Warwickshire subregional study, which asked for a corridor of growth to the North and South of the City (Coventry C.B., Solihull C.B. and Warwickshire C.C., 1971). As this suggestion had been, by and large, supported by A Developing Strategy for the West Midlands (W.M.R.S., 197) it is clear that the effects of the local government reform both in its generalities, and specificities, did not fit very well into the regional planning activity, in the West Midlands at least.

Turning now to consider changes in nondepartmental public bodies the first thing that is worth noting is that during the first half of the 1970s in particular the number and variety of these bodies increased substantially. This led to greater complexity in intergovernmental relations and fostered discussion about the merits of such admnistrative developments (Johnson, 1979).

Nowhere was the consequence of these developments more strongly felt than in the regional sphere. In addition to the already large number of regional

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(42) - See, inter alios, Roberts (1976), p.43 and Friend et al (1974), p. 457.

(43) - Interview with Mr. Walter Burley (3.2.81). This type of interpretation finds some support in the literature on local government reform. See e.g. Dearlove (1979) pp. 99-103.

bodies, the National Health Service Reorganisation Act 1973 instituted Regional Health Authorities, the Water Act 1973 created Regional Water Authorities and other regional bodies were also set up to deal with Sports and Recreation, and Tourism matters. Since regional planning is the activity which most obviously requires some form of unified 'regional authority' (Despitch, 1971) the increased complexity and fragmentation introduced by these developments obviously had negative consequences.

Despite the coming into office in 1979 of a Conservative government committed to halt 'the QUANGO Explosion' (Holland and Fallow, 1978) the situation has not changed in any significant way. In September 1979 the Secretary of State for the Environment - Michael Heseltine - announced the first cuts in D.O.E. sponsored QUANGOS but this involved no more than a one per cent reduction of D.O.E. spending on QUANGOS and 0.5 per cent of their paid appointments[44]. However, preeminently among the bodies abolished were the E.P.C.s.

In 1980 following a report produced by a former civil servant - Sir Leo Pliatzky - the government proceeded to abolish a further 250 QUANGOs. This figure, however, should be seen against the backcloth of more than 2,000 bodies listed in the report. As an analyst put it

> *The Pliatzky purge might easily be interpreted as one of those gentlemanly exercises in Whitehall gamesmanship rich in token sacrifices and 'fairy gold' but with no real blood being spilled*
>
> (Hood, 1980, p. 264)

In practical terms the 'purge' amounted less to an attack on the 'size of government' or 'the Quango explosion' and more to an indication of the ideological commitment of the new government to market principles (abolition of the Price Commission, of the R.E.P.C.s, etc).

A final development to which it is important to refer at this stage concerns the proliferation since the late 1960s of 'planning systems', by which

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(44) - See 'Private Eye' of 20 September 1979.

is meant formal arrangements for making and expressing policy to serve as a guide to subsequent decision and action. These 'planning systems' vary widely in purpose. A D.O.E. (1977) internal paper distinguished between: first, management planning systems directed to controlling the activity and resources of the authority concerned (e.g. water plans of R.W.A.s); second, programming planning systems concerning the systematic allocation of resources (normally financial) by central government to an authority, and their subsequent allocation within that authority (e.g. Housing Investment Programmes); third, indicative planning systems associated with situations in which control over resources is either loose, or indirect, and where non-financial instruments are significant (e.g. recreation strategies); fourth, coordinative planning systems aimed at encouraging collaborative work between organisations or authorities which may have their own separate plans (e.g. inner cities programmes). Further the 'paper' argued that the elements in this typology are not mutually exclusive and that a planning system could be classified in more than one manner (e.g. regional strategies as indicative/coordinative). Moreover 'planning systems' very also in terms of their content, time-scale, phasing methodology and who initiatives and approves them. Table XIV provides a classification of planning systems given such criteria.

Various arguments have been put forward to explain the growth in the number of 'planning systems'. These arguments were summarised by Hambleton (1981) who rightly concluded that

> *a variety of approaches is required to deal with the complexity of the processes involved - there can be no best way*
>
> (Hambleton, 1781, p. 9)

The various approaches appear to share, however, a number of points and it seems important to briefly summarise them here. In broad terms the growth of planning systems appears to be associated with four issues, three of which have already been discussed in this thesis:

a) the growth of non departmental public bodies and the transfer to these bodies of functions previously discharged by either

Title	Purpose	Content		Accountability		Planning Process (years)	
		Area	Scope	Initiating and Implementing Authorities	Approveing Authority and Form of Approval	Horizon	Frequency of presentation and Review
WITHIN THE AREA OF ACTIVITY OF THE DOE							
Area Management	Management	Sub-district	Service Delivery	District *	District Adoption	3	
Housing Investment	Programming	District	Public Sector Housing	District *	DOE: Programme Approval	3/5	Annual roll forward
Inner City	Programming and Co-ordination	District	Variable	District	DOE	3/5	Annual roll forward
Local Plans	Indicative and Co-ordination	District **	Development and other use of land	District *	Counties: in accordance with structure plan	10/15	3/5 (?)
National Park Management Plans	Management and Co-ordination	National Parks	Recreation and Conservation	Joint or special Planning District National Park Comittee	Parking Planning Boards : Adoption	5/10	within 5
Recreation Strategies	Indicative and Co-ordination	Region	Sport and Recreation Facilities	Regional Councils for sport and recreation	Regional Councils: adoption	10	3/5
Regional Strategies	Indicative and Co-ordination	Region	Economic Social and Physical Issues	Local Authorities, Department of the Environment and Economic Planning Council	Department of the Environment	10/15	3/5 (?)
Rural Action Plans	Programming	Sub-District**	Industrial and Infra-structural Development	Counties	Development Commission:resource allocation	10	3/5
Structure Plans	Indicative and Co-ordination	County**	Development and other use of land	Counties	Department of the Environment: Statutory approval	--	--
Water Plans	Management and Programming	Region	Water and sewage	Regional water Authority *	Department of the Environment:and resource allocation	5 and 20	Annual roll forward
Waste Disposal Plans	Management and Programming	County	Finance	Counties	Department of the Environment: borrowing approval	5/10	Annual
OUTSIDE THE AREA OF ACTIVITY OF THE DOE							
Public Expenditure Survey Committee	Programming	National	Programme Areas	Treasury	Cabinet Adoption of White Paper	3/5	Annual roll forward
EEC Regional Development Programmes	Programme and/ or Indicative	Regions	Economic Development	Department of Industry	EEC Commission: grant allocation	3/5	Annual roll forward
Health Service Plans	Management	District, Area and Region	Health-Care	District, Area and Regional Health Authorities*	Each tier approves the plan of the tier bellow	3 and 10/15	Annual roll and four years roll forward
Highways Programmes	Programming	National/ Regional	Inter-urban Areas	Department of Transport *	Department of Transport: programme approval	10	Annual roll forward
Regional Tourist Plans	Indicative and Management	Regions	Facilities for Tourism	Regional Tourist Boards	Regional Tourist Boards: adoption	10/15	--
Transport Policies and Programmes	Programming	National/ Regional	Inter-urban Areas	Counties*	Department of Transport: borrowing approval	3/5	Annual roll forward

NOTES : * also implementing authority
** most usual area

TABLE XIV: Policy Planning Systems - end of the 1970s (Source D.O.E. (1977)).

central or local governments;

b) the development in the late 1960s and early 1970, in both central and local government of a more sympathetic approach to the need for 'rational' approaches to public policy-making;

c) the development during the 1970s of a number of policy iniciatives linked either with the 'discovery' of newtypes of social problems (e.g. 'inner cities') or the adoption of a new approach, to 'old' problems (e.g. the former Community Land Programmes);

d) finally, the attempt to link the broad strategies and priorities for action of public bodies to detailed expenditure programmes as part of the wider attempt to control public expenditure (e.g. housing investment programmes (H.I.P.s) and transport policy and programmes (T.P.P.s).

As far as regional planning is concerned, arguably the most important development associated with the proliferation of planning systems concerned the introduction of investment programmes linking local authorities with central government (e.g. H.I.P.s and T.P.P.s). These programmes have two elements in common (Raine and Baxter, 1979). First, they are all based upon individual or service-specific resource allocation procedures. Second, the onus for determining the level of resources received lies, in the first instance, with the recipient who submits proposals for expenditure in the form of a bid. Both elements appear unfavourable to regional planning. The former because it tends to reinforce separation between related functional areas. The latter because not only allocation (and bids) are made on a one-year basis but also because allocations are used as part of the attempt to control local authorities and are, therefore, somewhat unpredictable. Further, the programmes have been used by central government to discriminate between various types of authorities (e.g. favouring rural authorities to the detriment of metropolitan ones). The unpredictability and discrimination in allocations are clearly evident in the

H.I.P. allocations in the West Midlands region (see Table XV).

A final observation should be made in regard to the relations between these investment programmes and Structure and Regional Planning. In the mid 1970s it was felt within certain quarters of the D.O.E. that there was

> *a need for investment programmes to be coordinated in the context of development plans*
>
> (Hickling et. al., 1979, D.O.E. written forward)

Research commissioned by D.O.E. on such approach however, cast doubt on the ability of the Development Planning system to act as a framework for this coordination. The main objections raised by Hickling et. al. (1979) were that the split of responsabilities between Counties and Districts made the preparation and approval of plans a very slow process; that the long time scales involved and the uncertainty of the criteria used tended to make the policies out-of-date by the time they came to be implemented; and, finally, that the level of specificity was unsatisfactory. These criticisms found support in research carried out on individual investment programmes: housing (Murie, 1980); transport (Brown, 1980) and Water (Stafford, 1980). Overall there can be little doubt that the introduction and the increasing importance attributed to sectoral investment programmes diminished the potential relevance of Structure Plans as a guide to resource allocation.

This conclusion is, of course, similar to the research findings on the relationship between investment programmes and regional strategies produced by Friend et al (1978) (see above, pp. 306-12).This is not surprising. Planning systems based on sectoral, short-term financial considerations are not easily integrated with planning systems such as regional strategies, which tend to address cros-functional, long-term and 'real' resources considerations. In the end it is the weight attached to one or the other type of considerations which determines the relative importance of the planning systems concerned. In this respect it is important to emphasise that in recent years the first type of planning system appears to have taken precedence over the second.

HOUSING AUTHORITY	(a) CAPITAL 'BID' REQUESTED	(b) PROVISIONAL ALLOCATION	(c) REVISED (MAR.'81) ALLOCATION	£s PER CENT CHANGE (b)(c)
Birmingham	56.450	47.329	46.485	- 1.8
Coventry	24.983	7.822	7.645	- 2.3
Dudley	22.653	6.550	7.759	+11.6
Sandwell	26.574	14.548	14.464	- 0.4
Solihull	8.374	2.081	3.267	+61.8
Walsall	16.442	6.993	7.876	+13.4
Wolverhampton	27.424	14.398	13.743	- 4.6
WMC	223.600	102.221	101.387	- 0.9
Bromsgrove	2.330	1.728	2.373	+37.3
Hereford	2.014	1.450	1.382	- 4.7
Leominster	1.509	1.113	1.575	+41.5
Malvern Hills	(5.000)	2.902	3.239	+11.6
Redditch	2.705	1.340	1.339	- 0.1
South Hereford	1.935	1.290	1.368	+ 6.0
Worcester	4.211	1.598	1.866	+16.8
Wychavon	4.026	2.496	3.073	+23.1
Wyre Forest	5.100	3.033	3.060	+ 0.9
HERE. & WORCS.	28.821	16.960	19.275	+13.6
Bridgnorth	1.817	1.024	1.028	+ 0.4
North Shropshire	2.166	1.162	1.181	+ 1.6
Oswestry	0.621	0.825	0.761	- 7.8
Shrewsbury	3.139	1.353	1.461	+ 0.5
South Shropshire	1.044	0.924	0.909	- 1.6
The Wrekin	6.365	3.604	4.294	+17.5
SHROPSHIRE	15.152	9.042	9.634	+ 6.5
Cannock Chase	3.015	1.949	2.497	+28.1
East Staffs	2.593	2.514	2.491	- 0.9
Lichfield	(2.400)	1.869	2.040	+ 9.1
Newcastle-u-Lyme	3.629	2,578	2.677	+ 3.8
South Staffs	3.168	1.889	2.266	+21.0
Stafford	3.885	2.325	2.157	- 7.2
Staffs Moors	(1.300)	1.087	1.290	+18.7
Stoke-on-Trent	10.305	7.563	7.645	+ 3.7
Tamworth	5.663	3.525	3.862	+ 9.6
STAFFS	35.958	25.299	27.139	+ 7.3
North Warwick	1.973	1.067	1.520	+42.4
Nuneaton	4.924	2,477	2.802	+13.1
Rugby	3.265	2.556	2.993	+17.1
Stratford	3.146	2.125	2.249	+ 5.8
Warwick	4.268	2.235	2.827	+26.5
WARWICKSHIRE	17.576	10.460	12.391	+18.5
SHIRE COUNTIES	97.507	61.761	68.439	+10.8
REGION	320.307	163.982	169.796	+ 3.5

Note: (a) 1979 Outturn Prices ( ) Estimates based on 1980/81 'Bids'
(b)(c) 1981 Outturn Prices

TABLE XV: Housing Investment Allocations 1981-82 - West Midlands

(Source: W.M.R.A.C. (1982))

IV.2.4 - SUMMARY

The institutional context of regional planning is highly complex. Preeminent among the institutions which account for this complexity are government organisations. Indeed, due to the cross-sectoral and multilevel characteristics of regional planning the institutional context of the activity comprises all major types of governmental organisations, namely: central government departments, local authorities and non-departmental public bodies.

However the various types of government organisations do not relate to regional planning in the same way, nor do they have the same degree of influence over the evolution of its characteristics. A few organisations have direct responsabilities for regional planning matters while others, the majority, are only involved in the activity in an indirect and somewhat involuntary way, Given this fact the way in which government organisations relate to each other, and to regional planning, are elements of crucial importance in determining the form and contents of the activity. In historical terms the characteristics of inter-governmental relations in England (e.g. functional articulation, ambiguity, confusion) and the non-existance of an integrated regional level of political-admnistration have been major hindrances to the achievement of a strong and coherent regional planning activity.

Unfortunately for regional planning institutional developments during the 1970s added further problems to an already unfavourable context. To begin with, the new methodology of financial planning adopted by central government from the mid 1970s onwards reinforced the importance of short-term considerations whilst, simultaneously, exacerbating the functional compartmentalisation of public expenditure planning by programme. Furthermore, changes in the sphere of local government reflected, also, considerations and concerns generally hostile to the needs of regional planning. Finally, there was a substancial increase in the number and variety of non-departmental public bodies and of policy planning systems. These developments further increased the complexity of the institutional context of regional planning and reinforced

existing problems of fragmentation and coordination. The implications of these developments for regional planning are assessed in the following chapter.

IV.3 - REGIONAL PLANNING PRACTICE-ADMNISTRATIVE STRUCTURES

As noted in the previous chapter the admnistrative structures of regional planning are particularly prone to change. Most of the changes they incur derive from modifications in the context (institutional, political-ideological and socio-economic) in which the activity develops. Other changes, however, result from sources which are specific to the activity. Having considered in some detail the broad features of the regional planning environment (with particular emphasis on the institutional context) the ground is now cleared for an analysis of the specific aspects of the admnistrative structures of regional planning.

In this chapter the admnistrative structures of regional planning in the period 1964-80 will be considered in two stages. Although the two stages have some chronological order they should not be seen as examining events in direct sequence. Regional planning developments in the eight English regions varied quite widely during the period, and there was never a uniform pattern of admnistrative structures for regional planning in all regions. Given this perspective the division of the analysis into two stages relates, in the first instance, to the particular characteristics of the admnistrative structures being considered and only then to the chronological sequence. It is only in this way that the analytical findings can be generalised.

IV.3.1 - IN SEARCH OF A MODEL

The early 1960s saw in the United Kingdom a growing governmental concern about the effects (social and economic) resulting from major inter-regional economic disparities. The so-called 'overheating argument' developed by the N.E.D.C. (1963 a) suggested that action to reduce these disparities was a *sine qua non* for fostering the rate of growth of the British economy and regional

planning was considered an appropriate mechanism to formulate and implement the action required. However, for regional planning to assume this role, it was widely held that it would be necessary to create a common pattern of regional plans covering the whole county and to link these with some form of national economic planning. In the absence of a common framework inconsistencies were seen as inevitable and overbidding for scarce resources likely. The task of creating such a framework fell on the Labour government elected in the Autumn of 1964 and it must be said that this task fitted in with the ideological commitments of its election manifesto (Labour Party, 1964).

Within the complex economic planning machinery created by the incoming government the R.E.P.B.s were given the responsability

> *to prepare the draft plan (or plans) for the region and to coordinate the work of the various government departments in implementing the final plan*

The R.E.P.C.s, in turn, were given terms of reference which instructed them, inter alia, to assist in the formulation of the regional plan and to advise on the steps necessary for its implementation[45]. The final responsability for regional planning was, however, to rest with D.E.A. headquarters and its Regional Policy Division which had been entrusted with the task of providing for a full and balanced development of the country's economic and social resources (Roll, 1966). Thus by the mid 1960s the fortunes of regional planning appeared closely linked to the overall sucess of the national indicative economic planning machinery.

This machinery was heavily inspired by the French experience of economic planning and by the reform of territorial admnistration introduced in that country early in 1964[46]. Unlike the French, however, the British

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(45) - Hansard of 25 February 1965, vol. 707, col. 631

(46) - For short accounts of the French developments see e.g. Grēmion (1971) or Lagarde (1977). A fuller, and theoretically important, analysis of the regionalisation process in France is provided by Grēmion (1976).

arrangements did not provide for any greater concentration of executive powers at the regional level as that emboddied in the Prēfet Regionales. Smith (1964) has argued that the failure to move in that direction was, possibly, a reflection of the bitter memories left in certain regions as a result of the experience with Regional Commissioners during the war. There was also, arguably, a general hostility to such an approach in Whitehall amongst the civil service. Whataver the real reason, however, the point is that the chairpersons of the R.E.P.B.s found themselves very much in a position of primus inter pares without any formal authority to achieve the required interdepartmental coordination. Further, their room for manouevre was further limited by the fact that the Secretary of State for Economic Affairs - later Lord George Brown - made it clear in Parliament that the creation of the R.E.P.B.s would

> *not affect the existing powers and responsabilities of local authorities or existing ministerial responsabilities* [47].

In any case the initial scheme was never fully tried out. The preparation of the only two regional planning documents published under the aegis of the D.E.A. - for the North West and the West Midlands regions - had to be cut short in order for their findings to be included in the National Plan (Great Britain, 1965). Although the analytical chapters of these documents included economic considerations the proposals only dealt with land-use matters and were not regarded as committing the government to action (D.E.A., 1965a, 1965b). When the National Plan was published it became clear that it did not pay much attention to the idea of regional planning. Unlike the French IV National Plan published in 1962, the British National Plan did not contain any 'tranches rēgionales' (regional investment programmes). This fact substantiates the claim made by Wright and Young (1975) that during the early years of the D.E.A. existence regional planning had a low priority within the context of its overall responsabilities.

The National Plan - and indeed the whole idea of indicative national

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(47) - Hansard of 10 December 1964, vol. 703, col. 1829.

economic planning - was abandonned during the turmoil created by the deflationary package of July 1966. Before that, however, the responsability for preparing regional plans had been transferred to the R.E.P.C.s (March 1966). This transfer of responsibilities effectively meant that the government need not be financially committed to any proposals made in the plans. Lindley (1982) suggests three hypotheses in order to interpret this change in the course of government policy. Firstly, he argues, the government had made a substantial commitment to the Scottish economy with The Scottish Economy 1965-70 - a plan for expansion (Great Britain, 1966) and had, probably, become aware of the political risks of allowing the Scottish Plan to set a precedent for future plans for the English regions. Secondly, the government might have considered the problem that too strong a commitment to specific proposals would require a higher degree of interdepartmental coordination than it was legitimate to expect the R.E.P.B.s to achieve. Finally, in some regions - namely the North-West - the R.E.P.C.s had already taken the lead in preparing regional planning documents.

Whataver the correct interpretation of the change in government thinking, there can be little doubt that this transfer of responsibilities represented a substantial weakening of central government commitment to regional planning. The E.P.C.s were encouraged to prepare long-term strategies for the development of their regions but, as an internal D.E.A. memorandum recognized, due to the demise of the National Plan it was no longer practicable to prepare detailed regional plans with timetables tied to investments programmes (D.E.A., 1966). The sequence of events was then predictable. In regions suffering more acute economic problems (Northern, North-West, Yorkshire and Humberside) the plans prepared by the Councils acquired an economic emphasis which in the absence of an agreed national framework for economic development could easily be accused of 'regional bidding' (e.g. Glasson, 1978; Hall, 1977; Powell, 1978). In the more prosperous regions, facing problems of urban congestion and expansion the plans, often at the request of central government, concentrated on issues

more traditionally associated with land-use planning (urban containment, planned overspill, etc.) This split tended to reflect the traditional dichotomy between regional policy (economic) and regional planning (physical) and constituted a sharp retrogression vis-à-vis the concept of integrated regional planning initially associated with the regional planning machinery created in 1964.

The fortunes of these plans were, by and large, undistinguished. In the case of the plans which had a strong economic emphasis the overall attitude of central government was to dismiss them in terms of being 'introverted', 'lacking a coherent overall perspective' and so forth. This type of criticism has, probably, some justification. However, given the absence of agreed guidelines which could be used to ensure that what emerged proceeded from some national premises about the distribution of population and economic development, it is difficult to see how the plans might have overcome the flaws of which they were so widely accused. In any case there is little doubt that their practical impact on policy-making was minimal (Wright and Young, 1975).

In the case of the plans with a strong land-use component it was the turn of local authorities to attack them, arguing that they represented interference by a non-representative regional body (the R.E.P.C.s) in problems which were better resolved by local authorities working together. In addition to the feeling of outrage associated with this issue, there were also two other, and more specific, reasons for this reaction. First, in several R.E.P.C.s, the number of members involved on local government was small and this was seen as acting against the interests of local authorities. Second, there was a profound disagreement in some regions (notably the West Midlands) about the way central government was resorting to the designation of New Towns in the resolution of specific regional problems. The major reasons for complaint in this regard concerned the large target-size of the New Towns being designated (Fig. 27) and the location chosen for some of these (for example Telford New Town) which cast doubt on their potential to live up to the expectations underlying their

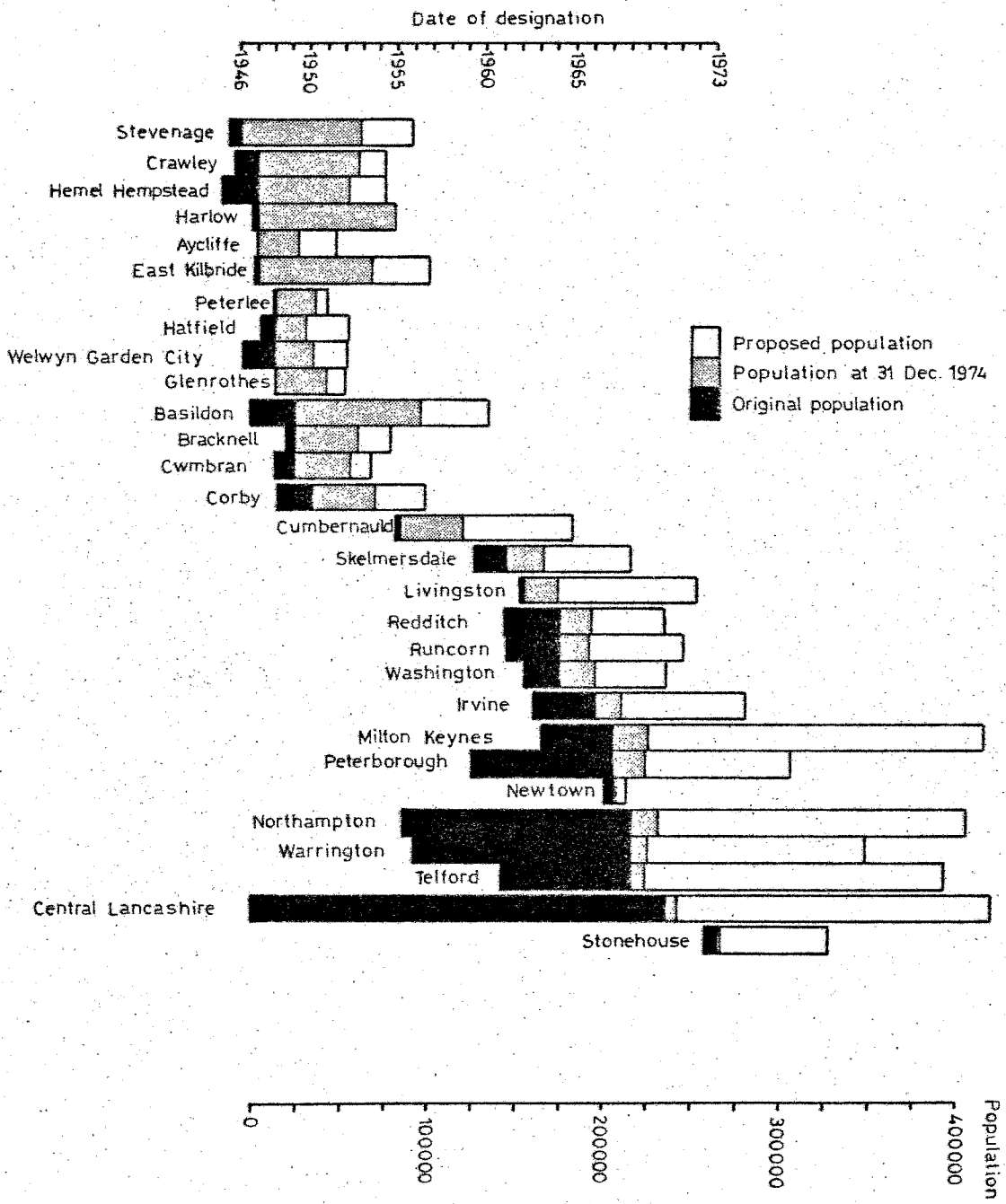

Fig. 27: Population Growth in Britain New Towns - 1946 - 1974

(source: Diamond (1978), Fig. 1)

designation (see above, pp.137-8)[48].

This reaction of local authorities severely weakened the practial import of the planning documents prepared by the R.E.P.C.s. If the reccomendations of these documents were to be followed up by more concrete decisions there was, in many cases, an absolute necessity for local authorities to have some commitment to them. This commitment was particularly difficult to obtain in regions where a tradition existed of local authority cooperation in relation to planning matters (notably in the South-East and the West Midlands regions). In 1967 the South-East E.P.C. published A Strategy for the South-East - A First Report (S.E.E.P.C., 1967) which dealt with similar issues to those adressed in a report published one year earlier by the Standing Conference on London and South East Regional Planning (S.C.L.S.E.R.P., 1966). Not surprisingly the S.E.E.P.C. document was seen by the S.C.L.S.E.R.P. as unwelcome interference in local authority matters and, furthermore, as containing proposals unacceptable to many local authorities. In the West Midlands region, in turn, the local authority reaction to Patterns of Growth (W.M.E.P.C., 1967) prompted the M.H.L.G. to invite the W.M.P.A.C. to submit a strategy for the region (see above, pp.152-6).

The experience of the West Midlands, however, soon revealed a number of failings. First, the unanimity rule to which Standing Conferences are subjected to in their operation made it difficult for them to address issues in which substantial disagreements existed between local authorities. The W.M.P.A.C. was well aware of this problem and attempted to overcome it by freing the W.M.R.S. from direct 'political' pressures during the preparation of A Developing Strategy for the West Midlands. The net result of the process, however, fell rather short of expectation and the emerging strategy was irrelevant to a derisory degree (see above, pp.185-8)[49]. Second, handing responsibility for the

(48) - Interview with Sir Michael Higgs 23.1.81.

(49) - The reasons why the W.M.R.S. could not really be expected to overcome the 'consensus rule' problem are discussed below. See pp. 450-3.

preparation of regional strategies to Standing Conferences was particularly dangerous to central government, as this meant that it was mainly restricted to reacting to fully worked out proposals. The difficulties experienced by central government regional offices in establishing adequate working arrangements with the W.M.P.A.C. during the preparation of A Developing Strategy were, of course, reinforced by the decision of the latter body to grant wide discretion to the W.M.R.S. throughout the process. As a result the process of appraisal and approval of the strategy lasted almost three years and the final result had only the slightest resemblance to the original document (the Blue Book) (see above, pp.185-8).

Thus by the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s the situation on the regional planning front was far from clear. In organisational terms it was more or less obvious that neither E.P.C.s nor Standing Conferences alone could, from a central government perspective at least, assume responsibility for the regional planning process. The plans themselves oscillated between what were considered 'regional economic bids' to more traditional land-use planning documents. In common, however, these plans had a low level of government commitment to their reccommendations and an almost complete lack of direct financial implications.

In practical terms the idea of using the regional planning process for the purpose of a regionally based coordination of major investment decisions - regional programming - was abandonned in favour of the less demanding idea of regional strategic planning. Now, the concept of strategic planning could easily claim a place in Gallie's (1955) list of 'essentially contested concepts'. Some authors associate strategic planning with the goal-setting functions through which various alternative ways of attaining the objectives of a normative plan are reduced to those goals that can be achieved (Ozbekhan, 1969). Others, drawing on the theory of games, associate the concept with

> *situations in which a decision-maker wishes to anticipate a range of alternative actions either by some readily identifiable 'opponent' or by other less clear-cut groups of forces operating*

> *within his environment, and to select his present and future responses accordingly.*
>
> (Friend and Jessop, 1969, p. 112)

Finally, a third group of authors sees strategic planning as concerned with 'critical issues', by which is meant the activities whose control by an authority enables that authority to control other activities (Cowling and Steeley, 1973).

The idea of regional strategic planning, however, does not exactly fit in with any of the above definitions of strategic planning. Basically regional strategic planning was seen as serving two main purposes (Crosland, 1974; House of Commons, 1976). Firstly, providing a context within which local planning authorities might frame structure plans. Secondly, providing a framework for major decisions by public bodies (central government departments and non departmental public bodies) having investment, or environmental, responsabilities within the regions concerned. It is important to look at these two issues in more detail.

The first objective corresponded to the traditional role of regional planning in England, that is to say, the provision of guidance on the solution of planning problems common to more than one local authority[50]. In practical terms this involved agreement on forecasts between local authorities, the achievement of consistency on planning proposals affecting more than one authority, etc. The structure planning authorities were, in the first instance, responsible for following-up these agreements and securing consistency when preparing their plans. However, where necessary, the D.O.E. had both formal and informal powers, and the ultimate responsability, to impose it through modifications to the Structure Plans submmitted for approval (see above, pp. 379-84).

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(50) - In 1951 a document from the Ministry of Local Government and Planning stated that:

> *"the intention in commissioning outline plans for regions and sub-regions was to provide local planning authorities with some broad guidance on the lines to be followed in problems common to a number of local authorities"*
>
> (M.L.G.P., 1951, p. 23)

As far as the second, and more ambitious, objective was concerned the situation was from the start much more complex. In the first place, the characteristics of the decisions to which the regional strategies were supposed to provide a framework for coordination varied enormously; from central government department decisions on nationally defined policies (regional policy, transport policy, etc.), to specific investment programmes prepared by non departmental public bodies (e.g. R.W.A.s). Secondly, in the complex web of intergovernmental relations through which this coordination was to be achieved, command relationships played only a limited role. Further, many of the channels of influence and power - such as levels of finance at an aggregate level - were not particularly appropriate to determine specific spatial decisions (see above, pp.379-84). Finally, in the face of representative bodies with locally or nationally defined responsibilities, and electoral accountability, it was problematic whether a non-statutory planning system, devoid of any specific political backing, would be able to assert a strong coordination role.

In organisational terms the most obvious solution to this problem was to bring together the three sides previously involved in regional planning, namely: central government, local authorities and the E.P.C.s. Not surprisingly these new arrangements were first attempted in the South-East region and led to the publication in 1970 of the Strategic Planning for the South East (S.E.J.P.T., 1970). This report was prepared by a team chaired by the Chief Planner in the M.H.L.G. and staffed by both central and local government. The team's work was steered by a group of officers of both central and local government and the sponsorship of the process was handed, formally, to a Supervisory Committee constituted by elements representing local authorities, central government and the S.E.E.P.C.. This tripartite sponsorship was to provide the organisational model of regional planning in the decade ahead. Indeed early in 1972, the D.O.E. Minister with responsability for regional planning told the House of Commons that

It is the Government's intention that future regional strategies

> *should be prepared in collaboration between the regional economic planning councils, the local planning authorities and central government. Ultimately, it is hoped to cover all the English regions in this way, but detailed arrangements and timing will vary from region to region* [51].

Under the tripartite sponsorship arrangements regional strategies were prepared in the East Anglia, Northern, North-West and South-East regions. Updatings and reviews of existing strategies were also prepared for the South-East and West Midlands regions (Table XVI). It is now necessary to consider in detail the operation of this model of regional planning.

IV.3.2 - THE TRIPARTITE MODEL OF REGIONAL STRATEGIC PLANNING

The administrative structures of the tripartite model of regional strategic planning can be analysed along four dimensions:

1) the organisations which sponsored the planning process, their relationships as far as this sponsorship was concerned and their broad expectations in relation to the process - sponsorship network;
2) the organisational arrangements devised to carry out the technical work involved in the process, the relationships between these arrangements and the sponsoring bodies and the practical orientation of their work - intelligence network;
3) the organisations involved in the process of appraisal and approval of the regional strategy, the procedural mechanisms used in the process and the characteristics and status of the approval - appraisal and approval network;
4) the impact of the regional strategic process on the decisions and actions of the public bodies which the strategy was supposed to influence - influence networks.

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(51) - Hansard of 19 January of 1972, vol. 829, col. 181, Written Answer.

YEAR	EAST ANGLIA (EA)	EAST MIDLANDS (EM)	NORTHERN (N)	NORTH-WEST (NW)	SOUTH-EAST (SE)	SOUTH-WEST (SW)	YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE (Y&H)	WEST MIDLANDS (WM)
1964					'The S-E Study (MHLG) 'S-E England' (Cmnd 2308)			
1965				'The N-W - a regional study' (DEA)				'The WM - a regional Study' (DEA)
1966		'The E-M Study' (EMEPC)	'Challange of the Changing North' (NEPC)	'An Economic Planning Strategy for the N-W' (NWEPC)	'The Conference Area in the Long Term' (SCLSERP)		'A Review of Y&H' (YHEPC)	
1967					'A Strategy for the S-E' (SEEPC)	'A Region with a future - a draft strategy for the S-W' (SWEPC)		'The WM - Patterns of Growth' (WMEPC)
1968	'E-A: a Study' (EAEPC)			'Strategy IX the NW of 1970s' (NWEPC)				
1969		'Opportunity in the E-M' (EMEPC)	'The outline Strategy for the N' (NEPC)					
1970					'Strategic Plan for the S-E' (SEJPT)		'Y&H Regional Strategy' (YHEPC)	
1971								'The WM an economic appraisal (WMEPC) 'A Developing Strategy for the WM' (WMRS)
1972								
1973					'Strategic Planning in the SE: a first report of the Monitoring Group' (DOE)			
1974				'Strategic Plan for the N-W' (NWJPT)		'A Strategic Settlement Pattern for the SW' (SWEPC)		'A Developing Strategy for the WM' (WMPAC)
1975	'Strategic Choice for E-A' (EARST)			'Economic and social Trends 1974' (NWEPC)				'A Developing Strategy for the WM :first monitoring report' (JMSG)
1976	'Strategic Choice for EA- first Monitoring report ' (EACC)	'A Forward Economic Look' (EMEPC)		'Economic and social Trends 1975' (NWEPC)	'Strategy for the S-E:1976 review' (SEJPT)			'A Developing strategy for the WM:second monitoring report' (JMSG)
1977			'Strategic Plan for the N region' (N R S T)	'Economic and Social Trends- 1976' (NWEPC)				
1978		'A Forward Economic Look' (EMEPC)			'Strategic Plan for the S-E' (DOE)	'Monitoring the Regional Strategy' (SWLPB)	'The Regional Development of Y and H' (SCCC)	
1979		'EM- a forward economic look' -3 rd ed' (EMEPC)	'First State of the region report' (NRJMT)					'Updating and Rolling Forward of the WM Regional Strategy (JMSG) [WMEPC & WMPAC)
1980		'EM in focus' (EM Forum)	'Second State of the Region Report' (NRJMT)		'SE Regional Strategic Guidance' (DOE)			
1981	'Regional Development Programme' (EACC)		'Third State of the Region Report ' (NLCCA)		'SE Regional Planning - the 1980s' (SCLSERP)		'Yorkshire Textile Action Area Plan' (RPCY & H)	

TABLE XVI: Regional Planning in England 1964-82
plans and major reports published

Together these four dimensions cover the fundamental elements of the regional strategic planning process. A consideration of the four networks will facilitate an examination of the problems which derive from this particular organisational division of labour within the regional planning process.

Sponsorship Network

As far as the sponsorship of the process was concerned the 'tripartite model' could be considered as an exercise in multiorganisation design, that is to say the bringing together of parts of various organisations in the performance of a common task. At a first level of analysis, the situation appeared to be clearcut involving central government, local authorities and the appropriate E.P.C.s. This simplicity, however, was more apparent than real.

Taking first of all the local authority side of the arrangements, the mise en ouevre of the tripartite model required the existence of a regional Standing Conference of local planning authorities and their willingness to participate in the process. Wherever one, or both, of these conditions failed to materialize the chances of realisation of the model were slim. Thus in three regions (East Midlands, South West and Yorkshire and Humberside) the 'tripartite model' was never put into operation, Further, the involvement of local authorities in the process had a direct relationship with the previous experience of local authority cooperation in planning matters and varied with the strength and coherence of the existing arrangements for cooperation between them. For example, local authority involvement in the East Anglia region, where only seven planning authorities existed, was easier to secure than in the case of the North West, where more than twenty authorities shared responsabilities for the planning of the region. Fragmentation of interests - and subsequent conflicts - were more likely to occur in the latter than in the former situation. In the case of the South East a tradition of cooperation between planning authorities within the S.C.L.S.E.R.P. dating back to 1962, coupled with skillful political management, meant that local authority involvement in the process did

not result in major problems[52]. Conversely, the operation of the arrangements in the West Midlands was marked by profound disagreements amongst local authorities, concerning the substantial problems involved in the updating of the West Midlands Regional Strategy. This together with the lack of strong leadership within the W.M.P.A.C. clearly weakened the local authority position in the process (see above, pp. 237-46)

Turning now to the central government side of the sponsoring arrangements the first thing that should be said is that, in practical terms, regional strategies were sponsored not by central government as a whole but by the department with responsabilities for regional planning - the D.O.E. (Fig. 28 a). At the regional level, however, the exact contours of this situation were somewhat blurred by the fact that the senior regional officer of the D.O.E. acted also as chairperson of the E.P.B. Other central government departments were involved in the sponsorship of the process mainly through their membership of the E.P.B.s.

This situation was doubly unsatisfactory. First, the nature and degree of involvement of the regional offices of the various departments in the process depended on the division of labour internal to the department concerned. In certain cases, and the Department of Industry (D.I.) is often mentioned in this regard, the regional offices were mostly concerned with implementing centrally determined policies in the region (Hogwood, 1982). As a consequence of this, their capacity to participate in the process, in a maningful way, was severely restricted. Second, and more important, some departments participated in the process in a somewhat involuntary manner and did not regard the exercise as having sufficient status to offset established departmental policy. Hence the conflicts involving the D.I. during the Updating of the West Midlands regional strategy which were responsible, in part at least, for the dis-association of central government from the report on the regional economy (see above, pp. 249-50)

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(52) - Interview with Mr. David Saunders 5.5.81.

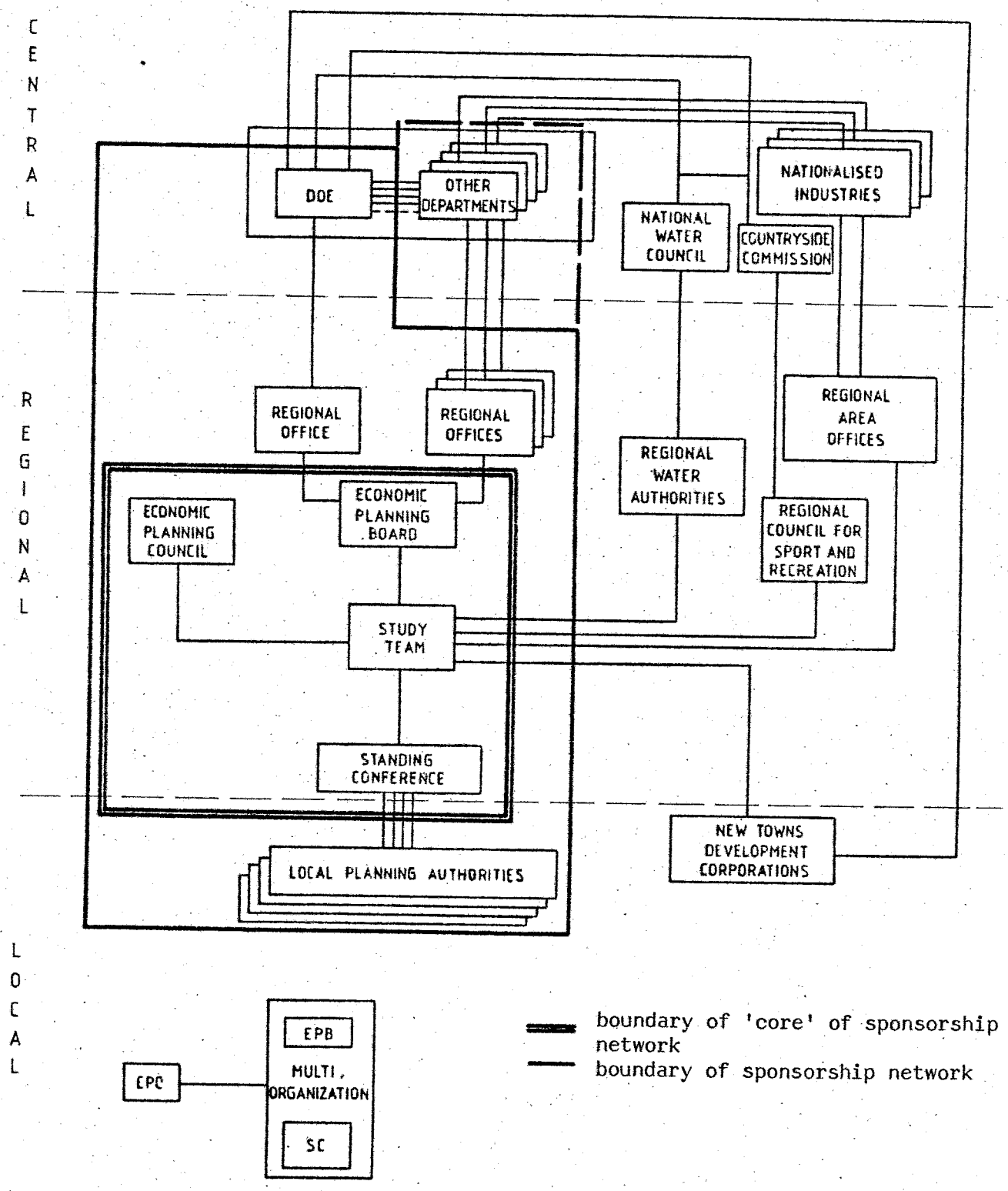

Fig. 28a: Tripartite Model of Regional Strategic Planning - sponsorship network

A further problem with central government sponsorship of the process related to disagreements within the D.O.E. about the level of support and commitment to regional planning. A D.O.E. officer involved in regional planning matters has argued that the section of the D.O.E. with regional responsabilities took into account regional strategies when carrying out its functions, but that within the departments as a whole:

> *the political and national importance of other departmental issues relative to regional planning probably determined whether the strategy or the other issue (was) dominant*
>
> (Stevens , 1976, p. 83)

Finally, it must be said that, in the context of the tripartite model, the relative importance of the E.P.C.s was minimal. Without independent staff- apart from a D.O.E. officer who acted as secretary - it was obvious that the E.P.C.s could not intervene in the regional planning process to the same degree as the central and local government sides[53].

It is obvious, then, that the sponsorship arrangements were more complex than a first appreciation might suggest. To further complicate the situation it can be argued that the two major parties involved in the sponsoring of the regional planning process (central and local government) had a different interpretation of the meaning and relative importance of the two broad purposes of regional strategic planning outlined earlier (see above, pp. 409-12).

In relation to the first purpose central government, and the D.O.E. in particular, clearly sought to preempt the emergence of inconsistencies between the Structure Plans of local authorities in relation to issues of spatial allocation of overspill housing, industrial development, etc.. In this respect the participation of both local authorities and the D.O.E. in the formulation of regional strategies increased the legitimacy of the latter to subsequently intervene in order to eliminate inconsistencies between the proposals of various Structure Plans.

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(53) Interviews with Dr. Ian Gibson 21.1.81 and Mr. Francis Graves 20.1.81.

The position of local authorities in this respect was more complex. On the one hand, as has been noted by various authors (e.g. Carter et al., 1975; and Skelcher, 1979), issues of spatial allocation of development were, potentially at least, divisive for them. On the other hand, however, if these issues were not solved during the formulation of regional strategies there would be a case for subsequent intervention by central government, either during the approval of Structure Plans or in decisions on planning enquiries, to give only two obvious examples[54]. Local authorities had, therefore, also an interest in tackling these problems, particularly insofar as their resolution at the regional strategic level might prevent subsequent central government involvement in these matters; which would be much less subject to local authority influence. Given this perspective, the interest of local authorities in the above matters is better interpreted in terms of the attempt to protect, as far as possible, their own discretion in local planning decisions.

In relation to the second broad purpose of regional planning, the position of the two main parties was, arguably, even more complex. As the local authority involvement during the early stages of the regional planning process was through Standing Conferences (or similar bodies), there was an understandable interest on their part to orientate the process towards those issues in relation to which a consensus between local authorities was more easily achieveable. Obvious issues in this respect were the overall financial relations between central and local governments; the interregional distribution of public expenditure in general, and regional policy assistance in particular; the broad regional impact of specific government policies (industrial, manpower, etc.); the role of regional executive non-departmental public bodies (e.g. R.W.A.s.). etc.. But this was the limit of discussion as far as local authorities were concerned. They were not particularly interested in discussing, and specifying, courses of action and investment decisions which might be

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(54) - Interviews with Mr. Colin Davies 30.1.81 and Sir Michael Higgs 23.1.81.

analysed in the process of structure planning, nor were they interested in dicussing the full spatial implications of central government policies (e.g. inner cities policy versus New Towns) at a subregional scale. Overall their orientation was one of avoiding indepth discussions of issues and policies which might be divisive for them, even if this implied overlooking crucial questions (see above, pp.243-8).

As far as the central government side of the equation was concerned there is some evidence to suggest that until the mid 1970s there was an expectation, in the division of the D.O.E. with regional responsibilities, that regional strategies might provide an adequate framework for the coordination of investment programmes, and decisions, of public executive bodies. It was this expectation which prompted the D.O.E. to commission research on this matter (see above, pp. 306). The findings of this research did not give support to this expectation, and later in the decade it was already reasonably clear in the D.O.E. Directorate of Regional Planning and Regional Policy that the ability of regional strategies to act as a framework for investment programmes of relevant public bodies was very limited indeed (Wood, 1977).

It is therefore obvious that throughout the 1970s as a Director of one of the tripartite study teams noted, there was

> *no real agreement on the content and purpose of regional planning*
> (Waide, 1974, p. 458)

Intelligence Network

As far as the organisational arrangements for the formulation of regional strategies were concerned the situation was no less complex (Fig. 28 b). Two different solutions were developed when designing the organisational 'core' of this part of the process: the 'independent team' and the 'network multiorganisation'. The first solution involved, in broad terms, the creation of an ad hoc technical team, for a limited period of time, with members seconded from both central government departments and local authorities, and/or specially

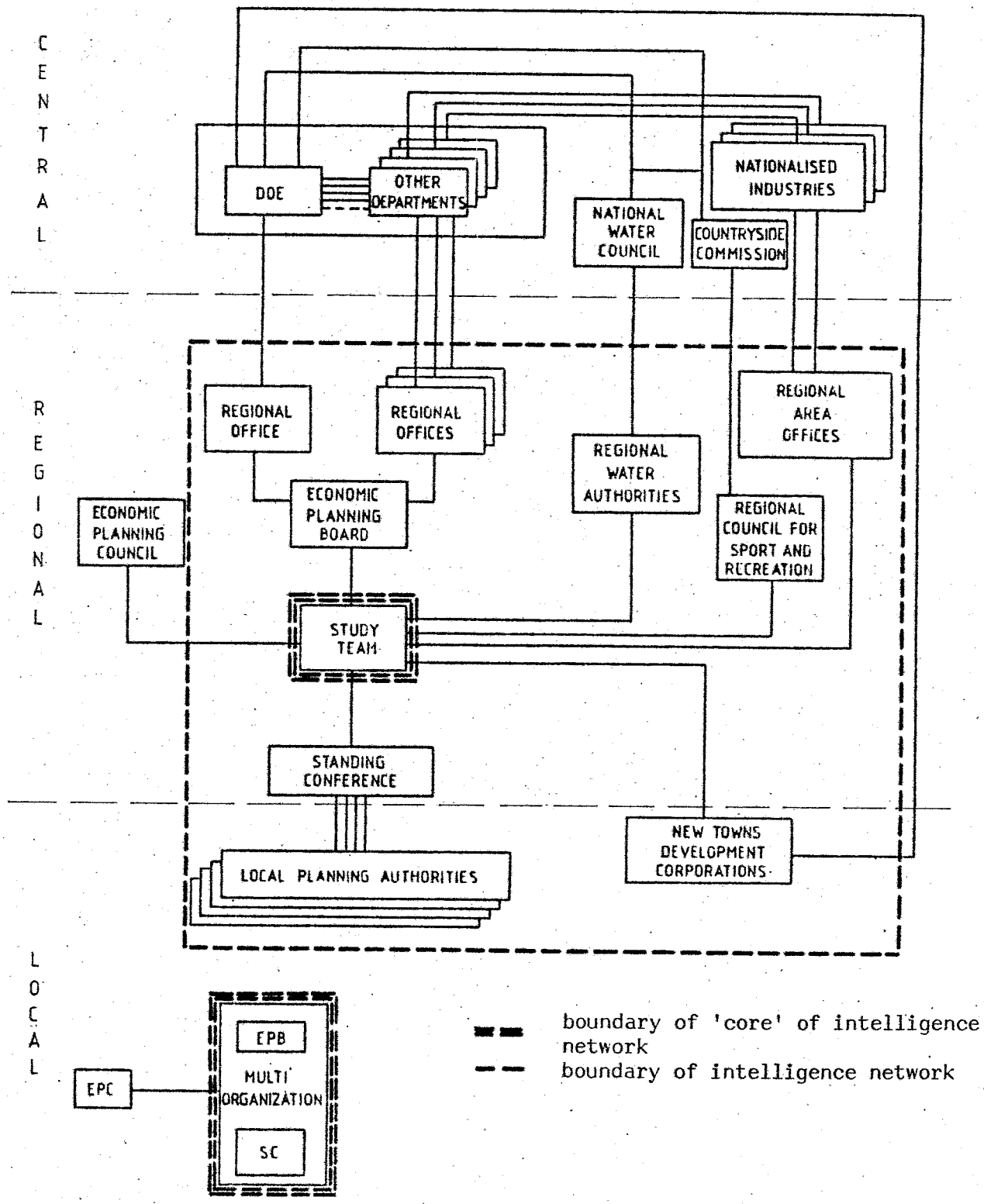

Fig. 28b: Tripartite Model of Regional Strategic Planning - intelligence network

contracted from the outside for the particular job. This solution was used in the East-Anglia, North-West and Northern regions and it is illustrated in Fig. 29 in relation to the East-Anglia case.

The seconde type of solution, involved the creation of formal joint working arrangements between technical representatives of central government departments in the region (through the E.P.B.) and local authorities (through the Standing Conference technical unit), but without the creation of a separate organisation. This type of arrangements was used in the review and updating of the South East and West Midlands regional strategies, and its operation was previously discussed in detail in relation to the West Midlands (see above, pp. 207-9).

The existence of two different solutions for the 'core' of the intelligence network of the regional planning process and the apparent shift from the 'independent team' to the 'network multiorganisation' solution can be ascribed to three broad factors. Firstly, the attempt at giving the core of the intelligence network a greater degree of organisational continuity in the wake of various calls for continuing monitoring and updating of regional strategies (N.W.J.P.T., 1974; Wedgwood-Oppenheim et. al., 1975). The fact that the 'network multiorganisation' solution was used in reviews and updating of existing strategies clearly reinforces this argument. Secondly, the attempt to increase the 'environmental effectiveness' of the core of the intelligence network, by increasing its degree of fit in with the operational organisational context (see above, pp.317-23). Finally, and closely related with the previous aspect, the attempt by the sponsoring bodies, central government in particular, to achieve greater control over the early stages of formulation of regional strategies. It is important to look at this last factor in more detail.

The main task of the 'core' of the 'intelligence network' was to formulate the regional strategy under the supervision of steering arrangements provided by the sponsoring bodies. This involved the collection and treatment of relevant data; the preparation and evaluation of alternative strategies, etc. In

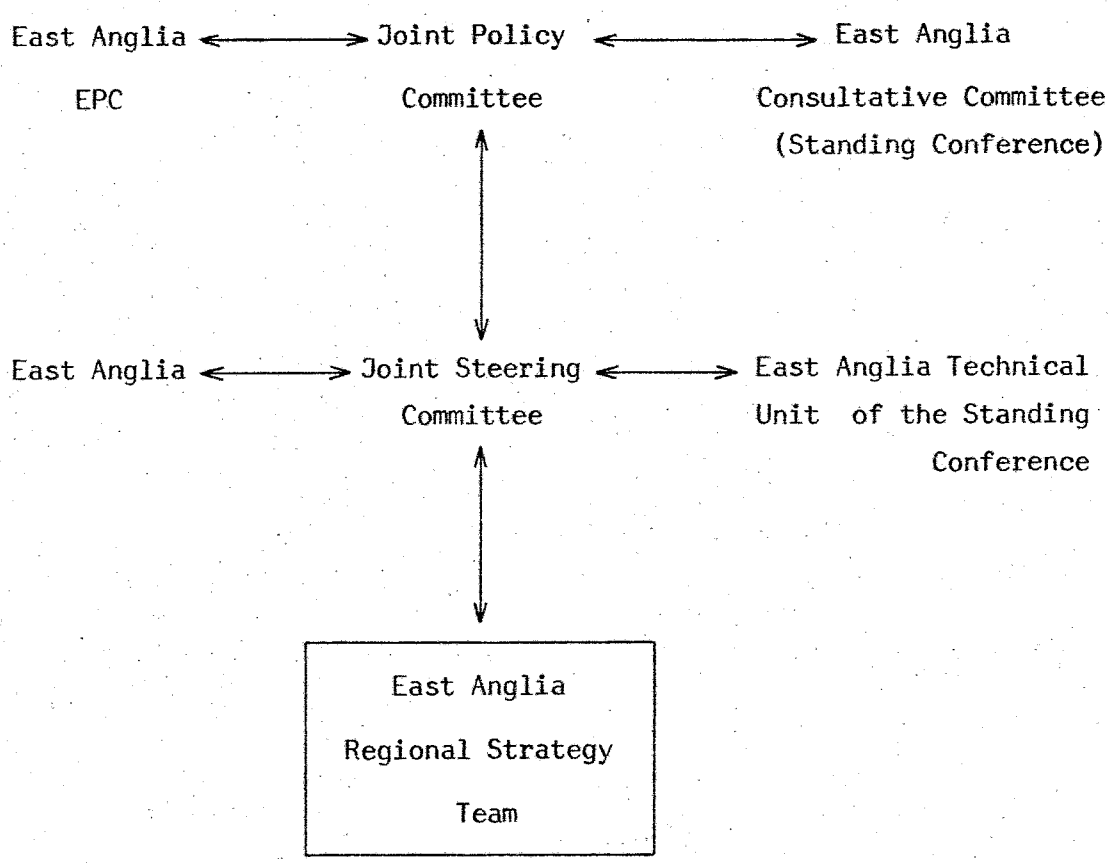

Fig. 29: East Anglia Regional Planning Arrangements: 'core' of intelligence network

procedural terms the 'independent team', or 'network multiorganisation', was also expected to obtain from the sponsoring bodies, 'political' clearance of progress reports and/or of the 'preferred strategy' reccommendations. However, the exact development of the process varied considerably from region to region.

In the case of the North-West, for example, an Issues Report was required from the team before it was allowed to move on to prepare the main report. Conversely in the Northern region the team was given by the sponsors a very detailed Outline Specification Report, indicating the subject areas which should be covered. After this report was agreed, however, the steering arrangements acted very loosely, if at all. As a result of this situation the planning approach developed by the 'independent team', and the main strategic reccommendations, came out in a form totally unacceptable to central government, which never bothered to formally comment on the strategy's main report (see below, pp.435).

In the case of the South East and the West Midlands, where the organisational core of the process was constituted by network multiorganisations, the influence of steering arrangements was both less formal and more ubiquitous. As there was not a clear distinction between sponsoring, steering and operational arrangements, the sponsoring bodies could intervene in the process of formulation of the strategy's reccommendations at almost every moment. Although this close relationship did not make for a smooth running of the process it did mean that it was possible to avoid a situation of total rupture such as occurred in the Northern region (see above, pp.249-55).

It is now important to comment upon the external relationships established by the 'core' of the intelligence network throughout the regional planning process. In order to carry out their functions, the organisational core of the network had to develop contacts with central government departments (mainly through regional offices), local authorities, non-departmental public bodies and pressure groups. These contacts served two main purposes. On the one hand they were intended to stimulate and/or enhance the attention and/or

commitment of those bodies to the regional planning process. On the other hand these contacts were instrumental in managing the three sources of uncertainty listed by Friend, Power and Yewlett (1974), namely: uncertainties about the operating environment; uncertainties about related choices and uncertainties about the policies of the various bodies. Contacts ranged from purely informal day-to-day and less frequent bilateral consultations to the launching of formal surveys, involving a large number of organisations and taking a substantial share of the team's operational resources (time, in particular).

In this regard it should be noted that the sponsoring organisations were the source of the greater part of the data upon which the 'intelligence network' core worked. Although there were some problems concerning inconsistencies between data provided by central government departments and local authorities (see above, pp.210-21) it was in relation to non-departmental public bodies that most of the problems arose. For example, during the updating of the West Midlands regional strategy the J.T.W.G. put a considerable amount of effort in obtaining and coordinating data on 'resources' (health services, education services, gas, water, electricity) distribution, and relating these to the availability of residential land in the region. The results of the exercise were, however, very disappointing as the quantity and quality of data obtained from the various sources did not match up and could not be used in any significant way in the design and evaluation of alternative strategies (see above, pp.218-9).

Appraisal and Approval Network

Extensive consultations were also held during the appraisal period which preceded the Secretary of State's letters of response to the reports of the strategies. Disregarding minor variations between regions it is possible to describe this phase of the process in a few sentences. Regional strategies were not required to be subjected to public participation exercises as were Structure Plans; however, once the regional strategy reports were finalised they were forwarded to the public bodies wich had been involved in their preparation

(sponsoring bodies included), to private organisations in the same circunstances, to the regional Members of Parliament, etc. All these organisations and individuals were asked to submit comments on the agreed strategy. The comments received were then transmittted to the Secretary of State accompanied by a 'report on the comments', prepared either by one of the three regional sponsoring bodies (generally the local authority side), or by the team which had prepared the main report (Fig. 28 c).

In the case of the first 'tripartite' strategy (the South East Strategic Plan of 1970) the final appraisal and the government's response was prepared through a process of informal consultation, in Whitehall, in the light of comments received. In all other cases the appraisal in Whitehallwas conducted through ad hoc interdepartmental working parties chaired by a D.O.E. senior officer. On the basis of this appraisal the Secretary of State of the D.O.E. then produced a 'letter of response' which read together, where necessary, with the regional strategy report set out the approved regional strategy[55]. This 'letter of response' served two purposes (Wood, 1977). Firstly, it expressed the D.O.E. policy towards the planning of the region. Secondly, it provided a qualified opinion on whether the strategy report was broadly acceptable as a basis for consideration if other public agencies should so choose. However, as the regional strategies themselves had no statutory basis the responses were not binding on anyone.

Two further comments need to be made about these responses. Firstly, they took a considerable amount of time to produce (18 months in the case of the North-West, 12 months in East Anglia), as a consequence of which certain elements within the strategies became out-of-date even before the responses were published. Secondly, the responses were very brief, unsubstantiated and mild documents:

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(55) - See for example D.O.E. (1975) Regional Strategy for the North West: Government Response to the Strategic Plan p. 11, para. 2.

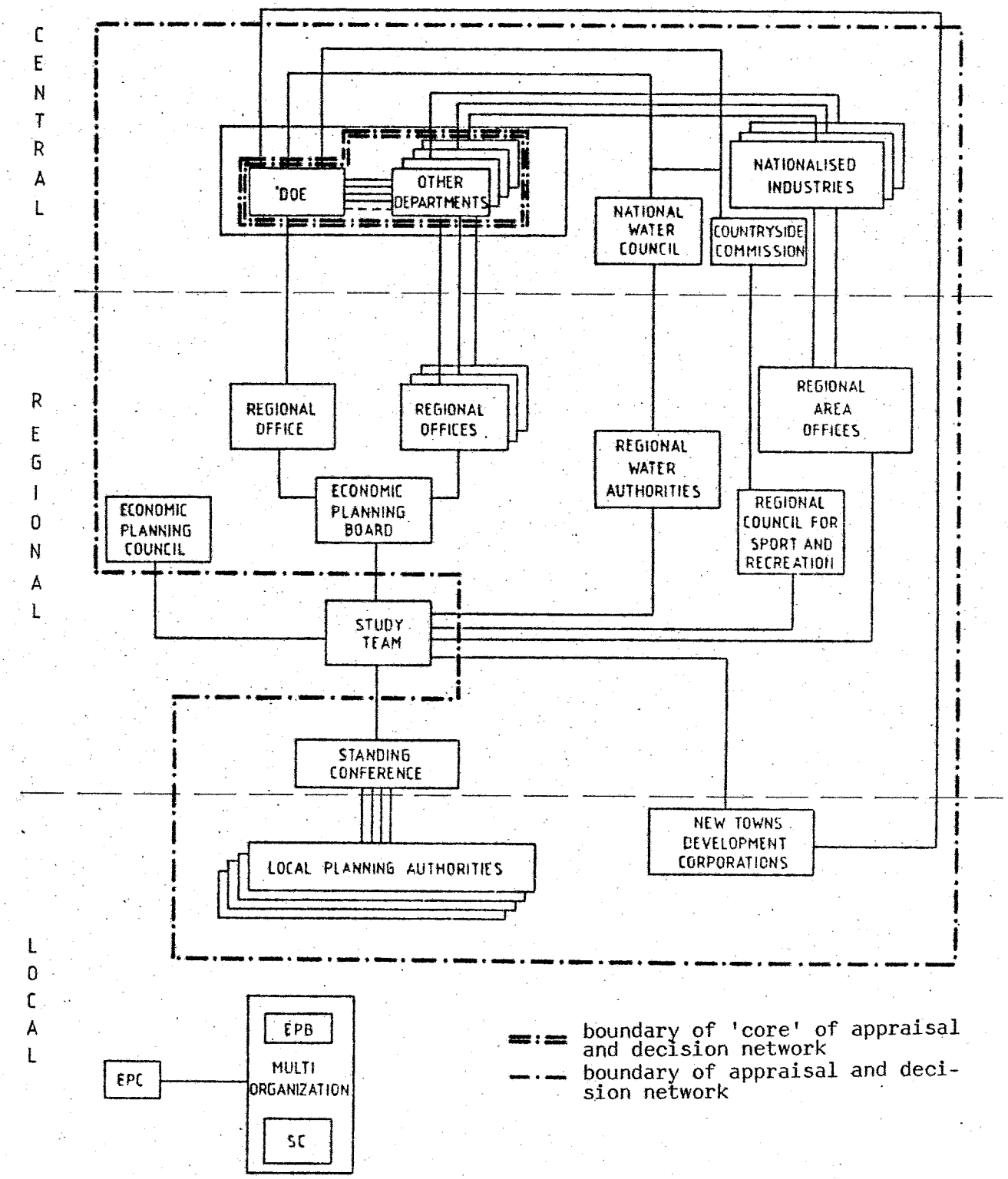

Fig. 28c: Tripartite Model of Regional Strategic Planning
- appraisal and decision network

> *tending to assimilate the strategy to government thinking rather than to accept suggestions for changes in policy; dismissing matters which cannot be resolved without comparable information for all regions; and passing on other matters for further consideration at structure plan stage*
>
> (Power, 1978, p. 10)

The weaknesses of the letters of response was further compounded by the ambiguity and vagueness of some of the strategies' reccomendations. It was sometimes difficult to understand what precisely had been approved (see above pp.235-5). This, of course, did not augur well for the ability of the strategies to influence the decision making processes of the agencies who acted as targets for their reccommendations. Before commenting on this aspect it is important to provide an interpretation of the characteristics of the letters of response.

Because regional planning had a low priority within D.O.E., and almost none within other government departments, the appraisal process was the first time that the attention of most senior civil servants in Whitehall was drawn to the regional planning processes. There was consternation in some departments that documents sponsored by one government department (the D.O.E.) had the effect of impinging on the policy areas of other departments, and central government policy in general. Further, it was argued that the Secretary of State of the D.O.E. in his letter of response could not approve, or disapprove, policy reccommendations which were under the responsibility of other government Ministers. The delays in the responses were, in part at least, due to attempts to resolve conflicts between departments over policy responsabilities. The vagueness and ambiguity of the responses derived from the constitutional impossibility, let alone interest, of the Secretary of State of the D.O.E. in commenting upon many of the reccommendations and analyses put forward in the strategies.

Given this situation a view prevailed in certain quarters of the D.O.E. noticeably the Directorate of Development Plans and Regional Policy, that there was

> *a need for a more definitive response document able to stand on*

> *its own as a clear statement of government policy towards the region*
>
> (Wood, 1977, p. 40)

Indeed it is interesting to note that the 1977 Secretary of State's Policy Statement for the South-East broadly corresponded to that approach (D.O.E., 1977). The 1980 response to the updating of the West Midlands regional strategy (D.O.E., 1980) also had little to do with the submissions (see above, pp.253-6). In both cases, however, the responses far from being 'a clear statement of government policy' were very vague and concentrated on those matters over which the Secretary of State of the D.O.E. had jurisdiction. Preeminent among those matters were land-use issues which could be relevant during the subsequent review of the Structure Plans of the various local authorities in the regions concerned.

Influence Networks

Finally, no analysis of the admnistrative structures of regional planning could be considered satisfactory without examining the influence network of the process. As Carter et al stated:

> *the extent of application to public policy decisions is the ultimate criterion of the sucess or otherwise of a study*
>
> (Carter et. al, 1975, Summary)

Indeed the regional planning process can be considered as a mechanism of influence over the decisions and actions of public agencies (Fig. 28 d)[56]. This perspective was considered at length in Part III of this thesis. So, at this stage the analysis can be restricted to outline some of the key issues.

The point that needs to be made is that the extent of the influence of regional planning processes over the decisions and actions of public agencies

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(56) - It is obvious that regional strategies also tend to have an indirect influence over the decisions of non-state organisations and decisions makers. However, it can be argued that eventual modifications in the behaviour of these agents are a consequence of changes in the practical orientation of state agencies. Given the indirect nature of this influence influence it can be safely disregarded at this stage of the analysis.

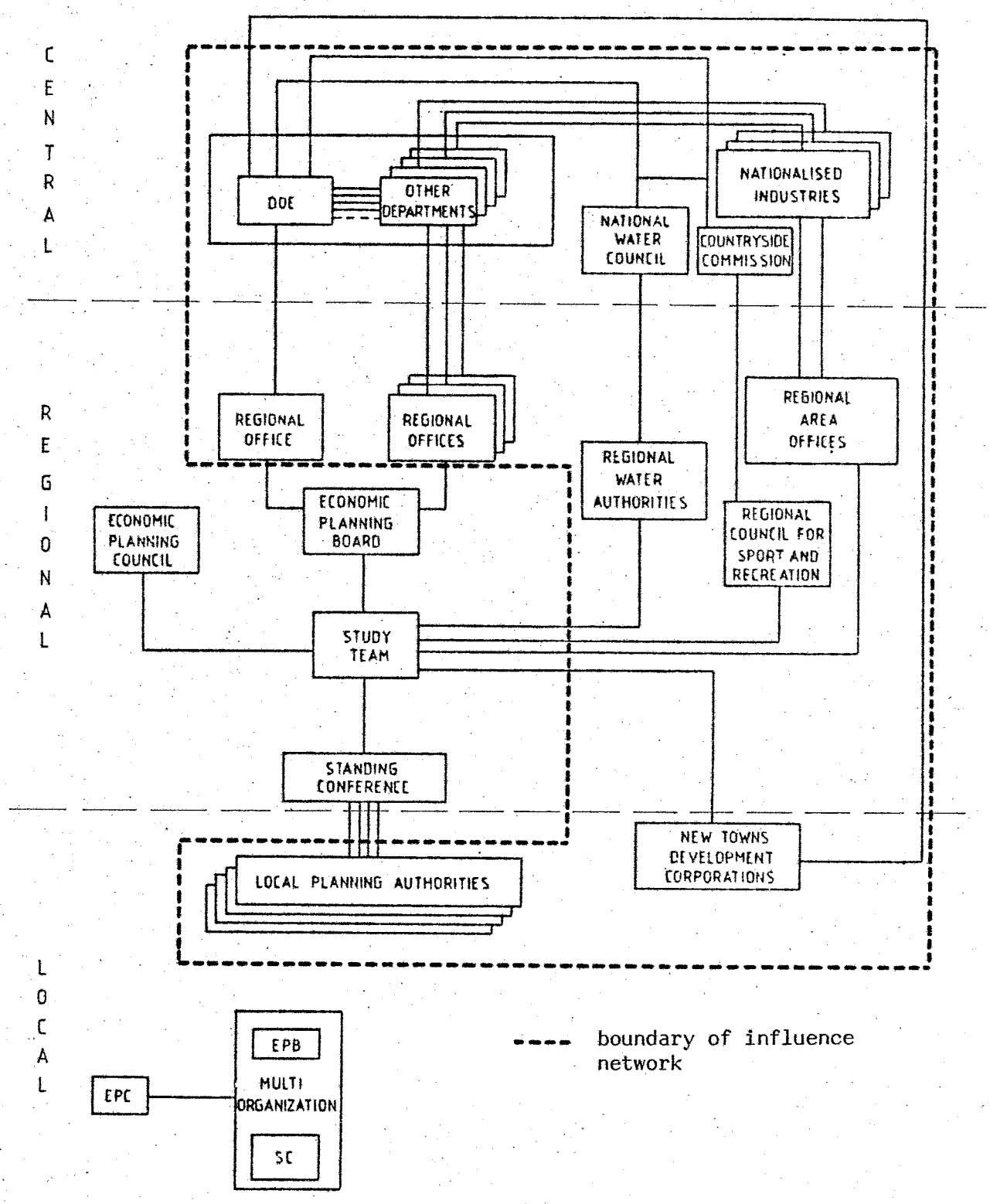

Fig. 28d: Tripartite Model of Regional Strategic Planning - influence network

should not be evalueted only by reference to the approved regional strategic recommendations. The influence is not only what occurs after the strategy has been approved, but also includes the processes of learning and substantive and procedural policy changes which occur during the interorganisational interactions that take place while the strategy is being prepared. While these 'invisible products'(Carter et al. 1975), by their very nature, are difficult to evaluate they should not be overlooked. Equally, it is important not to overexagerate their importance, as Hart et al. (1980) appear to do. It is necessary to bear mind that the substitution of some key decision-makers in the process can, eventually, lead to the destruction of 'informal networks' forged during years of collective 'larning experiences'. More important, in situations where substantial disagreements between organisations exist these 'invisible products' cannot compensate for the lack of agreement in relation to the visible products, as the process of updating and rolling forward of the West Midlands regional strategy clearly illustrates (see above, pp. 249-55).

The second point which should be considered in any assessment of the ability of regional planning processes to influence the decisions and actions of public agencies is that they constitute only one among many elements with such aims. In this respect regional strategic reccommendations join, and compete with, other mechanisms of influence such as pressure groups, departmental priorities, admnistrative rules and routines etc. Given this perspective it is particularly difficult to assess whether specific procedural or substantive changes derive from the influence of the regional planning process or from other sources or both. This problem is clearly illustrated by the comment made by the Post Office on the East Anglia Regional Strategy:

> *The existence of a regional plan is, of course, taken into account by the Postal services when making forward plans of its own. However, the decision to locate e.g. a mechanised parcels sorting office (is) based on a very large number of imputs of which the regional plan is only one* [57].

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(57) - Quoted by Stevens (1976), p. 21.

The third issue which deserves attention is whether the characteristics of the regional planning process facilitate or, on the contrary, hinder its ability to exercise influence over public executive agencies. Although no public agency is bound to adhere to reccommendations put forward in regional strategies, the situation varies considerably amongst the various agencies and policy areas. It also varies according to the degree of support the reccommendations receive from the sponsoring bodies in general and central government in particular. Two examples can be used to illustrate the problems faced in this respect.

In its response to the consultation stage of the updating of the West Midlands regional strategy the Severn Trent Water Authority argued that

> *The documents are, by their very nature, expressed largely in generalisations and hence the Authority is not able to give detailed comments. Only when strategies for development become firmer and specific issues are identified can they be evaluated* [58].

The point here is, as noted earlier (see above, pp.306-12) that water authorities require, for their operational decisions, detailed information and a high degree of expressed commitment to proposals, which are simply not possible to provide through regional strategy reccommendations. More worrying, however, is the fact that executive agencies use this pretext to completly ignore regional strategies. A couple of months before the W.M.E.P.C. was disbanded its members found out that the S.T.W.A. was using, for purposes of medium-term planning of its activities, population forecasts that were profoundly at odds with those used in the updating of the West Midlands regional strategy[59]. This situation clearly suggests that the 'invisible products' of the exercise were not, particularly dramatic.

This situation might have been avoided, in part at least, if the sponsoring bodies, central government, in particular, expressed a high degree of

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(58) - Letter of 23 November 1979 from the Severn-Trent Water Authority to the Secretary of the W.M.P.A.C.

(59) - Interview with Sir Michael Higgs 23.1.81.

commitment to the regional strategy processes. This, however, did not prove to be the case. Apart from the traditional functional bias of government operation there were, at least, two specific reasons for the lack of commitment.

First, when the strategy reports widened their concerns and began openly to challenge established national policies the documents started being greeted in Whitehall with *"intense anthagonism"* and as *"just another thick book from region X asking for money"*[60]. Whether this type of reception was justified is very difficult, if not impossible, to judge. Like the documents of the E.P.C.s produced in the late 1960s, the regional strategies of the 1970s were prepared without the benefit of an overall framework against which to assess partial contributions. In this context any claim for extra resources, or changes in policies, is always liable to be interpreted as 'regional pleading'. One thing seems certain though, once regional planning becomes a synonimous with regional pleading its impact is bound to be minimal[61]. Given this perspective the widening in scope of regional strategies which some analysts (Powell, 1978; Skelcher, 1979) considered to open up new horizons for regional planning in fact were to get nowhere. Indeed, within the existing political and organisational context, these changes were bound to further weaken the already weak commitment to regional planning.

The second specific reason for the poor commitment of central government to the activity was that, as noted earlier, the 1970s were marked by a proliferation of planning systems associated, in part at least, with attempts to control public expenditure. Within a context dominated by financial considerations the planning of real resources associated with regional planning had naturally a lower priority vis-ã-vis programming systems such as H.I.P.s and

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(60) - Transcript of the address made by George Wedd (D.O.E.) to the Regional Studies Association Conference. 'A Future for Regional Planning', Imperial College, London, December 1980. See Webb (1980), p. 56.

(61) - This will occur unless regional strategies are backed by powerful interest groups or social movements. This was never the case of regional planning in England. See below pp. 470-73.

T.P.P.s. As the characteristics of these programmes were clearly at odds with the characteristics of regional planning (see above, pp.395-9) the consequences of these developments could only be a decline in the importance of regional planning.

It was only vis-à-vis the Structure planning process that regional strategies played an important role as is well illustrated in the West Midlands case (see above, pp.394-9). Even in this regard, however, it needs to be emphasised that the slow-down in the rate of demographic and economic growth throughout the 1970s, and the local government reform introduced by the Local Government Act of 1972, both contributed to undermining the importance of regional strategies. The specific problem (distribution of growth) which used to create disputes between neighbouring local authorities became less significant and, increasingly, could be treated at the level of structure planning. In the updating of the West Midlans regional strategy, the combination of these changes in the context and disagreements between the major sponsoring bodies concerning land-use planning, meant that difficult issues were not tackled, choices were not clearly exposed and explored and decisions were, in fact, left to be taken in the process of Structure planning (see above, pp. 249-55).

Relationships between the four networks

The analysis of the four main networks of the regional strategic process clearly suggests that there were a number of organisational and political problems associated with the tripartite model of regional strategic planning. In organisational terms these problems become apparent when the four networks are considered together as an overall framework (Fig. 28). It is important to note, for example, that the core of the Intelligence Network had no direct role on the Influence Network. This created, a crucial gap between the formulation and eventual follow-up of reccommendations. Similarly, Standing Conferences which played an important role in the Sponsorship Network and also figured in the Intelligence and Appraisal and Approval Networks were by and

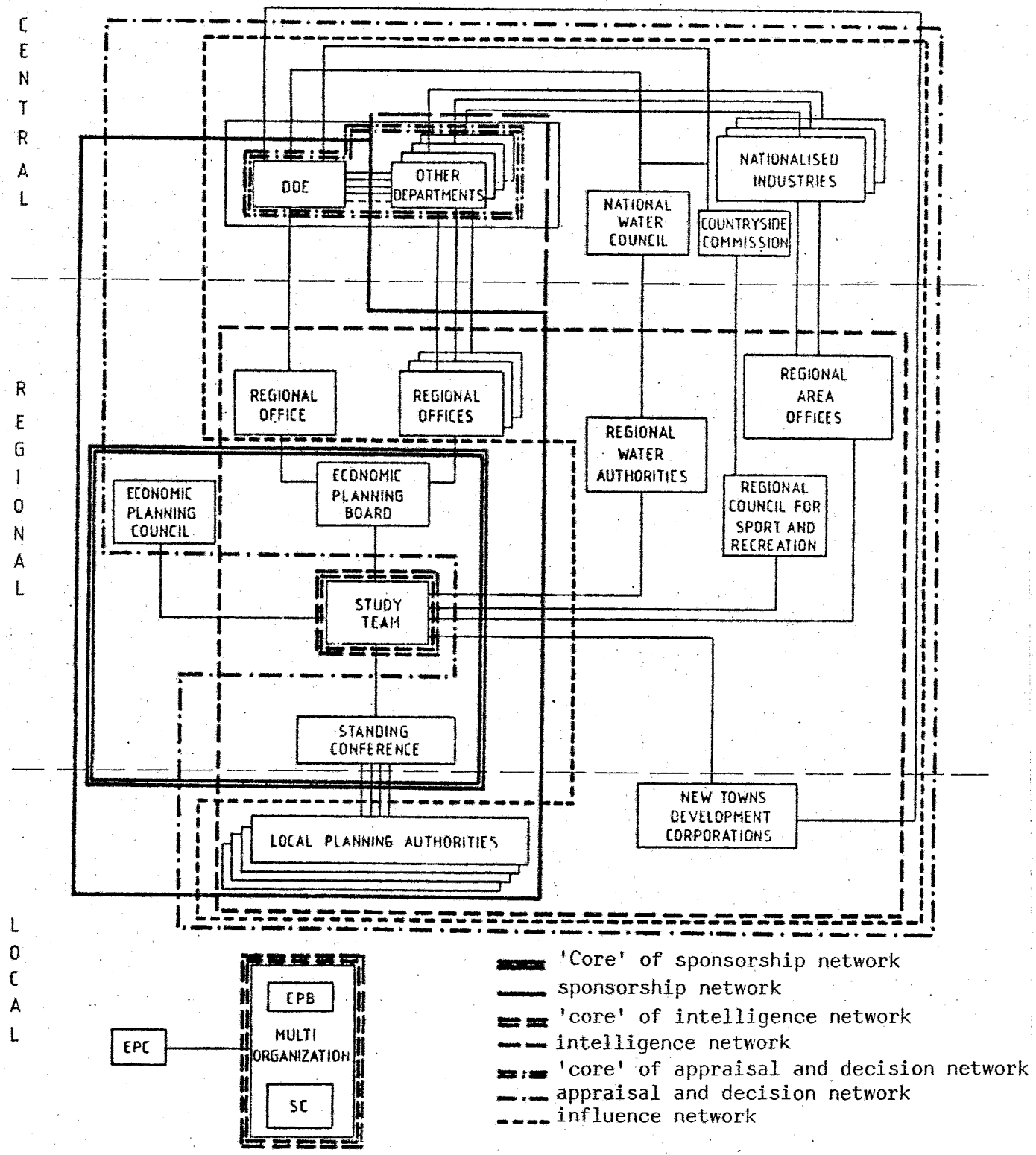

Fig. 28: Tripartite Model of Regional Strategic Planning
- interorganisational networks

large, absent from the Influence Network. If 'influence' is a key word in relation to regional strategies then these gaps could only lead to unsatisfactory results as far the activity was concerned.

The difficulties began to emerge during the office of the Labour Government 1974-79 when there was a failure to respond to the final report of the Northern Region Strategy Team (N.R.S.T., 1977). However, the existing problems were much aggravated by the election of a Conservative Government in the Spring of 1979. Within the space of a few months the government delivered a number of fundamental blows to the tripartite model of regional strategic planning. First, in July of that year the Secretary of State of the D.O.E. - Michael Heseltine - disbanded the E.P.C.s (see above, pp. 376-7). Second, the government made it clear that it was only prepared to comment on the land-use aspects of the Updating of the West Midlands regional strategy (see above, pp. 370-2).

Finally, in November of that year, a Minister announced that there would be no official government response to the Strategic Plan for the Northern Region on the grounds that the report took the form of 'special pleading', was too wide in scope and had in part been overtaken by events[62]. More generally, staff at the regional offices of the D.O.E. were instructed to withdraw their participation from regional planning exercises and the Minister for Local Government - Tom King - made plain the overall position of the government concerning regional planning when he stated:

> *Too much effort was being devoted to a level and degree of detail, particularly, economic planning, which by the nature and structure of government in this country (including the responsability for the major classes of infrastructure provision) was bound to be relatively ineffective at the regional level... In many cases the regional dimension can only properly be taken into account in the national planning of individual infrastructure and other spending programmes, and machinery, formal or informal, usually exists for this purpose*
>
> (King, 1981, p. 93)

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(62) - The Planner November 1979.

IV.3.3 - SUMMARY

In this chapter the admnistrative structures of regional planning in the period 1964-80 were considered in two stages. The first stage dealt with the process which resulted from the creation of the system of R.E.P.C.s and R.E.P.B.s in 1964. Initially the Boards were given responsibilities for preparing regional plans but this situation lasted less than two years: in 1966 responsibilities were transferred to the Councils. This development reflected, inter alia, a weakening of central government commitment to regional planning.

The initiating role played by central government, and subsequently by the E.P.C.s, on regional planning matters was strongly opposed by local authorities in some English regions (e.g. South-East and West Midlands), and this prompted the relevant standing conferences of local authorities to develop regional planning processes in paralell with those being carried out by the E.P.C.s. Thus by the late 1960s there was considerable ambiguity and confusion concerning the admnistrative arrangements of regional planning.

Such a situation, which constantly weakened the 'influence dimension' of regional planning could not last for a long period. The organisational solution adopted to overcome this state of affairs was to bring together the three main parties previously responsible for regional planning (central government, local authorities and E.P.C.s) under some form of co-operating arrangements. The tripartite model of regional planning arrangements, which resulted from that endeavour, provided organisational support for most regional planning processes carried out in the 1970s. However, this sort of arrangements revealed a number of important shortcomings from the mid 1970s onwards, and by the end of the decade it was apparent that it had no chances of overcoming a number of fundamental problems which had plagued regional planning in the past.

In spite of a number of negative developments which happened while the 1974-1979 Labour Government was in power it was with the accession of a Conservative government to power in 1979 that the short-term prospects of regional planning became bleak. What these considerations suggest is that actors

(individuals, groups) can significantly shift the practical orientation of organisations. The consideration of actors, and actor orientations, must therefore be part of any adequate analysis of the regional planning activity. This is the object of the following chapter.

IV.4 - ACTORS AND THE INTEREST STRUCTURE OF REGIONAL PLANNING

IV.4.1 - INTRODUCTION

By interest structure of regional planning is meant the set of action orientations of the actors (individuals, groups, institutions) who are involved in the specification of regional planning outputs[63]. These action orientations, as noted earlier, derive not only from attempts to defend and promote the actor's material interests (wealth, status, etc.) but also from the actor's adhesion to specific sets of symbolic interests (individual or professional ideologies, values and attitudes)[64]. Thus, even within the 'dominant coalition' of a given organisation there might be conflicts between the action orientations of various actors. For example, within local authorities, deep-seated values of representative democracy might clash with values of managerial efficiency favoured by senior local government officers.

In spite of this fact, the consideration of organisations as the main bases of power relations in the determination of regional planning outputs provides, arguably, the best way to operationalise the notion of 'actor' in regional planning, without resorting to 'voluntaristic' or 'structuralist' approaches to human behaviour. This approach requires, however, some method of identifying and classifying those actors involved in the specification of the activity's outputs.

Before adressing this question it is worth making a brief parenthesis to consider the extent to which changes in the admnistrative structures of regional planning entail modifications to the patterns of interest

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(63) - The differences between this definition and the one suggested by Benson (1980) are explained by the fact that this thesis is concerned, mainly, with political outputs while Benson is preocupied with the study of political outcomes.

(64) - A more detailed discussion of these questions is to be found in Appendix D below, esp. pp. D-10—20.

representation in the activity. A case in point in this regard concerns the disbanding, in 1979, of the E.P.C.s. Although the Councils were constituted by individually appointed members, the selection of elements from the two sides of industry was done in close cooperation with the regional structures of the C.B.I. and the T.U.C. (see above, pp.370-2). The E.P.C.s provided, therefore, a direct opportunity for regional industrialists and trade-unionists to argue their case at the early stages of formulation of regional plans. Whether this fact had any significant impact on the practical orientation of the activity is debatable (see above, pp.370-2 and below, pp.453-4). The point which is important to stress here is that the disbanding of the E.P.C.s deprived these actors of an institutional opportunity of directly being involved in the regional planning process[65]. Concomitantly, the relative importance of other actors (e.g. public employees) in the process was reinforced.

Bearing this point in mind it is now necessary to attempt a classification of actors in relation to the regional planning activity. The first thing that needs to be said in this respect is that the method used by Benson (1980) to differentiate between actors (in terms of demand groups, support groups, coordinating groups, etc) does not appear very helpful in relation to an activity such as regional planning. In this activity the specification of outputs derives mainly from processes of organisational interaction. In these circunstances it seems more appropriate to resort to a process of classification by institutional differentiation, that is to say, distinguishing the actors with reference to the organisations in which they operate. Indeed 'organisational interests' (Leach, 1980) provide the basic action orientations for a substantial part of the actors involved in the activity.

Classification of actors by institutional differentiation, or indeed by any other method which relies on the positions actors occupy in predefined social

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(65) - Of course some of these remained directly involved in the activity because of overlapping membership. Others retreated to forms of indirect involvement in the activity through, for example, pressure groups.

structures (institutions, social classes, etc) depends on theoretical positions concerning the way power mechanisms operate in the society at large, and in the particular activity being studied[66]. In the case of regional planning, the listing and classification of relevant social actors depends on the theories adopted for the analysis of relations between state and civil society.

For example, the adoption of a 'structuralist' approach to the State would mean that the consideration of the action orientations of the actors located within the State apparatus would be irrelevant. Thus Castells (1978) dismisses the importance of 'bureaucratic' and 'professional' interests as explanatory variables for the analysis of state actions and decisions[67]. Conversely, if an extreme version of the 'managerialist' thesis was adopted in the analysis, the consideration of actors operating in the sphere of civil society would be made unnecessary. The approach to the state adopted in Part I of this thesis does not allow for the introduction of either of these extremes. State and civil society were seen as inseparably interwoven and any analysis of the activities of the state which excluded, a priori, any of these dimensions was considered to be theoretically inadequate (see above, pp.18-51).

The articulation of this theoretical approach with the idea that actors participate in the regional planning activity through processes of organisational interaction, justifies the adoption of a classificatory scheme based on the connections of actors to organisations, belonging either to the state apparatus or the civil society. A strict application of this scheme would, however, leave out of the analysis all unorganised actors such as the so-called 'public' in 'public participation' exercises, and 'social movements', which for one reason or another have not developed a definite organisational expression. Although the characteristics of the admnistrative structures of the activity might suggest that, in general terms, these actors are unlikely to have much influence in the

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(66) - See Appendix D below, esp. pp. D-1—10.

(67) - See Castells (1978), p. 64.

specification of regional planning outputs, it would be unjustified to exclude them a priori from the analysis.

Actors associated with state organisations will be considered using the threefold classification of state organisations introduced earlier (central government departments, local authorities and non departmental public bodies). Actors in organisations from civil society will be assessed with the help of a taxonomy of pressure groups. Acting as a bridge between these two broad types of actors it is important to consider the role of political parties. A synoptic scheme of the classification of actors used in the analysis is provided in Fig. 30.

Before beginning to analyse the various elements in the taxonomy it is important to deal with two general issues. First, the issue of overlapping membership, that is to say, the fact that individuals are likely to belong to more than one type of organisation (e.g. political party, local council, professional organisation). This situation has two dimensions. On the one hand, individuals have multiple commitments and are guided in their behaviour by multiple, and often contradictory, action orientations. On the other hand, the strength and 'orientation' of organisations (local councils, pressure groups, etc) are bound to be influenced by the 'overlapping membership' of its more powerful members. This question is of particular importance when analysing the relation between pressure groups and state organisations. For example, the decisions and actions of a local council concerning a regional planning issue may faithfully represent the positions of a particular pressure group, mainly because of the issue of 'overlapping membership'. In such a situation the pressure group will not need to formally bringing pressure on the Council as a whole. This represents, it goes without saying, an example of 'organisational mobilisation of bias'.

The second issue that is necessary to mention at this stage concerns the fact that the relative importance of actors in the specification of regional planning outputs can only, in the last resort, be assessed in relation to

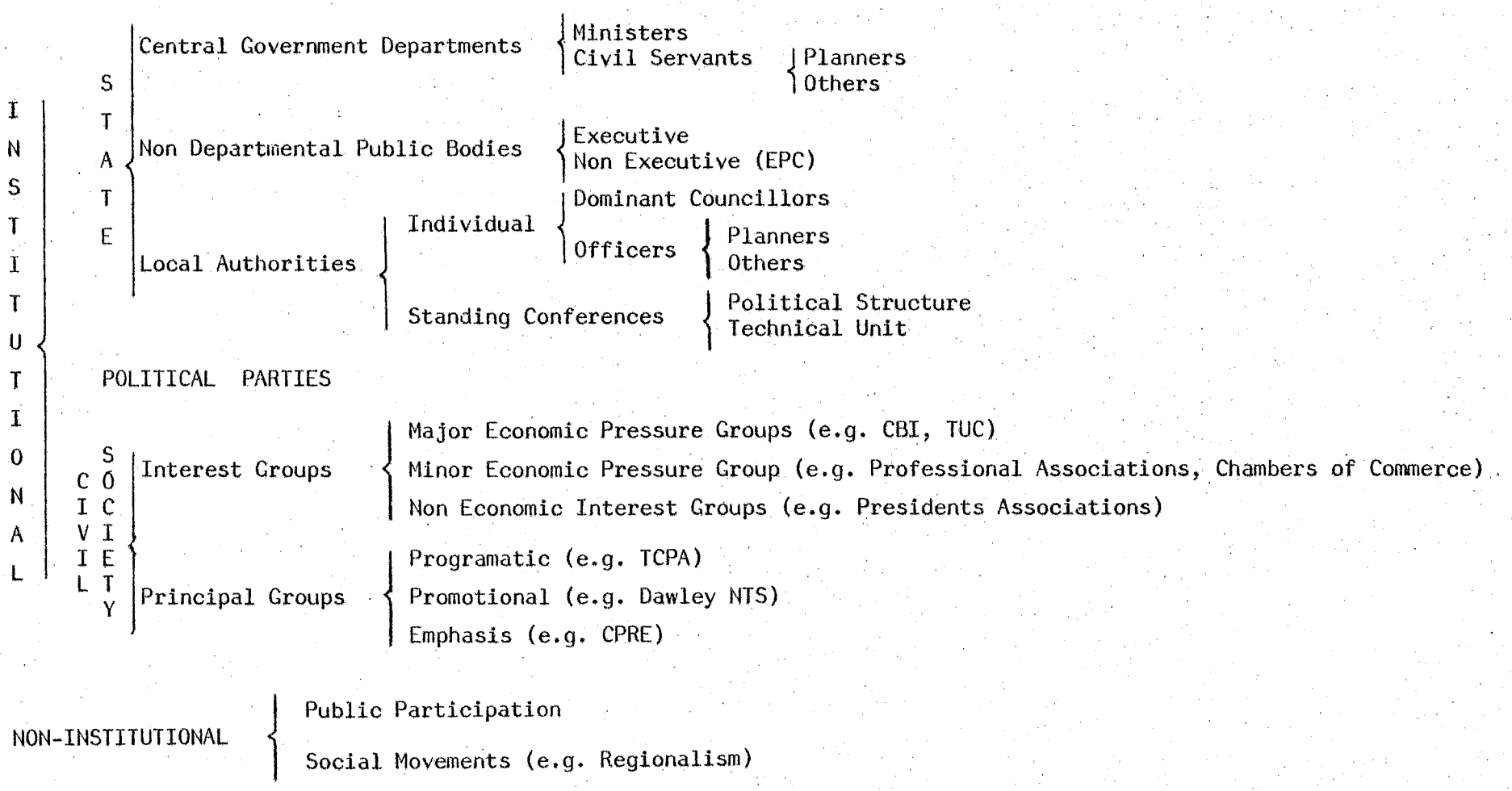

Fig. 30: A Classification of Actors in Regional Planning

concrete situations. Of course, it is possible to discuss, in general terms, the likelihood of a particular actor (individual, group, institution) being able to significantly influence the specification or regional planning outputs. Further, this discussion is necessary in order to obtain a preliminary screening of the whole set of actors. However, only the empirical analysis of concrete situations will enable the analyst to state whether, or not, the action of a particular actor was determinant in the specification of a given output[68].

Given this perspective it seems useful to divide the analysis of the interest structures of regional planning into two stages. Thus, the remainder of this chapter is used to discuss, in general terms, the relative power of the various types of actors in the specification of regional planning outputs (regional planning in the West Midlands providing most of the illustrations). Then, a number of regional planning outputs in the West Midlands region (associated with various types of power relations) will be considered, in the following chapter. The discussion of these outputs will allow, not only the discussion of power relations between the various types of actors, but also a scrutiny of the role of constraints in the specification of regional planning outputs.

IV.4.2 - STATE ORGANISATIONS

Regional planning outputs are state outputs aimed, in part at least, at influencing other state decisions and actions. Given this perspective the importance of public employees in the specification of regional planning outputs can hardly be overemphasised[69].

Within the state apparatus of democratic representative states there is

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(68) - This is a logical corollary of the adoption of a relational view of power. See. Appendix D below, esp. pp. D-2—6.

(69) - Of course crude versions of the manegerialist thesis achieved this difficult, but undistinguished, objective.

a case for distinguishing between three types of actors: elected members (Ministers, councillors), public employees (civil servants, local government officers) and non-permanent appointed members (mainly associated with non-departmental public bodies). The elected members are, in constitutional terms, the decision-makers. The role of public employees is, in constitutional terms, one of preparation of information for, and implementation of, the elected member's decisions. In practical terms, however, public employees act as decision-makers as a result of various factors, namely: explicit delegation of functional responsibilities from the elected members and the existence of admnistrative rules which need to be interpreted and implemented. Further, the importance of public employees in the determination of state outputs has tended to grow in recent decades, a fact associated, in part at least, with the increasing number, complexity and scope of state activities.

This increase in the relative importance of public employees (specially at the central government level) has given rise to two competing interpretations of the phenomenum and associated effects. For some authors, e.g. Heclo and Wildavsky (1981) this development has made the distinction between elected members and public employees meaningless. Both groups are best referred to as 'political administrators' sharing a common appreciative system, that is to say, a common set of general and specific values, beliefs, etc. For other authors, however, this ongoing process of reinforcement of the decision-making powers of public employees in general, and civil servants in particular, has led to a situation in which these elements see themselves:

> *as being above the party battle with a political position of (their) own to defend against all-comers, including incoming governments armed with their philosophy and programmes*
>
> (Benn, 1980, p. 62)

According to this perspective public employees far from constituting a 'political community' with elected members are mainly interested in getting their own way. This they achieve through a number of processes, namely: by briefing politicians when they enter office; by setting the 'policy agenda', that is the

set of problems elected members should address; by controlling the information elected members receive; by mobilising external pressures against, or for, certain decisions and by using their expertise to influence outputs[70].

The above positions are, certainly, best seen in terms of ideal-types, than as adequate descriptions of the behaviour of each and every public employee. As such, they are useful for assessing particular situations but should not be considerad as hypotheses for testing. As far as regional planning is concerned, two questions offer themselves for further consideration in this respect: first, whether, or not, the characteristics of the activity heighten the importance of public employees vis-ã-vis elected members; second, what would be the impact upon the practical orientation of the activity resulting from a domination of public employees in the specification of regional planning outputs. Before considering these two questions it is necessary to make a few remarks about the action orientations of state actors.

According to Benson (1975) the operational behaviour of the admnistrators of state agencies is guided by four basic action orientations: the fulfilment of programme requirements; the maintenance of a clear domain of high importance; the maintenance of orderly, reliable patterns of resource flow; the external application and defense of the agency's paradigm (see above, p. 93)[71]. The main shortcoming of this formulation is that it relies heavily on an 'economicist' interpretation of action orientations associated with material interests. By pursuing the action orientations identified by Benson, agency admnistrators would indirectly enhance their own positions in terms of status, wealth, career prospects, etc[72]. However, these action orientations in pursuit

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(70) - For a development of this type of argument see Benn (1980) esp.pp. 66-72. Less 'apocalyptic' prerspectives of the same problem are provided by Chevallier (1977) pp. 85-88 and Williams (1980), pp. 91-94.

(71) - The expression agency admnistrators refers to both elected and non-elected elements occupying a dominant position in a given agency.

(72) - See Clegg and Dunkerley (1980) pp. 463-480 and Ranson et al (1980) pp.20-24.

of what Leach (1980) calls 'organisational interests' do not provide an adequate basis for the interpretation of the behaviour of the state's agents in all circunstances. In some cases this is better interpreted with reference to the pursuit of 'symbolic interests', such as personal or professional ideologies and values.

It is in relation to these symbolic interests that disagreements and conflicts between elected members and public employees are more likely to develop. One reason for this is that the elected 'political admnistrators' are members of a given political party, and their action is bound to reflect 'action orientations' which are not directly determined by the position they occupy in a given agency. This action orientation may, eventually, be detrimental to the 'organisation interests' as, for example, when a political party is committed to reduce, or abolish, the functions performed by a specific agency. In this respect public employees are likely to adhere more closely to the action orientations identified by Benson (1975) and, as such, emphasise the advantages of policy and organisational continuity and incremental change[73]. This statement needs, however, to be qualified as far as professional public employees are concerned. For these public employees, professional ideologies and doctrines ('best currency ideas' and 'best prescriptions') are likely to play a significant part in shaping their action orientations.

It is now important to address the two questions outlined earlier. In regard to the first of them it is possible, in the abstract, to advance arguments both for and against the idea that the characteristics of regional planning make the specification of the activity's outputs particularly open to the influence of public employees. In favour of the argument it can be stated, for example, that the technical complexity of regional planning practice makes it difficult for elected members to fully understand what is at stake in regard to regional planning alternatives, and intelligently comment on them. Further, it can be

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(73) - See Heclo and Wildavsky (1981) pp. 21-35.

argued that the electoral relevance of regional planning issues is minimal and, as such, politicians are quite happy to let the specification of planning outputs go by default to the public employees (planners in particular). Finally, it might be suggested that the long-time horizon, and the continuous nature, of regional planning tends to make it difficult for elected members to control the activity.

There is, undoubtly, an element of truth in these arguments. However, they do not appear totally convincing. For example, in relation to the first argument it could be argued that the technical aspects of regional planning are, certainly, not more complex than those associated with public housing finance or land-value policy issues; and that in relation to these issues the role of elected members has been particularly notorious[74]. Besides, the regional planning activity is not associated with any clearly defined profession that might invoke specific technical mastering of regional planning issues. The second argument is also of doubtful validity in, at least, two aspects. On the one hand, a number of regional planning outputs (e.g. decisions on major planning enquiries) have often a clear electoral relevance (see below, pp.479-80). On the other hand, it can be argued that given the low admnistrative status of the activity, and the characteristics of its outcomes (indirect, long-term) it does not constitute a field of action which public employees (civil servants in particular)are particularly keen to be associated with[75].

What this dicussion reveals is that is fruitless to attempt assessing in abstract the relative powers of elected members and public employees in the specification of regional planning outputs. It may well be the case that the two groups of actors have different degrees of power, in relation to different types of outputs. As such a response to the question can only be provided in relation to concrete situations.

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(74) - See Mckay and Cox (1979) pp. 266-271.

(75) - For example Carter et al (1975) argue that the civil service career structure made it unrewarding for D.O.E. officers to be heavily involved in long regional planning processes.

The second question concerns the potential impact on the practical orientation of the activity resulting from a situation in which public employees in general, and planners in particular, assume a dominant role in the specification of regional planning outputs. A number of alternatives appear possible in relation to such a situation. Firstly, it could result in the specification of outputs faithfully reflecting the relation of power in society at large. This argument has been put forward in relation to urban planning by authors such as Goodman (1972) and Hardy (1974). Secondly, it can be hypothesised that the diminution of political control over the activity would give planners freedom to adopt the 'best currency ideas' and 'best prescriptions' for regional planning, in fashion at the time. Davies (1972) has referred to urban planners as 'evangelistic bureaucrats' preaching and, to a certain extent, implementing a gospel constituted exactly by such best currency ideas and prescriptions. Thirdly, it may be argued that because public employees require for their action some form of 'legitimacy', they could resort either to the application of general legitimising operational principles (e.g. 'economic efficiency') in order to justify their actions or, alternatively, they might seek support for their decisions on the more powerful groups of the civil society associated with the output being determined[76]. In both cases the tendency would be for the activity to exacerbate the power differentials existing in the civil society. Finally, planners might be willing to assure a 'progressive' role and use their control over the specification of regional planning outputs in order to promote social change favouring the least powerful groups in society (Friedman, Kossy and Regan, 1980). Again these are abstract and hypothetical remarks, and there is no possibility of assessing the relative merits of each of the arguments without the benefit of analysis of concrete situations.

It is now necessary to illustrate the argument just presented by briefly considering a few issues associated with the role of actors in the three

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(76) - See Habermas (1976) and Stewart (1974) respectively.

main types of state organisation.

Central Government Departments

An important point to bear in mind, when considering the role of actors in central government departments in the determination of regional planning outputs, is that different departments have different levels of responsibilities, and commitment, to the activity. Similar action orientations pursued by actors belonging to different departments (or sub-units in the same department) may have quite different results, as far as regional planning is concerned.

A good illustration of this situation is provided by the arguments between two senior Labour Ministers at the time of the creation of the R.E.P.C.s in the mid 1960s. Describing the negotiations the Secretary of State for Economic Affairs - Mr (later Lord) George Brown - wrote:

> *The Councils were formally called Regional Economic Planning Councils. We wanted them to be called Planning Councils, and the 'Economic' was put in to appease the local government people, who feared that their functions might be confused with physical planning, which was in local government hands. I always thought that the two forms of planning went together, but I reckoned that by agreing to have the word 'Economic' in their title we could have enough ambiguity in the situation for our scheme to go ahead without too much fuss*
>
> (Brown, 1971, pp. 108-9)

The Minister for Housing and Local Government - Mr. Richard Crossman - described the situation in typical megalomaniac terms:

> *In the course of yesterday and this morning I had been continually negotiating on the draft. It had come across to us with the word 'economic' added in longhand before the word 'planning' as a concession to me so that it read not just 'regional planning' but 'regional economic planning' ha, ha, ha! I also wrote into the statement that nothing in this scheme would affect the existing powers of the local authorities with regard to planning. It seemed to go down fairly well in the House of Commons, mainly because it will take sometime for people to discover how inadequate and meaningless it has now been made*
>
> (Crossman, 1976, p. 93)

It is therefore obvious that while both actors were pursuing similar action orientations, the fact that they were responsible for organisations which disputed the responsibility for a given policy domain put them at both extremes

of a power relation, over the determination of a specific regional planning output.

The same type of situation can develop between actors belonging to different sub-units of the broad department with responsabilities for regional planning (e.g. the D.O.E.). In this respect it is important to note that because regional planning never had a high status, the departmental sub-units (Directorates, Divisions) directly involved in the activity tended to have little weight within the department responsible for regional planning[77].

Such points are usefull when considering the role of civil servants in the regions. Because of the context in which they operate regionally based senior civil servants (of the D.O.E. in particular) may tend to assume a topocratic action orientation to the detriment of a technocratic one (see above, pp.92-4). However, it does not seem likely that this type of action orientation would be reflected in the outputs of regional planning activity because of two factors. First, one of the responsibilities of central government departments is imposing roughly the same standards of public services across the country. Second, decision-making powers over most regional planning outputs are concentrated in Whitehall and in the end functional considerations are likely to prevail (see above, pp. 364-5)[78].

Local Government

Unlike the actors in central government, who are bound to a political system which is supraregional in character, actors in local authorities are associated with constituencies which are subregional in scale. This difference in the scale of constituencies is, arguably, the principal reason for the different expectations which actors in the two main levels of political admnistration have

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(77) - See also Stevens (1976) pp. 82-83.

(78) - Intermediate regional planning outputs such as regional planning reccommendations are more likely to be influenced by the topocratic orientations of civil servants.

in relation to regional planning (see above, pp.417-9). In regard to the regional planning activity elected and non-elected members of local authorities are likely to behave as topocrats. However, as the scale of the geographical unit of political admnistration to which they are linked is subregional in character, this orientation, tends to be translated not in 'regionalist', but rather in 'localist' or 'parochial' action orientations (see above, pp. 79-80).

At this point it is important to recall that local authorities intervene in the regional planning activity both individually and through Standing Conferences. This creates a need to distinguish actors and action orientations at these two different levels.

When local authorities are acting individually the questions associated with the distinction between elected members and local government officers are similar to those associated with Ministers and civil servants. Decision making powers in local authorities, as at the central government level, are effectively shared between elected members and permanent employees[79]. It must be noted, however, that at this level regional planning has a low priority. Even for those elected members and officers directly involved in planning committees and departments, the activity has importance mainly insofar as its outputs may constrain the options open for the local authorities policy and planning activities[80].

As far as Standing Conferences are concerned, however, the situation is totally different. Regional planning issues are the main, or even the single, concern of these bodies. This fact has, however, quite different implications for the political (elected members) and technical (professional and admnistrative officers) structures of these bodies. Taking first of all the political side of Standing Conferences, the aspect that is necessary to bear in mind is that,

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(79) - This point is discussed in some detail by Boyle (1981).

(80) - This point was repeatedly emphasised during the author's interviews with local government officers and councillors namely by Mr. Ledbetter 12.1.81, Mr.Murray 15.1.81 and Mr. Marshall 14.1.81.

because of their voluntary nature, these bodies operate through consensus - oriented procedures, and avoid interference in the internal affairs of individual local authorities and in conflicts between two, or more, local authorities (see above, pp.365-9). The action orientations of elected members tend, therefore, to be self-protective and 'parochial'.

The situation concerning the technical units of Standing Conferences is totally different. These are, arguably, the only organisations with a single-minded commitment to regional planning. The 'organisational interests' of the actors in the units strictly coincide with the enhancement of the importance of the regional planning activity. Given this fact, the elements of these units are bound to play an important role in the specification of regional planning outputs. This statement should, however, be subject to three qualifications. First, these units are associated with particularly weak political structures which, as argued in the previous paragraph, are constrained by the need to establish a consensus between their members. If the technical unit opted for suggesting procedural or substantive planning options, which directly challanged the 'organisational interests' of any of the constituent authorities, this would be likely to have two major consequences. On the one hand these options would have very little chance of being adopted by the political structure of the Standing Conference. On the other hand, the future of the Standing Conference, let alone that of its technical unit, would be put at risk[81].

Second, these technical units tend to be very small, and as such they are generally unable to handle the complex interrelationships between different policy fields. They have to rely to a large extent on information and analyses provided by the technical departments of the constituent authorities, which have resources (staff numbers, money, etc) more substantial than the units. If

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(81) - The reccomendations made by the W.M.R.S. in the Bluee Book were partly responsible for the temporarily withdrawl of Birmingham from the W.M.P.A.C. in 1971. This idea was shared, inter alios, by Sir Michael Higgs 23.1.81, Mr. Moreton 23.1.81 and Mr. Alfred Wood 12.1.81.

controversial planning alternatives were presented this could severely damage relations which are the sources of key information. Third, the position these units (and more generally the Standing Conferences) occupy in the organisational division of labour of the activity mean that they only have a direct say in the specification of intermediate outputs of the activity (see above, pp. 433-5). Given these arguments their role can hardly be more than that of a technical broker between the 'organisational interests' of the constituent local authorities.

Non Departmental Public Bodies

The discussion in the previous chapter suggested that the expression nondepartmental public bodies covers a wide range of organisations. As far as the executive bodies are concerned a common element is that they are managed by boards constituted by members appointed either totally (e.g. N.T.D.C.s and Nationalised Industries) or partly (e.g. R.W.A.s) by Ministers. These bodies are appointed to discharge a centrally defined task or to run the bodies according to 'commercial criteria' for which they are provided with various levels of admnistrative discretion. Given this background, the behaviour of the 'dominant coalition' in these bodies is more likely than not to adhere to the four basic types of action orientations identified by Benson (1975). The role of these bodies in the regional planning activity was considered at length in the two previous chapters. Here it is only important to remember that, generally speaking, they do not play an important direct role in the specification of regional planning outputs, and that these do not appear to have a major direct influence in their decisions and actions either[82].

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(82) - Sir Michael Higgs 23.1.81 told the author that just before the W.M.E.P.C. was disbanded they attempted to develop a joint working party with the Severn Trent Water Authority, in the course of which they 'discovered' that the latter was using in its medium-term planning process demographic forecasts completly different from those used in the process of updating and rolling forward of the West Midlands Regional Strategy.

As far as Economic Planning Councils are concerned (the only non-executive non departmental public body singled out for discussion) the problems associated with their intervention in the specification of regional planning outputs has already been discussed in some detail (see above, pp.370-2). More detailed considerations can only be made in relation to specific situations, and these will be considered in the following chapter:

IV.4.3 - POLITICAL PARTIES[83]

In order to assess the role of political parties in relation to regional planning it is important to consider for a moment certain definitional points. Max Weber has provided, arguably, the best known definition of political parties when he referred to them as

> *voluntary associations for propaganda and agitation seeking to acquire power in order to... realize objective aims or personal advantages or both* [84].

This definition encapsulates two dimensions. On the one hand political parties are seen as 'ideological groups' that is to say, groups which are bound together by a common body of rationalized and systematized beliefs. On the other hand, they are considered as instruments for the acquisition and exercise of political power by particular groups. The majority of political analysts would now accept that the latter aspect is of overiding importance for the analysis of political parties (Mackenzie, 1974). Althouth accepting that the two aspects have varying significance, it is neverthless important to bear in mind the two dimensions of the definition when considering the role of political parties in relation to regional planning.

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(83) - A lengthier version of this section can be found in Appendix D pp. D-20-28. For the sake of simplicity, and because only they exerted governmental functions, only the Conservative, Labour and Liberal parties will be considered.

(84) - Quoted by Mckenzie (1974), p. 278.

Looking first at the dimension of the definition which associates political parties with the 'pursuit of political power', it seems logical to assume that this characteristic has the effect of focussing the organisational and policy priorities of parties, and their members, at those geographical scales which coincide with the principal levels of political admnistration. Because English economic planning regions do not correspond to any level of integrated political-admnistration, regional matters tend to rank low in the list of priorities of the main political parties and their members. It is important to substantiate this statement.

The first aspect in relation to which this low priority is evident concerns the regional organisation of the two major political parties[85]. Both parties have some form of regional organisation (called 'area organisation' in the Conservative Party) but as Wilson (1975) shows this organisation is weak (where compared with the central or local ones) and has not developed any strong 'regional consciousness'. On the one hand, 'regional organisers' and their offices act mainly as field admnistration agents of their head offices. On the other hand, the experience so far with regional (area) councils has not proved successful in any of the parties. In both cases this state of affairs is directly attributed to the absence of a regional level of political admnistration. As a regional organiser of the Labour Party put it.

If there was regional government the situation would be different [86]

The lack of a regional level of political-admnistration in England and the weakness of the regional organisation of the major political parties has a direct reflection in the House of Commons. For the majority of English regions one party committees of M.P.s have only nominal existance. As far as pluripartidary organisation is concerned the Standing Committee on Regional Affairs, created in 1975, is also very weak. Borthwick (1978) argues that the

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(85) - See Appendix D, esp. pp. D-22—23.

(86) - Personal interview with Mr. Walter Burley (3.1.81).

creation of this Standing Committee was purely circunstantial and that it is a mere talking shop without any political bite. As far as regional planning is concerned the Committee has also proved utterly inadequate, as most of the speeches are constituency rather than region-oriented, even in the discussion of regional strategies[87]. Overall there is no evidence that the existence of this Standing Committee has done anything to encourage regional interests and identity among M.P.s.

The issue of regional identity among M.P.s was the object of an interesting piece of research conducted by McDonald (1979). Based on a contents analysis of all speeches on regional policy issues made in the House of Commons in the period 1968-1976 he concluded that, as far as English M.P.s were concerned, they tended to concentrate either on broad nationwide questions or on constituency issues, to the detriment of a regional approach to regional policy matters. This contrasted sharply with the regional-shall we say national? - orientation of the speeches made by Scottish and Welsh M.P.s[88].

In the light of the above evidence it seems justifiable to conclude that insofar as political parties act in the 'pursuit of political power' they tend to reflect the existing levels of territorial admnistration. Regional matters, and regional planning issues in particular, are therefore unlikely to attract much attention from political parties. But, as noted earlier, political parties are also 'ideological groups', and this aspect could prompt some of them to attribute particular importance to regional planning matters. It is, therefore, worth considering this possibility.

One instance in which the ideological stand of political parties is visible is in the preparation of election manifestos[89]. Given this perspective the author undertook an analysis of the election manifestos produced by the three

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(87) - See Borthwick (1978).

(88) - See Appendix D, esp. pp. D-24—26.

(89) - Election manifestos are also, of course, influenced by the pursuit of power aspect.

major political parties for all general elections after world war II[90]. This exercise suggested that as far as the Labour and Conservative parties are concerned regional planning issues found their way into their election manifestos only in the 1964 general election,and this largely because of the emphasis laid down, in both manifestos, on the broader theme of indicative economic planning. The Liberal Party consistently referred to regional planning issues, in relation to regional councils, but this party was never in a position to put into practice its regionalist proposals.

Is this evidence enough to support the verdict of Mckay and Cox (1979) that British planning has not been particularly influenced by party ideologies, and that politicians have tended to accept the wisdom of expert advice? Such a viewpoint is difficult to substantiate. The crossectoral nature of regional planning means that ideological disputes concerning issues such as housing or regional policies, to give only two examples, are bound to influence regional planning practice. From this perspective the fact that one, or the other, major political party is in office is not irrelevant to the specification of regional planning outputs. Moreover there are important differences between the two parties concerning their approaches to public planning and state intervention in general.

This discussion has so far considered regional planning in relation to the regional and national organisation of political parties. These, however, also control local politics and a comment is due in this respect. Party politics at the local level are extremely diversified and no simple generalizations can be made in this regard. In the West Midlands region the broad pattern has been that the Conservatives tend to hold the majority in the shire County Councils (Herefordhsire,Shropshire, Worcestershire and Warwickshire being traditionally Conservative strongholds) and that the conurbation local authorities, and Coventry, return more often than not Labour majorities. This situation could,

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(90) - See Appendix D, esp. pp. D-26—27.

easily be considered responsible for the planning disputes between conurbation and shire authorities. Without totally rejecting this interpretation it is necessary to recognize that the picture is more complex than such an interpretation might suggest. For example, it is generally agreed that in the Birmingham City Council there was a broad bipartisan approach to planning issues or, as a former City Engineer put it,

> *the development of practice in Birmingham can be summarised as the achievement of all-party agreement on a succession of measures that enhanced the self-sufficient power of the city, while conceding to the majority political party the responsability of method and timing by which the graving influence was wielded*
>
> (Borg, 1973, p. 43)[91]

Similarly it has been shown that local political parties in the shire county areas adopted identical positions in relation to regional planning matters irrespective of political allegiances (Hulse , 1976; Stranz, 1972).

Given these facts it seems safe to conclude that, in general terms, party political disputes at the local level did not play an important role in the specification of regional planning outputs. This situation was due on the one hand, to the weak ideological importance attributed to regional planning by the political parties and, on the other hand, to the importance of 'localist' arguments in the shaping of the action orientation of local authorities in relation to regional planning.

IV.4.4 - PRESSURE GROUPS[92]

By pressure groups is meant here organisations of the civil society that intervene, or attempt to intervene, in the relations of power and influence that shape the characteristics of state outputs[93]. They seek to achieve this

(91) - See also Hulse (1976) and Sutcliff and Smith (1974).

(92) - A lengthier version of this section is to be found in Appendix D, esp. pp. D-28—35.

(93) - This thesis avoids entering into the debate concerning whether the expression 'pressure group' is the must appropriate way to refer to this whole class of political organisations. For a sample of this terminological debate see e.g. Kimber and Richardson (1974) and Wooton (1970).

objective not by getting their members elected to positions in the state apparatus, but rather by bringing pressure upon those actors who are influential in the specification of the relevant outputs.

The intervention of pressure-groups in the specification of political outputs has been analysed in a variety of ways. According to Finer (1974) two complementary perspectives offer the best starting point for the analysis. On the one hand, the anti-despotic thesis according to which pressure-groups serve to defend individual liberties and interests from the despotism of state bureaucracy or mass society. On the other hand, the thesis of the desirability, and even necessity, of pressure-groups as a complement to the primary circuit of representation in modern representative democracies. Pressure groups are, in these terms, seen as providing responses to two sorts of problems: first, those associated with the fact that elected members of the state apparatus are elected for a long period and on a vague mandate; and second, those that derive from policy decisions being entrusted not merely for execution but also for formulation to public employees.

For the original proponents of this view, e.g. Truman (1951), the 'imperfect pluralism' that it implies is not seen as constituting a threat to representative democracy, as they took for granted the existence of automatic checks in society which would prevent an excessive concentration of power in any one group, or set of groups[94]. Contrary to this perspective, however, it has been argued that the role of pressure-groups has led to a widening of the gap between state policies and democratic control (Berger, 1981). Further, it has been argued that this phenomenon heralds a shift away from representative democratic and pluralist political systems, and towards corporatist political regimes. These would be controlled, in practice, by the interaction of the more powerful pressure groups with an elite of state personel (elected and non-electd members) (Harrison, 1980).

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(94) - This is, of course, the perspective defended by the pluralist theories of the political system, e.g. Dahl (1961) (see above pp. 22-23).

Discussion of this thesis has generated in recent years an enormous amount of literature, the complexity of which it is not possible to do justice here[95]. In broad terms 'corporatist arguments' fall into two categories. On the one hand, those who argue that the growth in importance of pressure groups, and the concentration of power in a few of them, derives either from changes in society, or from the internal transformation of the system of interest representation. This argument of 'societal corporatism' or 'corporatism from below' is associated with authors such as Pizzorno (1981), Schmitter (1977, 1981) and Winkler (1975). On the other hand, those who argue that the initiative for corporatist developments lie within the state. This moulds interests by attributing public resources and powers to particular groups, and so gives rise to a form of 'state corporatism' or 'corporatism from above' (Offe, 1981). Although these two perspectives are not totally antagonistic they point to different phenomena and, as Schmitter (1981) argues, there is no direct relationship between the two forms of corporatism.

Another point to which is necessary to call attention is the fact that the concept of corporatism is seen by all authors as an ideal-type. The question is not to see whether a given political system is corporatist, or not, but rather to analyse whether the ideal-type provides a useful starting point for the analysis of its characteristics and evolution. In relation to the latter aspect two competing perspectives have been put forward. For authors such as Schmitter (1979, 1981) and Winkler (1975) the trend is towards the establishment of corporatism as the stable mode of interest intermediation in advanced capitalist societies. The majority of authors, however, see corporatist developments as intrinsically unstable and contradictory, that is, as part of continuous shifts in the division of labour among political institutions (e.g. Berger, 1981; Jessop, 1980; Pizzorno, 1981, Scase, 1980).

This broad debate on the role of pressure groups in modern societies

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(95) - Berger (1981), Harrison (1980), Rhodes (1981), Saunders (1981) and Simmie (1981) provide useful introductions to this literature.

has obvious importance to the analysis of pressure groups in relation to regional planning. Before moving on to consider a number of issues in this respect it is important to briefly refer to the debate on corporatist trends in Britain. For some authors, e.g. Winkler (1975) and C.S.E. (1979), the British political system has rapidly developed signs of corporatism (both societal and state). This perspective appears, however, to rely on circunstancial evidence. Against this perspective Schmitter (1981) shows that, in comparison with other modern societies, Great Britain ranks very low in various indexes of societal corporatism. Similarly Jessop (1980), in a forcefully argued analysis of the evolution of the state in post-war Britain, concludes that 'state corporatism' developments have, largely, failed due to the low level of interest integration achieved by the two traditional 'social partners' (capital and labour interest) of government[96]. In these circunstances the resort to 'corporatist theories' made by authors such as Rhodes (1981) Saunders (1981) and Simmie (1981) should be scrutinized with great care. Certainly in the case of regional planning the only clear 'corporatist' development, the R.E.P.C.s, has been dismantled without being replaced by any other similar type of body.

It is now necessary to consider a number of aspects associated with the operation of pressure-groups. First, it is important to note that resources (an umbrella word which encompasses the size of the group's membership, its organizational cohesion, the group's financial, economic and 'expertise' means) are not equally distributed among the whole set of pressure-groups. Although the lack of a specific resource may be compensated by the abundance of another, this uneven distribution of resources tends to create a situation of oligopoly (Mckenzie, 1974); by this is meant that on a number of issues, only the voices of the more powerful pressure groups are likely to be heard (England, 1974).

A second aspect which is relevant to stress is that pressure groups tend to exert pressure on all those elements of the state apparatus which they

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(96) - See Jessop (1980) esp. pp. 40-54 and 80-84.

perceive as having an important role in the specification of political outputs; irrespective of whther these elements are elected members or public employees. This pressure can be exerted in a number of ways ranging from street demonstrations to the appointment of relevant state actors (M.P.s, leading councillors, etc) to honorary positions within the groups (Stewart, 1974). The choice of methods used by pressure-groups for their action depends on what Ingle (1971) calls the 'historial structural syndrome' of pressure groups. By this Ingle meant those elements associated with the groups's resources, and those factors peculiar to the relations between the group and elements of the state apparatus (e.g. whether, or not, the group has something- e.g. expertise, mass support - positive to offer to government).

The third aspect of the operation of pressure groups that needs to be dealt with, concerns the relation between the methods pressure groups use in their action and their rates of success and failure. This aspect is, in turn, related to the type of demands a group formulates. For example, Dearlove (1973) shows that what one perceived as 'helpful groups', i.e. groups with adequate resources, tend to put forward demands that are considered to be acceptable. Further, they tend to express these demands by a method which is regarded as 'proper'; thus, their rates of success tend to be high. On the contrary, as Saunders (1979) reveals, groups with poor resources can take little advantage of the less formal and less public channels for exerting pressure which are, exactly, those considered proper by most relevant elements in the state apparatus. However, when they resort to 'grass roots lobby tactics' their demands tend to be dismissed as 'irresponsible' or 'utopian', and the groups tend to have lower rates of success than those groups which can use to their advantage the 'rules of access' to policy-makers. This happens irrespective of whether the relevant elements in the state apparatus have, or not, a conscious bias against the latter type of groups[97]. Finally, in what situations and in relation to what issues do

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(97) - These three points are detailed in Appendix D, esp. pp. D-28—35.

pressure groups decide to exert pressure? In broad terns, the patterns of activity of a pressure group depend on the perception the dominant coalition within the group has of the nature of the situation it confronts, in relation to its own aims and the group's resources. This answer has, obviously, two dimensions. The first of them is that the group's action depends on the quantitative and qualitative resources the group has. If a group totally lacks technical expertise on an issue in relation to which technical arguments are of particular significance, there is not much point for the group commiting itself to that question. Further, because the resources available to any one group are limited, pressure-groups have to be selective in the identification of the issues upon which they are going to focus. This, of course, involves the design of a strategy of action, in which certain issues are entirely abandonned and attention is concentrated on others. It goes without saying that the contours of such a strategy will be influenced by the major objectives of the group.

This brings the analysis to the second dimension of the answer given above. Pressure groups will concentrate on those issues, and power relations, which are seen as more relevant for the achievement of its aims. This depends not only on the nature of the various issues, but also on the likely impact of the outputs associated with these issues on the promotion, or otherwise, of the group's objectives. This aspect is particularly relevant in relation to regional planning. The outputs of this activity could have an important role in the evolution of regional socio-economic features. In England, however, the fact that central government was never fully committed to the activity meant that regional planning recommendations were often ignored by executive agencies. As a result of this situation the practical importance of the activity suffered a severe blow and it is not surprising that Watson (1975) could conclude that the activity failed to attract the attention of other bodies, pressure groups included. This is an aspect upon which it is important to enlarge.

In order to assess the role of pressure groups in regional planning it is necessary to devise a method of classifying pressure groups. The distinction

which appears to receive widest support (e.g. Castles, 1967; Kimber and Richardson, 1974) among political scientists is between sectional or interest pressure groups and principle or cause pressure groups. The first type comprises all pressure groups which aim to protect the 'material interests' (e.g. economic, professional) of their members. The second type includes those groups committed to a particular set of 'symbolic interests', that is to say, to causes deriving from a given set of attitutes or beliefs. On the basis of this twofold distinction Allison (1975) developed a sixfold classification as follows:

1. Interest Pressure Groups
   - 1.a) Major Economic Pressure Groups: which bring together under a single organisation the major pressure-groups associated with economic activities (e.g. C.B.I. and T.U.C.)
   - 1.b) Minor Economic Pressure Groups: including major economic pressure groups acting in isolation (e.g. individual trade-unions), professional associations (e.g. R.T.P.I.) and pressure-groups that integrate a number of small, or spatially concentrated economic interests (e.g. Chambers of Commerce or Trades Councils)
   - 1.c) Non Economic Interest Groups: which pursue material interests not directly related to a productive activity (e.g. residents associations, ratepayer associations etc).

2. Principle Pressure Groups
   - 2.a) Programatic Pressure Groups: those which favour a broad set of social policies and, usually, justify them with general theories of social benefit and social organisation (e.g. T.C.P.A.)
   - 2.b) Promotional Pressure Groups: those which are unified by beliefs in the benefits (or otherwise) of a single

definable political output (e.g. M.N.T.S.)

2.c) Emphasys Pressure Groups: those whose aims do not conflict in any clear cut way with widely held social goals or values but where the group is motivated by a belief in the importance of certain values or the need of vigilance about them (e.g. National Trust, C.P.R.E.).

Most political scientists now agree that in modern societies pressure groups representing labour and capital are more powerful than any other pressure groups (Berger, 1981). This situation derives from the fact that in these societies two resources: economic (control of capital and labour) and citizenship (control of members and legitimacy) are far more important than others. In these circunstances the interests of labour, and especially capital, are likely to prevail in the specification of political outputs (see above, pp.45-50). When they do not prevail a specific explanation for the fact has to be found.

In relation to regional planning, however, the activity of economic pressure-groups appears to be particularly weak. As a well-informed commentator stated in relation to the West Midlands case:

> *the voice of industry is generally silent at planner's seminars and enquiries; industry does not participate in planning at the formulation stage though it does not fail to produce post-plan complaints of the planner's folly and misunderstanding*
>
> (Smith, 1977, p. 37)

The reason for this apparent lack of direct involvement by economic pressure groups in regional planning is twofold. First, the major economic pressure groups are organised on a national basis and their regional organisation, and offices, have no resources to contribute in any meaningful way to the decision-making processes concerning regional planning outputs[98]. Second, they do not consider the activity as having sufficient importance to justify

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(98) - This point applies to both the T.U.C. and the C.B.I.. Interviews with Sir David Perris 27.1.81 and Mr. Malcolm 22.1.81 respectively.

the allocation of extra resources, in order for them to be able to directly intervene in the process of specification of regional planning outputs[99]. This is not to say, of course, that these pressure groups play no role in the process. Mechanisms such as overlapping membership, which according to Hulse (1976) are particularly important in the planning field, can, in part at least, act as a substitute for direct involvement. There are neverthless grounds for expecting that this situation will tend to reinforce the importance of other types of pressure groups. This, of course, can only be decided in relation to concrete situations and this issue will be dealt with in the following chapter. For the moment it is important to take into account a number of considerations related to the role of unorganised actors in regional planning.

IV.4.5 - UNORGANISED ACTORS - PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND REGIONALISM[100]

As noted earlier the specification of regional planning outputs occurs mainly through processes of inter-organisational relations. In these circunstances the importance of unorganised individuals and social groups in the specification of regional planning outputs is bound to be severely constrained. Further, unlike the case of local planning, statutory public participation does not exist in the regional planning process and the regional level does not appear to constitute in England an appropriate level for the development of social movements. Such movements exist mainly at the national or local level bypassing, in most cases, the regional level. In spite of these judgements it is worth briefly considering the issue of public participation and social movements (regionalism) in relation to regional planning.

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(99) - This applies not only to the T.U.C. and C.B.I. but also to individual trade unions and chambers of commerce; interviews with Mr. Francis Graves 20.1.81 and Mr. James Mason 20.1.81.

(100) - A more detailed version of this section appears in Appendix D, esp.pp. D-34—41.

Public Participation

By public participation is meant here the various forms of direct involvement of unorganised actors in the specification of regional planning outputs. As far as the regional planning process is concerned public participation is only requested at the stage when the preferred strategy is submitted to the Minister for approval and does not have a statutory character.

The lack of statutory public participation in the regional planning process was justified by the D.O.E. in 1976 on four grounds[101]. First, that the scale and characteristics of the issues with which region plans were concerned made it difficult to set up, and develop, formal arrangements for the participation of the public at large. Second, that the tripartite sponsorship machinery, and the consultations carried out during the process by the teams charged with preparation of strategies, already guaranteed that a wide range of opinions were taken into consideration. Third, that the regional strategies were debated in the House of Commons Standing Committee for Regional Affairs, and that before the Secretary of State responded to the strategy extensive inter-departmental consultations were held. Finally, the D.O.E. considered that regional strategies contained a number of proposals on which Government alone had responsability. Overall the argument was that statutory public participation was neither feasible nor necessary.

Both these conclusions and the arguments on which they were supported are not uncontroversial. Indeed they were subjected to severe criticism at the time. It was argued, for example, that debates on the Standing Committees on Regional Affairs were extremely unsatisfactory; that the consultations made after the publication of the strategy report came too late in the process for them to be able to challenge the strategy in any significant way; and that consultations in the earlier stages of the process were, by necessity, selective and guided to establish a minimum of consensus among the organisations involved

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(101) - See House of Commons (1976), Written Evidance submitted by the D.O.E., 23 June 1976, a 25-38.

in the process[102].

Further it can be added that the consultation procedures had little to do with the public participation referred to above as they tended to be concerned mainly with 'organised actors'. Indeed the absence of meaningful public participation was openly recognized in the main report of the Strategic Plan for the North West:

> *We are conscious... that the purpose of all this effort is a better life for people in the region - yet paradoxically we have not been able to establish any real contact with them... we would like to see developed a means whereby their participation, even if only limited, in the regional planning process could be secured*
>
> (N.W.J.T. 1974, p. 255)

The question of whether public participation is feasible at the regional scale remains, however, problematic and there is not enough evidence on which to ground a firm opinion. As far as the author is aware the only occasion in which a public participation exercise was attempted was during the preparation of the Strategic Choices for East Anglia (E.A.J.T., 1975). This exercise involved a number of different methods of securing public opinion, namely: questionnaire-surveys, in-depth interviews and discussion groups (Hoinville, Spence and Shaheen, 1974). The results of the exercise were disappointing, but as Hart, Skelcher and Wedgwood-Oppenhein (1976) note this fact can, in part at least, be attributed to basic weaknesses in the way the exercise was conducted. People were asked to choose between very vague alternatives, relations between means and ends were not clarified nor were the relative costs and benefits that were expected from the various strategic alternatives identified[103].

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(102) - Idem, main report, paras. 80-86. See also Memorandum of Evidence submitted by Dr. P. Levin & December 1976 and the Supplementary Memorandum of Evidance submitted by the Council for the Protection of Rural England.

(103) - For example, people were asked to chose between *"we ought to spend only just enough for the present as we do not know enough about future needs"* versus *"we have to plan for the future and provide more facilities than we need now"*.

At a different level, as Table XVII reveals, the amount and distribution of comments received during the 'appraisal' stage of three regional planning processes in the West Midlands tends to suggest a very low level of individual interest in regional planning matters. Whether this situation could be substantially altered by a strong commitment to public participation in the early stages of the process is open to question.

	ACTORS	1965(1)	1971(2)	1979(3)
State Organisations	Central Government Departments	0	2	0
	Local Authorities	25	41	24
	Non Departmental Public Bodies	13	29	7
	POLITICAL PARTIES	2	0	0
Civil Society	Interest Pressure Groups	4	20	1
	Principle Pressure Groups	3	8	2
	Individuals	8(4)	3(5)	0
TOTAL		55	101	34

TABLE XVII: Responses to Consultation Stage of West Midlands Regional Plans and Strategies

(1) 'West Midlands: a Regional Study' (D.E.A., 1965)

(2) 'A Developing Strategy for the West Midlands' (W.M.R.S., 1971)

(3) 'Updating and Rolling Forward of the W.M. Regional Strategy' (J.M.S.G., 1979)

(4) Of which 4 were M.P.s

(5) Of which 2 were M.P.s

Sources: (1) W.M.E.P.C. internal files

(2) W.M.P.A.C. report to the Secretary of State on comments

received

(3) W.M.P.A.C. report to the Secretary of State on comments received

The absence of meaningful public participation in the regional planning process must be seen as an indication that the public, that is to say unorganised individuals, are by and large excluded from the power relations which determine the political agenda, and most of the outputs of regional planning activity. Regional planning outputs include, however, other forms of decision-making processes such as the designation of New Towns and decisions on planning enquiries with implications at the regional scale. Effective public participation in these matters could, partially, compensate for the lack of such activity in the regional planning process.

The situation in this regard, however, is little more encouraging. Decisions concerning New Towns, as noted in the previous chapter (see above 375-6), are taken in Whitehall and generally according to nationwide criteria. With the exception of the process leading up to the designation order for the New Town the public (indeed, also, local authorities) appear to play a minimum role in the process. Moreover, despite the fact that the designation of a New Town is preceded by the realisation of a public enquiry, there is evidance enough to support the conclusion that the dominant views in the public enquiry may be totally disregarded by the Minister when making the decision (Levin, 1976; Stranz, 1972) (see above, pp.140-2). This is, in fact, one of the problems associated with public enquiries; the final decision often has little to do with the main conclusions of the proceedings or the inspector's recommendations.

Regionalism[104]

The expression regionalism has been used by different authors with different meanings[105]. Here, following Mazères (1978) the expression is used to

(104) - For a more detailed version of this section see Appendix D, esp.pp.

(105) - See Appendix D, esp. pp.D-37—41.

refer to social movements oriented to the promotion of the perceived interests of one region as a whole. In broad terms regionalist movements express support for two types of objective. On the one hand, there is the redistribution of state functions and responsabilities in favour of a regional level of political admnistration. This objective is, in turn, associated with the twin themes of regional development and institutional decentralisation, or regionalisation. On the other hand, regionalist movements seek to secure the promotion and/or defence of traditional languages, cultures, etc; threatened with disentegration by the process of social and cultural massification, associated with political integration within larger nation-states and, more generally, with the development of uniform life-styles and patterns of consumption[106].

The political-ideological basis of regionalism consists of two interrelated assumptions: first, the existance of a regional consciousness associated with a perceived community of interests at the regional level; second, the idea that the region (regional population) should take in its (their) hands the defence of the regional interests against any external intervention. The existance of a regional consciousness involves: a feeling of regional identification with the region and of solidarity with the other inhabitants; the perception of the region's differentiation factor (language, tradition, level of economic development etc); the attribution of this differential factor to an external cause; and, finally, the formulation of a 'regional interest' which serves as the basis of regionalism both as an ideology and social movement. The 'regional consciousness' acts therefore as an 'ideological cement' (Dulong, 1978), unifying the social actors of the region in the defence of the regional interest against the common (external) enemy, whether this is perceived as being central government bureaucracy, transnational firms or a dominant region which 'colonizes' the region (Hechter, 1975). Regionalist political conflicts are, therefore, power struggles in relation to which the 'regional interest', no

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(106) - Idem, pp. D-38—40.

matter how defined, takes precedence over the specific interests (material or symbolic) of the actors involved in those struggles.

The regional planning activity is widely considered to be one of the state activities in relation to which regionalist attitudes are more likely to become apparent (e.g. Dulong, 1975 and 1976; Rowntree Research Unit, 1974). The idea of a region as a territory to plan tends, obviously, to favour the development of a 'metapolitical debate' (Dulong, 1975) about the socio-economic development of a region. In this debate, social groups translate their interests, or the interests of those they represent, into spatial designs which are confronted with other, similarly developed, spatial designs. Conflicts of social interests are, through this process, transformed, potentially at least, into conflicts between different spatial designs and, as such, tend to be abstracted from the wider social context only in relation to which they make sense. In a situation where regionalist attitudes and arguments dominate, the result of power conflicts can only be analysed by reference to the 'regional interest' and its 'external enemy'. This, of course, corresponds to a theoretical impoverishment of the analysis.

These hypothetical-abstract considerations immediately suggest a concrete question concerning the relative strength of regionalist ideologies and movements in England. In this respect there is a broad consensus among political scientists that:

> *the regional concept has never been exactly a fiery force among the public at large, however much they may treasure their county loyalties, local dialects, sporting affinities, and sub-regional consciousness as Merseysiders, Geordies, Londoners or West Countrymen.*
>
> (Powell, 1978, p. 5)[107]

As far as regional planning is concerned the lack of visible public support for the recent Strategic Plan for the Northern Region - a regionalist document by all accounts - in the English region with one of the

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(107) - See also G.B. (1973) vol. 7 of Research Reports, Keating (1982) and MacDonald (1982)

strongest regionalist traditions (Rowntree Research Unit, 1974; Townsed and Taylor, 1975) clearly suggests that regionalism is unlikely to have played any fundamental role in the specification of regional planning outputs.

These arguments should not be taken as meaning that regionalist arguments did not play any role during the formulation of regional plans and planning studies. For example, it was argued earlier in this thesis that both Conurbation (W.M.G., 1948) and the Economic Appraisal (W.M.E.P.C., 1971) were best seen as expressions of regionalist arguments in the West Midlands (see above, pp.168-9). Further, the above reference to the Strategic Plan for the Northern Region clearly reveals that regionalist attitudes did play an important role in the formulation of the strategy. However, the crucial point in this respect is that the weakness of regionalism in these regions (even in the Northern region) allowed central government to totally disregard what might be considered as 'regionalist demands'[108].

IV.4.6 - CONCLUSIONS

The discussion developed in the previous sections of this chapter suggest a number of preliminary conclusions concerning the role of social actors in the specification of regional planning outputs. First, that unorganised actors do not seem to have played an important role in the specification of regional planning outputs; a situation associated with the fact that the activity

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(108) - As far as the West Midlands is concerned Wood (1976) commented that there has been a failure

> *of political commitment in the development of any common interest between communities in different parts of the region*
>
> (Wood, 1976, p. 233)

Painter (1973) after discussing the possible causes of this situation concluded that

> *taking the West Midlands as an entity there is little in the way of a regional tradition, history or culture... It is characterised by heterogeneity rather than homogeneity.*
>
> (Painter, 1973, p. 68)

developed mainly through processes of interaction between organisations. Second, political parties, as such, also do not seen to have had a substantial influence on regional planning outputs. Third, contrary to what would be generally expected, pressure groups representing major economic interests appeared to have been particularly inactive as far as the regional planning activity was concerned, and this left the door open, potentially at least, for the action of other types of pressure-groups, principle pressure-groups in particular. Finally, due to the admnistrative characteristics of the activity, state actors appear, at first sight, as those elements having the greater influence in the specification of regional planning outputs. To what extent, however, were outputs defined as a result of power relations or, alternatively, as necessary products of external constraints? This is the broad question to be analysed in the following chapter.

IV.5 - POWER AND CONSTRAINTS IN REGIONAL PLANNING
THE WEST MIDLANDS CASE

IV.5.1 - INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter the issue of specification of regional planning outputs was approached through the consideration of the various social actors who might have played important roles in that process. This type of approach allowed for a preliminary screening to be made of the whole set of actors, separating those who played significant roles, from those who did not interfere, or were only marginally involved in the process.

The approach to be employed in this section is a different one. Regional planning outputs will be considered here taking as a starting point, not the various groups of actors involved, but rather the various forms of power relations, or contraints, through which they were defined. Thus the processes through which regional planning outputs were determined will be analysed in terms of positive and negative decision-making, non-decision making, control over the political agenda and rational and structural constraints (see above, pp. 356-7, and Appendix D below, esp. pp. D-6—10.)

There is, of course, no theoretical antagonism between these two types of approach. The role of actors in the power relations through which outputs are defined and the characteristics of these relations (and associated constraints) are two sides of the same coin. The adoption of one of the sides as a starting point for the analysis merely preditermines the sequence in which the two aspects are considered. It does not indicate any judgement about their relative importance for the analysis. Taking the formal aspects of the specification process as a starting point for the analysis has, however, two advantages in terms of presentation of the argument. First, it immediately calls attention to the fact that regional planning outputs cannot be reduced to their visible dimension. In addition to decisions, regional planning outputs include also non-decisions,

the definition of the activity domain, the identification of alternatives and so forth. Second, it serves to stress the relational character of power, and the fact that different actors may occuppy the dominant position in the specification of different outputs.

Two broad types of regional planning outputs will be considered in the remainder of this chapter. On the one hand, outputs associated with regional planning processes and regional plans (studies or strategies). On the other hand, operational decisions not directly related to regional planning processes such as decisions: on planning enquiries with regional importance (e.g. opposing two or more neighbouring local authorities); on the designation of New Towns; and other issues which might have been the object of reccommendations in regional plans (e.g. Green Belt matters, major infrastructure investments such as the N.E.C.). These two broad types of outputs are associated with various forms of power relations and constraints, and it is in these terms that they will be considered in the remainder of this chapter.

IV.5.2 - POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE DECISION MAKING

The most obvious examples of power relations in the regional planning activity are associated with situations in which the specification of regional planning outputs involves overt conflicts between two or more actors. This type of situation is exemplified by decisions concerning New Towns and planning enquiries.

The issue of designation of New Towns in the West Midlands provides examples of both positive and negative decision-making in the definition of regional planning outputs. Further, the consideration of its political aspects is particularly illuminating in relation to the role of pressure-groups, Ministers and senior civil servants in the specification of this type of political outputs.

The need for one, or more, New Towns in the West Midlands became

particularly acute in the early 1960s due to higher than expected population growth; the slow pace of progress of population overspill from the conurbation and a number of financial problems associated with Town Development agreements[109]. It was in this context that early in 1961 an interdepartmental 'Ministerial Committee in Birmingham Housing' was set up

> *... to consider the principle on which sites should be selected for new building to meet the future housing needs of Birmingham and other congested towns in the West Midlands, and in the light of those principles, what particular areas for development should be suggested to the local authorities concerned.*[110]

Initially the main argument in the Committee was between the Board of Trade and the Minister of Housing and Local Government. The former favoured dormitory towns just beyond the Green Belt from which workers could commute to Birmingham, therefore avoiding the problems involved in industrial overspill. The second objected to this on the basis that it would increase problems of traffic congestion, implicitly damage the Green Belt policy and constitute a generalised retrogression in planning solutions to overspill problems. The agreed compromise was to build a New Town as near as Birmingham as possible and thus involve only a small amount of employment overspill.

Searches for such a site began on the basis of an extensive range of criteria: good communications, avoidance of good agricultural and Green Belt land, costs of water and sewerage provision, good topography, etc.. After two preliminary surveys which identified 24 and then five sites, attention focussed on two locations. The first, Dawley in Shropshire, had already been under consideration for some time. It was an area of badly spoiled land as a result of old mineral working and which had suggested a process of economic decline after the closure of the mines. The other alternative, Swynnerton, in Staffordshire, had good communications and services, and a disused royal ordnance factory site that could be easily transformed into an industrial estate of 500 - 600 acres.

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(109) - See Appendix B, esp. pp. B-33— 41.

(110) - See Cullingworth (1979), p. 173.

As discussions evolved the focus of attention moved to a third alternative, Redditch in North Worcestshire. Development there corresponded to the initial suggestion of the Board of Trade; the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, however, reiterated its arguments against dormitory towns and concluded that this would be:

> *... a discredited type of development which it would be quite wrong for the Government deliberately to create.*[111]

The final comprise announced on August 1961 offered the following government suggestions to deal with Birmingham overspill:

a) a 600 acres peripheral development within Green Belt, at Wythall;

b) urgent implementation of Town Development Schemes at Daventry, Redditch and Worcester;

c) continuation of the feasibility studies to designate a New Town in the Dawley area.

In the event the peripheral development at Wythall was rejected after a planning enquiry and the Town Development Schemes at Redditch and Worcester did not materialize[112]. Against this backcloth, in May 1962, the M.H.L.G. announced the designation of a New Town near Dawley with a suggested overspill intake of 60-70,000 people. This decision was warmly welcome by the Midlands New Towns Society which, since its foundation in 1955 had been campaigning for such a development. The attitude of Birmingham City Council was more cautious. The fact was that the location and poor standards of communication of the New Town made it an unsatisfactory answer to the overspill problem of the Conurbation, and Birmingham in particular. Given these circunstances it is not surprising that Birmingham City Council immediately began to ask for a second New Town[113].

The designation of Dawley New Town can be seen as a victory of the organisational interests embedded in the M.H.L.G. and the M.A.F.F. over those of

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(111) - Quoted by Cullingworth (1979), p. 175.

(112) - See Appendix B, esp. pp. B-33— 41

(113) - See Sutcliffe and Smith (1974), p. 148.

the Board of Trade and, to a lesser extent, the Treasury. Further it can also be considered as a triomph of the principle pressure groups such as the M.N.T.S. and the T.C.P.A. which pressed for that designation. The designation represented a defeat for the Labour controlled Birmingham City Council and the local business community (represented by the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce) which preferred a location closer to Birmingham in order to avoid problems of industrial overspill[114]. It is necessary to bear in mind, however, that this designation only occurred after the Cabinet had rejected the creation of a New Town at Swynnerton, and was to be followed by a further designation order for a New Town at Redditch. These two decisions seem to reflect completly different patterns of interest.

Swynnerton was the location which the 1961 interdepartmental 'Ministerial Committee in Birmingham Housing' initially picked up as the most suitable location for a New Town in the West Midlands. However, when the decision-making process reached cabinet level, Dawley was preferred to the detriment of Swynnerton. Three types of considerations appear to have been of crucial importance in this respect. First, Swynnerton, unlike Dawley, was on good agricultural area and the M.A.F.F. was quick to point out that the occupation of some 5 000 acres of good farmland, for the sake of building a New Town which could be built elsewhere, would generate enormous criticism from Government supporters. Second, although Dawley would be dearer to build its designation, against a backcloth of land spoilt by mineral extraction and growing unemployment because of pit closures, could be presented as an imaginative project of environmental and social regeneration; and this would go far to justify the additional building costs there. Third, its designation was certain of the support of some of the most articulate pressure groups in the

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(114) - In a personal interview with the author of this thesis the former Birmingham City Enginer - Mr. Neville Borg - revealed that the City Council was not even consulted by central government on the location of the New Town.

region, namely the M.N.T.S., and of the County and District local authorities[115]. Thus, the decisions concerning Dawley and Swynnerton appear to reflect, mainly, broad party-political and ideological considerations. Taken together they seem consistent with each other and the attempt by Cabinet to follow the line of least political resistance.

The same cannot be said in relation to the designation of Redditch New Town which followed. As noted earlier after a New Town at Swynnerton was rejected by Cabinet, Redditch was for a moment considered to be the 'second best' location for a New Town in the West Midlands. This solution was strongly supported by the Board of Trade (Ministers and civil servants involved) but was opposed, vehemently, by the M.H.L.G. on the basis that it would constitute a new dormitory' of Birmingham, increase traffic congestion in the conurbation and destroy a particularly sensitive area of the Green Belt between Birmingham and Redditch[116].

This latter position prevailed and Dawley New Town was designated instead. Redditch was recommended as a location for a Town Development Scheme with an ultimate population target of 60,000. In the event the suggested Town Development agreement did not materialize and as this became apparent the newly appointed Minister for Housing and Local Government - Sir Keith Joseph - changed the position of his department, and of Cabinet, in this respect. In January 1963 he sought Cabinet approval for the designation of a New Town at Redditch on the grounds that:

> *we cannot look for town development under its present statutory arrangements for fast and large buildings* [117].

After obtaining Cabinet approval for this idea, he issued a designation order for a New Town with a population target not of 60,000 but of 90,000. One third

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(115) - The latter had previously approached Birmingham for the negociation of a T.D.S. in the area late designated as a New Town.

(116) - See Cullingworth (1979), p. 167-175.

(117) - Idem, p. 192.

of this area was within the proposed Green Belt and this met considerable opposition from the shire counties of Warwickshire and Worcestshire, the Districts involved and the M.N.T.S.. The latter argued, for example, that

> *it is a mockery to apply the term New Town to undertakings which contradict the true significance of the words* [118].

A public inquiry was held later in the year but in the end the Minister gave the go-ahead to the New Town disregarding both the objections presented in the enquiry and the points of criticism raised by the inspector's report. A curious aspect in this regard is that most of these criticisms were identical to those which M.H.L.G. officers had used during the process leading to the designation of Dawley New Town. With a good deal of irony a leading member of the M.N.T.S. (at the time chairman of the Redditch Urban District Council Planning Committee) was later to remark:

> *One cannot help wondering why the enquiry was held, except that it was required by law*
>
> (Stranz, 1972, p. 31)

The analysis of the decisions concerning Dawley, Redditch and Swynnerton strongly suggests that they reflected more ad-hoc adjustments to external constraints (electoral considerations, interdepartmental conflicts of interests) than any consistent rationale. Further it suggests that the relative importance of pressure groups in the specification of this type of regional planning output often tends to be overemphasised[119]. Indeed, when their demands confronted the Minister's commitment to a specific decision they were totally ignored.

The joint consideration of the decisions concerning the New Towns also indicates that relatively little significance was given to technical arguments in these processes. For example, one of the arguments which the M.H.L.G. presented against a New Town at Swynnerton was that:

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(118) - M.N.T.S. newsletter nº 37, 1964, p. 3.

(119) - Cf. Hulse (1976).

> *its distance from Birmingham would make it unactrative from the point of view of the distribution of industry* [120].

Interestingly enough this argument was not used by the M.H.L.G. in relation to Dawley which had, undoubtly, far worse road communications. Indeed, a survey of the West Midlands published a couple of years later in The Economist argued that because of the lay-out of the motorway network the North-Staffordshire area was one of the best locations for a New Town, and that Dawley had *"disastrously bad road connections with anywhere"*[121].

One of the reasons why the poor road links of Dawley did not appear to rank high in the considerations of M.H.L.G. officers was that some of its planning officers thought that this would help the New Town to achieve a balanced self-contained community and avoid commuting to the Conurbation[122]. The fact that this situation could severely affect the New Town's ability to attract industry did not seem, in the first couple of years, to affect their confidence in the experiment. In fact the contrary seemed to be the case.

On the eve of the anouncement of the draft Master Plan for Dawley New Town in the summer of 1965 the Minister for Housing and Local Government of the Labour government - Mr. Richard Crossman - disclosed that its population target was to be increased to 250,000 (regional population target was 90,000). This announcement had little to do with the specificity of the Dawley case. Indeed, neither the chairman of the New Town Development Corporation nor its general manager were told in advance of any changes. In the words of a M.H.L.G. spokesman the announcement indicated simply that

> *Mr. Crossman believes quite clearly that some of these New Towns are not quite big enough* [123]

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(120) - Quoted by Cullingworth, p. 168.

(121) - See The Economist of 2 February 1966, West Midlands Survey,, pp. XVII-XIX.

(122) - Interviews with Prof. Neville Borg, and Mr. William Ogdem 27 February 1981, and Mr. E. J. Whittingham 9 January 1981.

(123) - Quoted by Birmingham Post, 13.8.1965. This position reflected two interrelated aspects. First, the 1965 Registrar General projections of the Great Britain population had reached an all time record. Second, there was within government a clear desire to match dramatic population

In the event, in December of that year, the M.H.L.G. announced that a new Master Plan was to be prepared for a New Town of not less than 200,000 population and in the Autumn of the following year a preliminary feasibility study was published indicating a 200,000 population target[124].

That these developments had little to do with the realities of Dawley New Town development was made clear in the discussions that followed in Cabinet. The progress of the New Town had proved extremely disappointing and, with the benefit of hindsight, there was a broad agreement amongst Ministers and civil servants that its designation had probably been a mistake. Prospects for the future were also bleak, but it was thought to be politically unwise to abandomn the project. It was also hoped that the enlargement of the initial scheme would provide the required impetus for the New Town to be successful. Finally, although with great reluctance, the expansion was agreed and the draft designation order was disclose. After a local public inquiry, in May 1968, that raised few objections, the designation of the renamed Telford New Town occurred in December of the same year raising the population target of the New Town to 170,000 to be achieved by 1986[125]. In the early 1970s this expansion was finally acknowledged by central government as unrealistic and the ultimate population target reduced firstly to 180,000 (from 200,000) and then to 150,000 people (see above, pp. 221-30).

These decisions reveal, yet again, the lack of a consistent line of policy concerning New Towns. Further, they provide a clear illustration of one type of 'bureaucratic dysfunctions'. An initial error (designation of Dawley New

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increases with commensurate New Towns Developments. Thus, in the summer of 1966 the first Secretary of State - (later) Lord George Brown - announced in the House of Commons that

> *studies of the pros and cons of building cities of up to one million people on Humberside, Severnside, and at Dundee are to be made by Government*

(Hansard of 7.7.1966, vol. 731 col. 657)

(124) - See M.N.T.S. newsletters nº 43, p. 5 (1965) and nº 50 p. 3 (1967) respectively.

(125) - See Cullingworth (1979), pp. 258-265.

Town) leads to successive, and increasingly large, errors (expansion of the population target of the New Town) in the vain attempt to redress the initial error. It also calls attention to the personalities of key actors (Mr. Richard Crossman in this case) in the adoption of certain outputs. This is a theme which reappears in the discussion of regional planning outputs resulting from public enquiries[126].

The first public enquiry which will be considered here relates to a planning application (to which was associated a request for a boundary extension) made by Birmingham City Council in the summer of 1961 for a 600 acres public housing development, and some light industry, at Wythall. This development, as Birmingham noted in its application, had been actually suggested by the interdepartmental committee referred to earlier (see above, pp.477-9) and a positive decision was to be expected. In the event the Minister decided to reject the application. This apparently strange decision can be attributed to two factors. First, there had been a change in the Minister responsible, and the new one - Mr. Henry Brooke - was, apparently, quite impressed by the arguments presented at the public enquiry against the approval[127]. Second, there are grounds for suspecting that the Minister saw this rejection as a trade-off decision. Redditch Urban District Council made it clear at the enquiry that if the application was approved it would withdraw from the negociations about the Town Development Scheme suggested by the interdepartmental committee report for the Redditch area[128]. By rejecting the application the Minister might have thought that he guaranteed the T.D.S. at Redditch. This turned out not to be the case and in the end his successor - Sir Keith Joseph - had to designate Redditch

(126) - Attention will be focussed on three Public Inquiries concerning housing developments in the Wythall area. Background information is provided above, pp.106-15 and in Appendix B below, esp. pp.B-33-53. See also Hulse (1976) and Stranz (1972).

(127) - Among these there was a warning from the Wythall Ratepayer's and Residents' Association that the approval of the application would cost the Conservative Party a lot of votes from 'democrats all over Britain'. Quoted by Hulse (1976) p. 119.

(128) - See Stranz (1972), pp. 20-23.

as a New Town. The whole process can therefore be described in terms of a trade-off strategy that did not pay-off.

The second public enquiry to be considered here relates to two simultaneous planning applications made by Birmingham in January 1964; one to develop 420 acres at Wythall for 4510 houses and the other for developing 1,540 acres at Water Orton (Meriden Rural District) for 20,000 houses. No boundary extension or industrial development permission was asked for this time, but both areas were within the proposed Green Belt. Although the real interest of Birmingham was in the Water Orton area the leader of the City Council and the City Engineer speculated that by submmitting two simultaneous applications the bulk of public attention would concentrate on the more sensitive area. In these circunstances the other could be expected to go through almost without discussion[129].

This strategy clearly paid off as much of the discussion during the public inquiry held in May-June of that year was centred around the Wythall area. The output of the public inquiry was, by and large, decided when the 1964 general election returned to power a Labour Government after fifteen years of Conservative rule. The new Minister - Mr. Richard Crossman - wrote in his diary that he personally drafted the decision on the public inquiry to overcome the bias of the M.H.L.G. against peripheral developments[130]. He turned down the Wythall application and favourably disposed of the Water Orton development, although reducing it to 15,000 houses (this became the dormitory suburb of Chelmsley Wood). In a letter to the Birmingham Town Clerck he justified his decision on the grounds that the Water Orton location

> *was more suitable because its size and topography were better for industrialized building and its development would do less harm to amenity* [131]

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(129) - Interview with Prof. Neville Borg, 27 February 1981.

(130) - See Crossman (1976) pp. 87 and 309.

(131) - Minister's letter to the Town Clerck of Birmingham of 21 December 1964 transcribed in the Birmingham Post of 23 December 1964.

This decision is interesting on two accounts. Or the one hand it illustrates how a strategy of diversion and trade-off can be used by less powerful actors to foster their action orientations. On the other hand it reveals that when a Minister is strongly commited to a specific course of action he is, in general, able to impose it on his civil servants.

The third, and last, public inquiry which will be considered here related to the North-Worcerstshire scheme (see above, pp. 140-2). As noted earlier the initial impetus for this development came from the Minister for Housing and Local Government - Mr. Richard Crossman - who on the Christmas Eve of 1966 wrote to the chairman of Worcestshire County Council asking for a study to be put on hand for a 15,000 municipal dwellings scheme for Birmingham people within the triangle formed by Droitwich, Kidderminster and Redditch. Two reasons justified this Ministerial decision. First, the Minister was, at the time, being pressurised by Birmingham City Council, about the fact that, while its construction machinery was idle (after the completion of Chelmsley Wood) little progress was being made on both the New Towns and Town Development Schemes fronts. Second, the Minister was warned by senior civil servants in the region that further and rapid developments would be required to significantly reduce the problem of children living in poor housing conditions in Birmingham. According to one of these civil servants the latter argument was of particular importance in persuading the Minister to press for what would amount, in the Minister's own words, to a 'planned commuter belt'[132].

After a long process of negociations (see above, pp.140-2) a planning application was put forward by Birmingham for a 2,062 acres development at Frankley (within Birmingham) and Hawkesley and Moundsley, both north of Wythall and within the proposed Green Belt belonging to Bromsgrove Rural District Council. At the public inquiry which followed the application, and which lasted almost two months, the application was strongly resisted by local resident

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(132) - Interview with Mr. William Ogden, 27 February 1981.

associations and pressure groups including the C.P.R.E., M.N.T.S. and T.C.P.A., and by Redditch U.D.C. and Bromsgrove R.D.C.. Worcestshire C.C., however, adopted a somewhat ambivalent position. The reason for this attitude, which strongly contrasted with previous positions concerning development at Wythall, was that the Council had reached an informal agreement with Birminghm City Council and the M.H.L.G., that this would be the last intrusion into the Green Belt and that a comprehensive regional strategy should be prepared by all planning authorities in the region[133]. In the event the Minister, not surprisingly, decided in accordance with the position defended at the public enquiry by Worcestshire C.C.; development was granted at Frankley and Hawkesley, but not at Moundesley (except for a playing field).

The decision on this public inquiry is illuminating on two accounts. First, it confirms the impression gained from earlier decisions that when Ministers are committed to a specific objective the objections raised by principle pressure-groups such as the M.N.T.S. or the T.C.P.A. are unlikely to prove effective. Second, it illustrates a typical case of non-decision making. Worcestshire C.C. was not at all happy with the idea of incursions into the Green Belt. However, having recognized that the Minister was committed to obtaining, in the short - term, housing - land for Birmingham their objections remained latent; this avoided a situation of open conflict with the Minister. Thus, a decision-making situation was preceded by a non-decision making one. It is now important to consider other situations of non decision making in regional planning in the West Midlands.

IV.5.3 - NON DECISION MAKING (types I and II)

The situation just described corresponds to the second type (type II) of non-decision making identified by Bacharach and Baratz (1970). A less

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(133) - Interview with Mr. Colin Davies, 30 January 1981.

powerful actor (Worcestshire C.C.) failed to articulate a position of opposition vis-à-vis the demand formulated by a more powerful actor (Minister), not because it agreed with the latter, but because it considered that such opposition would be fruitless and could lead, eventually, to retaliatory measures being adopted by the latter.

As noted earlier this type of action orientation was, in part, responsible for the willingness of local authorities in the region to get together in the preparation of A Developing Strategy for the West Midlands. More generally it was one of the factors which led local authorities to get involved in the 'tripartite model' of regional planning (see above, pp. 152-5). This type II form of non-decision making situation also occurred in relation to a number of other processes of specification of regional planning outputs in the West Midlands. Two further examples will be used to illustrate this type of non-decision making situations.

When in the Autumn of 1972 the W.M.P.A.C. sent to the Minister its comments on the Blue Book prepared by the W.M.R.S. those comments clearly reflected the objectives that the local authorities of the Standing Conference wanted to secure (see above, pp.176-88). However, when the Secretary of State of the D.O.E. made it clear that he was not prepared to approve the strategy, as suggested in the W.M.P.A.C. submission, and that this might have negative effects on the subsequent approval of the first wave of Structure Plans, the W.M.P.A.C. promptly modified its original submission according to the Minister's wishes. In these circumstances, the more powerful actor (the D.O.E. emboddied in the Secretary of State) saw its position vindicated without any apparent conflict.

A similar type of situation occurred during the 'consultation stage' of the updating of the West Midlands regional strategy in relation to the Economic Policy Options (see above pp.237-49). In this case a significant number of local authorities (e.g. Coventry and Sandwell D.C.s, Salop, and Hereford and Worcester C.C.s) thought that the 'more radical' proposals put forward in

Economic Policy Option 4 deserved further consideration. In spite of this opinion, however, they decided not to press for them on the grounds that this could jeopardise the whole exercise. Further, the W.M.P.A.C. as a whole accepted the separation of the 'economic' and 'physical' elements of the strategy, as it was considered that their joint submission might lead central government to ignore, or reject, both the physical and economic elements of the Updating[134].

This second example of non decision making (type II) suggests the need to consider the first type of non-decisions identified by Bacharach and Baratz (1970). This reflects the ability that more powerful actors have of ignoring demands put forward by the less powerful. In the case of the updating of the West Midlands regional strategy awareness of this possibility was instrumental, as the previous example shows, in shaping the action orientation of the local authority side of the planning arrangements. In the event, that non-decision was, in part at least, vindicated, as the Secretary of State for Industry chose to ignore the economic submission altogether.

This situation was not unknown in the West Midlands in relation to economic policy matters. For example from the early 1960s the annual reports of the Birmingham Technical Overspill Committee voiced criticisms about the Board of Trade policy concerning the issue of I.D.C.s in overspill areas; further, these criticisms were followed up with representations to Ministers and other actions. In spite of the fact that these criticisms gave rise to a number of interdepartmental disputes in Whitehall (particularly between the M.H.L.G. and the B.O.T.) it was not until the late 1960s that the government finally bothered to answer the criticisms in a formal way[135]. Even these answers, however, fell far short of dealing with the more general points of criticism raised by the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce (1968) and C.B.I. (1969) concerning

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(134) - When making this decision the W.M.P.A.C. had in mind the reluctance, later transformed into refusal, of central government to reply to the S.P.N.R. (see above, p.435).

(135) - On the interdepartmental disputes see Cullingworth (1979) pp. 218-220 and 263-266. See also Hansard of 24 April 1969 vol. 782 col. 668-72.

the negative consequences, on the region's economy, of I.D.C. controls.

Another problem in relation to which successive government failed to answer demands for action, concerned the social effects resulting from the prosecution of a containment-overspill strategy for the region. As early as 1948 this issue had been raised in the West Midlands Plan (M.T.C.P., 1948). It was argued then that, unless measures to prevent a spatial socio-economic segregation and polarisation at a metropolitan scale were adopted, as a 'matter of urgency', this would be the inevitable result of such a strategy (see above, pp.106-12). This criticism was restated in various circumstances, namely in comments to the West Midlands Regional Study (D.E.A., 1965) (see above pp.135-9). The issue, however, was always ignored by central government, and indeed by the W.M.P.A.C. team when preparing the Blue Book (see above, pp.170-6). It only surfaced as a regional planning issue during the updating process of a Developing Strategy for the West Midlands; that is to say almost a decade after the 'inner city policy' began to take shape (Stewart and Underwood, 1981). This example, raises the question of the importance of the third-type of non-decision making identified by Bacharach and Baratz (1970), that is the direct 'mobilisation of bias' arising from control over the political agenda.

IV.5.4 - NON DECISION MAKING (type III) - CONTROL OVER THE POLITICAL AGENDA

The analysis of regional planning in the West Midlands presented in Part II of this thesis revealed that until the early-mid 1970s its political agenda was dominated, almost exclusively, by the issues of intra-regional spatial redistribution of population and employment. During that period most of the actors involved in regional planning tended to define its agenda in a similar way. This apparent convergence in terms of problem definition was coupled, however, with

> *an absance of agreed goals and priorities for the West Midlands or of any consistent application of those that have been espoused at*

one time or another

(Wood, 1976, p. 233)

This situation reflected the effects over regional planning of two interrelated factors. First, the overriding importance attributed to the twin problems of containment and overspill. Second, the importance of territorial conflicts in the specification of regional planning outputs, and over the action orientation of the actors involved.

As noted earlier regional planning outputs are associated with territorial conflicts insofar as they reflect power struggles over the control of a given area (territory) (see above, pp. 79-80). In the West Midlands case, in spite of the growth in importance of central-local conflicts from the early 1970s onwards, the most frequent and influential type of territorial conflicts has been localist conflicts. Indeed, even in the recent process of updating of the regional strategy localist conflicts played at least as important a role as central-local conflicts in the specification of the outputs from the process (see above pp. 237-49)[136]. Further, these localist conflicts were, in most cases, associated with a complex system of power relations centered around issues which Young and Kramer (1978) describe as 'local exclusionary politics'. It is important to enlarge on this point.

According to Young and Kramer (1978) territorial politics in the English metropolitan areas tend often to centre around the issues of social access and suburban exclusivity. From this perspective, territorial conflicts occur, largely, as a result of the resistance put up by suburban leaders to the inclusion of their territories within the expanding metropolitan area and to the 'decanting' of a working-class population to the suburbs in the form of Council housing developments. Further, they argue that this resistance is supported by an elaborate policy-nexus including social, fiscal and physical elements (which they call the 'policy-nexus of suburban conservatism') and by

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(136) - In this particular respect the analyses presented by Mawson and Skelcher (1980) and Skelcher (1982) are slightly nisleading.

an elite dominated imagery of the favoured residential suburb[137] (Fig.31).

That the policy outlook in suburban areas has often be dominated by the 'suburban-conservatism policy nexus' referred to by Young and Kramer (1978) has been corroborated by a number of authors (e.g. Allison, 1975; Glass, 1959; Hall et. al., 1973; King, 1980). Further, the analysis of regional planning in the West Midlands provides plenty of illustrations of the types of suburban resistance identified by these authors. There are, however, two aspects of their formulation that need to be qualified.

First, the identification they establish between suburban conservatism and an elite imagery of suburbia appears somewhat restrictive. It is, certainly, beyond dispute that, in the early stages of metropolitan outward expansion, elites were of fundamental importance in formulating and popularizing that favoured image of suburbia[138]. However, it is nessary to recognised that that specific image was rapidly absorbed by most social groups in English society[139]. Further, it has been argued by a number of authors (e.g. Dunleavy, 1977; Gans, 1968; Rex, 1968) that the 'favoured image' of suburbia constitutes an important element in the whole imagery of status promotion in the English society. In her analysis of local resident pressure groups in the Birmingham fringes, Hulse (1976) argues that this imagery is extremely widespread.

The second point in which it seems necessary to qualify the positions of Young and Kramer (1978) concerns the forms of resistance characteristic of suburban conservatism. Further to the two types of resistance they identify, 'suburban conservatism' is associated with a much wider form of resistance; that is resistance against development itself, largely irrespective of the forms this assumes. Thus suburban leaders in the Solihull area opposed; first, municipal housing developments; second, the development of the N.E.C. and third, the

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(137) - See Young and Kramer (1978), pp. 238-43.

(138) - See, for example, Allison (1975), Cherry (1974) and King (1980).

(139) - In this respect see Sharpe (1975).

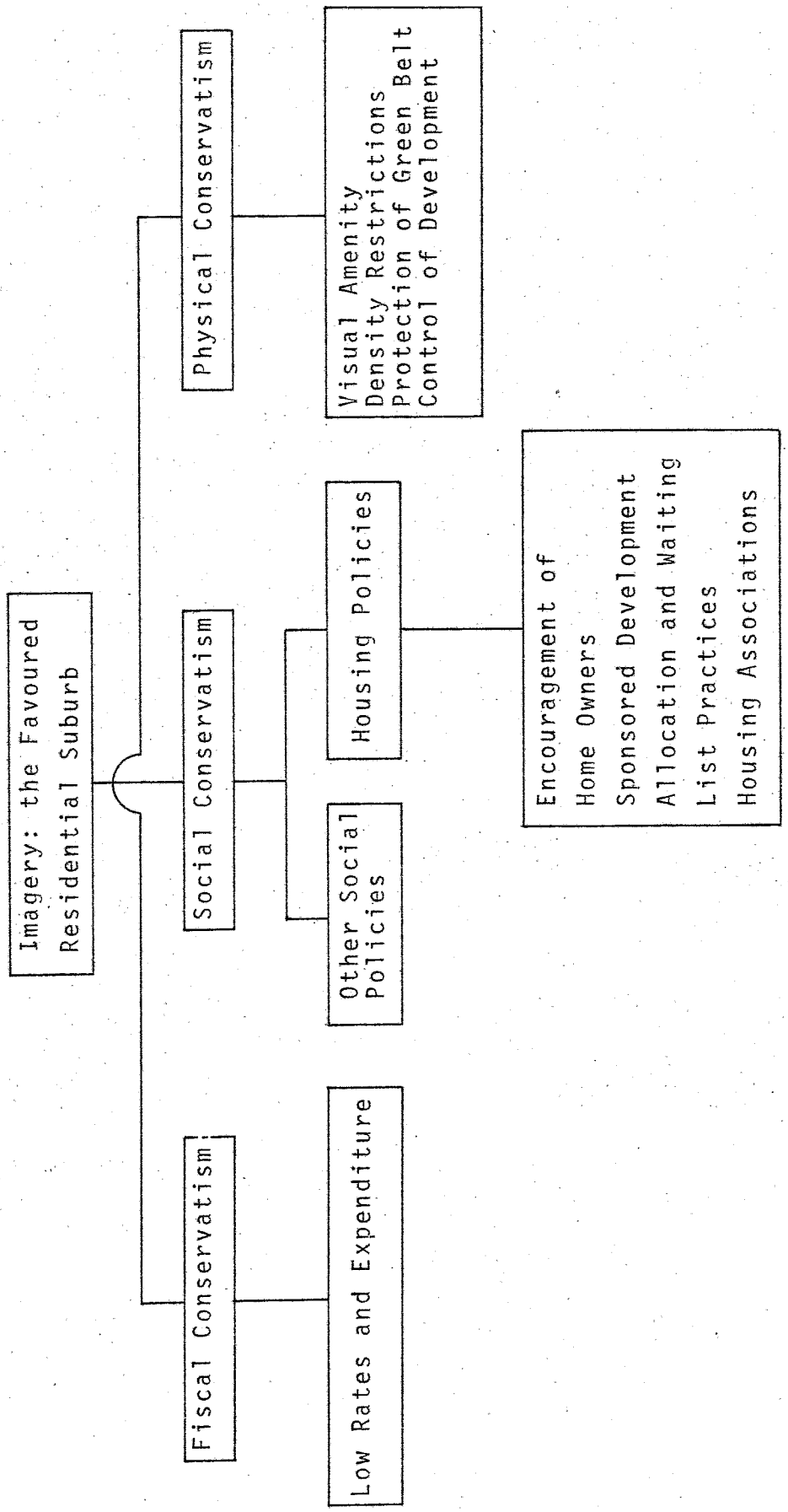

FIG. 31: The Policy - Nexus of Suburban Conservatism
Source: Young and Kramer (1978)

earmarking of a 'prestige site', for eventual industrial development, in the vicinity of the latter.

The question which needs to be answered at this stage is why the system of 'local exclusionary politics' managed to establish so firm a grip over the political agenda of regional planning? The answer to this question, in brief, is that 'suburban conservatism' shared with the dominant doctrines of regional planning the same sets of beliefs and values. Basically they shared, although on a different scale, the same doctrinaire commitment to a specific form of 'environmental determinism' and to a 'conservative reformism' approach to public policy. It is necessary now to expand on this point.

'Environmental determinism', corresponds to the belief that the geographical environment determines human character and social organisation[140]. In its doctrinaire forms it calls for the design of a perfect environment which would substantially solve all social problems and assure that humanity would live happily for ever after. 'Environmental determinism', per se, does not entail a specific prescription for environmental design, nor does it prescribe a specific social structure. In other words, 'environmental determinism' is compatible with different political perspectives on social organisation, and with different prescriptions on how the environment should be designed to produce the desired social structures and human behaviour[141]. In the case of regional planning in England, however, the 'environmental determinism' on offer was of a particular kind. That was that the 'community' rather than the 'State' constituted the basis of social organisation and that the best community life was the one provided by small, reasonably low-density and self-sufficient communities sharply differentiated from the outside world[142]. The rural village

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(140) - The definition of environmental determinism adopted here has a clear socialogical bias and differs somewhat from the traditional geographical interpretation of the expression. C.f. Holt-Jensen (1981).

(141) - The 'disurbanist' debate in the Sovit Union in the early 1920s provides a good illustration of this point. See Rodrigues (1973).

(142) - On the importance of the word community in the British cultural tradition see Williams (1954) esp.pp. 158-60. On the importance of this ideology in British Planning see, inter alios, Allison (1975), Foley (1960), Glass (1955), King (1980) and Simmie (1974).

community provided the beau idēal for this form of 'environmental determinism' (Davidoff, L'esperance and Newby, 1976).

As Allison (1975) notes this romantic-ruralism is best seen, in part at least, as a reaction to industrialisation and the development of the industrial city, with all this entailed: smoke, confusion and above all the explosion of the industrial proletariat

> *a great unschooled, ungoverned, undrained and unpoliced mass, different in every way from the poor classes of previous times*
>
> (Allison, 1975, p. 35)

Against this state of affairs romantic-ruralism made appeals to a nostalgic and seemingly more stable, beatiful and happy past dominated by rural small communities. Further, it claimed that England (the anglo-saxon societies in general) had no urban traditions and that great cities cannot provide really decent living places for the bulk of their inhabitants[143].

The dramatic growth of industrial cities was also responsible for the increasing importance of conservative reformism in the specification of public policies[144]. The problems in this respect were that the living conditions of the urban proletariat in the rapidly expanding industrial cities were often appalling. This fact was seen not only as responsible for the low standards of health of the working classes but also for the creation of 'social malaises' which could well develop as a real threat to the established social order (Glass, 1959). Conservative reformism, as a general principle of public policy leading to the improvement of the living conditions of the urban proletariat, developed

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(143) - Only against this backcloth it is possible to understand arguments such as the following

> *We Anglo-Saxons are by origin and sympathy Country-lovers, and have lacked the racial (sic!) love of beatiful cities which characterised the Graeco-Latin civilisations. Impelled by the needs of Trade and industry to an ever growing urbanisation we have instinctively regarded the town as someting fortuitous from which we dream of escaping* (editor of the M.N.T.S. in Quarterly newsletter, nº 38, p. 2 (1964)

(144) - The ideal of Conservative Reformism is beatifully encapsulated in the words of the 17th Century Viscount Falkland: *"When it is not necessary to change, it is necessary not to change"*.

out of two kinds of reasons: genuine concern for their conditions and fear of the consequences of not doing anything about them[145]. Since there was no chance of calling a halt to the growth of industrial cities the practical objective became, as far as possible, to mould their further growth and/or rebuilding on the rural village community beau idéal.

The pervasive influence of these sets of ideas on what Hall (1975) calls 'the pioner thinkers in urban planning' in Britain cannot be overemphasised. In his fundamental book, significantly sub-titled A Peaceful Path for Real Reform Howard (1898) argued for the planned decentralisation of workers to relatively small (≈ 32.000 people), garden cities outside commuting range from the large cities and separated from them by Green Belts. In spite of a few experiments (Letchworth and Welwyn Garden City) in which Howard himself co-operated, the lack of legislative backing either for the creation of Garden Cities or the enforcement of Green Belts meant that, in practical terms, his ideas had little impact during the first three decades of this century. Instead of Garden Cities there developed, 'leafy' suburbs along, and in the vicinity of, the main arterial roads coming out of the big cities ('ribbon development'). The urban sprawl associated with these developments occupied in the London case some of the best horticultural land in the whole country (Hall, 1975).

It was this last element which increasingly brought together during the 1920s and 1930s two different groups of actors. On the one hand, supporters of the Garden City idea, namely pressure groups such as the T.C.P.A. (founded by Howard in 1902) and town planners (associated since 1914 in the Town Planning Institute). On the other hand, countryside conservationists groups (e.g. the C.P.R.E. created in 1926) which reacted against the 'despoliation of the

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(145) - *Some measures are urgently called for, as claims of humanity and justice to great multitudes of our fellow men, and as necessary not less for the welfare of the poor than the safety of property and the security of the rich*

(Report of the Select Committee on the Health of Towns, H.M.S.O., London, 1840, para. XIV-XV).
Quoted by Glass (1959), p. 50.

countryside' understood essentially in emotional and aesthetic terms of scenery, views, wild life and 'nature'. The convergence of these two groups meant that planning doctrine became, henceforward, inextricably associated with attitudes and values which as various authors (e.g. Allison, 1975; Hall et. al., 1973; King, 1980) noted corresponded, to a large extent, to the material and symbolic interests of a particular fraction of the middle and upper classes.

The working coalition of the above two groups of actors, and associated ideas, was of fundamental importance in setting the political agenda for regional planning after the II world war. This importance was evident at two levels: legislative and operational. As far as legislative action is concerned the legislation passed in the first few years after the war was heavily influenced by their ideas. Indeed, as Mackay and Cox (1979) and Newman (1980) argue, their ideas provided the only secure basis on which to found positive planning legislation. Further, most of the outside experts called to contribute to both the Royal Commissions reports, and ensuing legislation, were leading members of these groups (e.g., Patrick Abercrombie who was a founder member of the C.P.R.E.).

In operational terms these ideas provided the doctrinaire basis of support of the regional plans prepared for the major British urban agglomerations during and immediately after the II world war. Patrick Abercrombie directed the preparation of regional plans for no less than three areas (Glasgow, Greater London and the West Midlands). In all three the rationale of the planning solution was identical: a land-use master plan based on the concentric decline of residential densities; a Green Belt restricting urban sprawl and a framework for the creation of New Towns and/or town expansions beyond the Green Belt in order to ease development pressures on suburbs.

It was the joint effect of this operational rationale, and the fragmentation of local government in metropolitan areas, which created the conditions for the continued domination of the regional planning agenda by the

'local exclusionary politics' referred to above. In this process pressure-groups (such as the T.C.P.A., the C.P.R.E. or the M.N.T.S.), suburban leaders, but also metropolitan leaders and planners shared the same basic set of attitudes and values. Territorial conflicts arose, not because there were different ideological positions in confront, but because the same action orientation pursued by actors on opposite sides of territorial boundaries had antagonistic consequences.

But the effects of the above operational rationale on the regional planning agenda cannot be merely understood in terms of the exacerbation, it produced, of a particular type of territorial conflict. More important, perhaps, is the fact that by reducing the regional planning agenda to a question of 'environment management' that rationale excluded from the political agenda other types of consideration. It was not until the late 1960s that questions started to be raised, not about the practicability of the containment-overspill doctrine but rather about its social and economic consequences. In 1971 a central government report on the long term distribution of population in Britain argued strongly against further major planned town expansions and New Towns, in view of the social problems involved in moving people substantial distances to new planned developments while they could get jobs in the city regions (G.B. 1971). A couple of years later in their mammoth study of containment-overspill in England, Hall et. al. (1973) concluded that the operation of the system had, in practice, reinforced social polarisation. In fact this result was foreseen some 25 years earlier by the authors of the West Midlands Plan but it had gone largely unnoticed at the time[146].

Indeed the operation of the doctine created a duality of environmental standards between the core and suburbs of the metropolitan areas. Because of the scarcity of housing land in the centres of the big urban areas

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(146) - For example the consideretion of the issue of social polarisation in M.T.C.P. (1948) (see Appendix B, esp. pp. B-17— 20).

local authorities had to progressively increase housing densities in their redevelopment programmes. With the active support of various governments this involved a growing emphasis on tall blocks of flats, industrialised construction and massive spatial segregation of council housing. These developments were not only contrary to the proclaimed objectives (in environmental terms) that the operational prescription was supposed to achieve, but were also highly unpopular among those directly experiencing the consequences[147]. The protection of the environment in the suburbs amounted, in practical terms, to a worsening of environmental conditions in the core of the urban areas (according to the doctrine's own environmental values).

In economic terms the practical effects of the doctrine were, arguably, no better. Because regional planning was understood, basically, as a process of 'environmental control of development' the economics of land-use were largely disregarded (Sharpe, 1975). Land was seen not as a factor of production but rather as an object of consumption. The development of this, or that, site for a particular purpose was primarily analysed not in terms of the potential economic value but rather on the basis of non-economic considerations such as the preservation of amenity, environmental design, etc. Moreover this non-economic bias was reinforced by institutional rivalries and conflicts, with the effect that regional policy and regional planning were always located in two different departments.

It can be argued that the creation of the R.E.P.C.s in the mid 1960s presented a challenge to the interests (non-economic) previously dominant in setting up the regional planning agenda. The R.E.P.C.s allowed for the first time representatives of production-based economic interests to directly intervene in the early stages of the regional planning process. In certain cases,

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(147) - Government support for tall blocks of flats was firstly made clear in the Housing Subsidies Act of 1956 which provided for housing subsidies to increase with the height of the block. On the unpopularity of multi-storey living see Cooney (1974). The particular case of Birmingham is discussed in Sutcliff (1974)

this had the effect of increasing the role of economic considerations in the specification of regional planning outputs. For example, the criticisms levelled by the W.M.E.P.C. at A Regional Study (D.E.A., 1965) and the recommendations made in Patterns of Growth (W.M.E.P.C., 1967) are a clear illustration of this fact. They were guided by the attempt to relate planning developments with the needs of industry in the region, namely by relating them with the main lines of communication (see above pp. 139-45). Although largely directed to the shortcomings of regional policy the Economic Appraisal (W.M.E.P.C., 1971) can be seen in the same light.

These developments had, however, little continuity in the West Midlands. The reaction by local authorities to the interference of the W.M.E.P.C. in regional planning matters, and the continuing separation of regional policy and planning matters, led to the W.M.R.S. being instructed to prepare a regional strategy under a brief which restricted the agenda to the consideration of the traditional issues of localist politics. Within this framework the task of the W.M:R.S. was seen as one of reconciling competing claims for the use of limited land and excluded, by and large, economic or social issues. This brief corresponded to the 'minimalist' planning ideology identified by Foley (1960) and, to emphasise the suggestions of political neutrality, the W.M.R.S. was left to carry out its job outside direct 'political interferences' (see above, pp.154-7). That the elected members decided to renounce their responsabilities in relation to the formulation of the strategy is quite extraordinary and can be interpreted in two ways: first, the inability of the W.M.P.A.C. to provide a clear lead in the process given a backcloth of localist conflicts; second the concealment of political conflicts and the weakening of the role of political parties and representatives whilst, simultaneously, strengthening the importance of public employees and outside experts over the political agenda of the activity as already mentioned.

Against this backcloth localist conflicts continued to dominate even when the lack of economic and demographic growth undermined many of the

arguments (social advantages of New Towns, need to halt metropolitan sprawl, etc) previously used in the process. The problem became one of redistributing existing resources, or sharing the effects of cut-backs. But this, of course, provided, if that was possible, even more fertile ground for localist conflicts (see above, pp. 237-49).

IV.5.5 - RATIONAL AND STRUCTURAL CONSTRAINTS IN REGIONAL PLANNING

There are no structural constraints concerning the objectives of a given activity. The consideration of constraints is only relevant insofar as these can make difficult, or totally impede, the achievement of the objectives. If the success, or failure, of an activity is to be measured in terms of the extent to which the desired objectives are achieved then a paradoxical situation might ensue; the most successful activities are likely to be those which attempt to achieve less.

The considerations above are of crucial importance when considering the role of constraints (rational and structural) in relation to regional planning activity. The ultimate aim of the activity in the West Midlands was, until recently, to solve a number of perceived social problems (housing and social deprivation) through a voluntarily induced process of environmental change. The intermediate objectives were to achieve a decentralization of population to New Towns and expanded cities beyond the commuting range from the conurbation, the creation of a Green Belt, etc.

As noted earlier these objectives relied on a number of broad assumptions: that most overspill would be carried out by pyblic agencies; that effective coordination could be achieved between the policies and actions of public agencies, etc (see above pp. 110-13). It goes without saying, these assumptions were themselves based on the assumption that the amount of public resources to be applied to the solution of the problems identified would be commensurate with what was required. These assumptions proved, however, to be

unjustified.

While during the 1950s the scale of the perceived problems increased beyond what was initially forecast (because of higher than expected rates of population growth and personal mobility, etc.) the amount of resources made available to face the problems was cutback in relative, if not in absolute terms. One reason for this fact was the poor rate of growth of the British economy (Stewart, 1977); another was that different central government policies pushed in opposite directions from those reccommended in regional plans. Thus, from the early 1950s onwards the share of council housing in relation to total house building declined while, at the same time, central government housing policies encouraged housing developments at high densities in tall blocks, to give only two interrelated examples of the undermining of regional planning assumptions[148]. Moreover, local authorities became associated with a bitter system of territorial politics which was difficult for central government to overcome, without breaking the long established traditions of local democratic government.

The question which needs to be answered in this respect is whether the macro-economic problems referred to earlier, and the fragmentation of government machinery, constituted structural constraints as far as regional planning was concerned? The answer to this question must lie in the affirmative. It must be so because the tackling of these constraints did not depend, exclusively, on the actors involved in regional planning. For example, any change in the distribution of powers between levels of political-admnistration required Parliamentary approval[149]. It is important, however, to qualify the answer given on two accounts. First, it is necessary to consider the fact that some of these constraints might have been eased if there had been a strong governmental commitment to the activity. For example, regional policy could have been modified to

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(148) - See Appendix B, esp. pp. B-25—30.

(149) - It is in this respect that the distinction made earlier between power in the society at large and in a specific activity is important. This constraint was not a structural constraint in the wider society.

bring it in turn with the needs of overspill areas. Second, it is necessary to emphasise that some of these constraints only became important because the activity had assumed a particular orientation. Public expenditure constraints, for example, were of crucial importance because the operational rationale of the solution to urban congestion and sprawl depended, heavily, on schemes (New Towns and Town Development Schemes) that created enormous short-term financial problems, either to central or local government.

These considerations suggest that there is a close relationship between the characteristics of the regional planning agenda, the practical orientations of the activity and the constraints which are likely to direct its developments. The regional planning agenda defined in the years after the II world war was extremely ambitious and, not surprisingly, the constraints it had to face proved to be enormous. In these circunstances the activity, lacking full and coordinated backing from both central and local government actors, fell quite short of its intermediate objectives, let alone its ultimate aims.

It is also important to note that the strong doctrinaire bias of the regional planning agenda created all sorts of rational constraints for the actors involved. For example, successive plans for the West Midlands region struggled to devise ways to allocate incresingly large amounts of population overspill from the conurbation, on the grounds that the latter was overcrowded. However the broad population densities in the most congested areas were never particularly high (at least to a continental observer) and there was, certainly, a strong case for concentrating efforts in restructuring the urban fabric of the conurbation, rather then attempting, at all costs, to steer population away from it. If these rational constraints were, probably, more strongly felt by those planners directly involved in the formulation of the 'planning blueprints', elected politicians had to put up with the system of territorial politics which the doctrine entailed. The decision taken by the Conservative government not to designate a New Town at Swynnerton is a clear example of the rational constraints created by political considerations (see above, pp.479-80).

But from the late 1960s onwards the importance of contraints can, probably, be encapsulated by a single word: feasibility. By this is meant the probability of a given output being accepted, on the grounds that it does conform with wider power relations and structural constraints. Two reasons accounted for the increasing importance of feasibility considerations in regional planning.

On the one hand there were changes in the methodology and procedural theories on which the activity, and the regional planning process in particular, were based. Regional planning became to be perceived as a continuos activity rather then the one-shot production of planning-blueprints. This entailed a shift in planning thinking, away from the mechanisms of blue-print design and towards the intermediate stages of plan preparation. Moreover increasing attention was devoted to the 'post-plan' stages of the activity such as monitoring and implementation (D.O.E., 1972). These developments were accompanied, in its early stages, by a dramatic increase in sophistication of planning techniques drawing on systems analysis, operational research, etc. (Chadwick, 1971, MacLoughlin, 1969).

On the other hand, and probably more important, there was an increasing awareness of the enormous gap between 'blueprint' and reality which cast doubts on the raison d'être of the activity. Increasing the feasibility of regional planning outputs was the only way of overcoming the ensuing credibility gap. Doing this, however, implied one of two alternatives: increasing the strength of the activity (size and variety of its resources and instruments), or reducing the scope of the objectives aimed at. Lacking the power basis to secure the first alternative, those involved in the formulation of regional planning reccommendations settled, with a few noticeable exceptions, for the second[150].

It is important to note that feasibility considerations are not, necessarily, recognised by the actors involved in the regional planning

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(150) - The arguments about context appropriateness developed by Skelcher (1982) appear, in this light, as post-fact rationalisations.

activity as constraints. Thus, feasibility was treated as an objective during the formulation of A Developing Strategy for the West Midlands in paralell with others, such as guaranteing adequate housing conditions for the population in the region[151]. During the Updating of this strategy, in turn, feasibility was considered as one of the general principles on which the strategy should be based; others were, a recognition that the future is not totally predictable, that the strategy should be clear and unambiguous, etc[152].

Feasibility constraints are, it goes without saying it, associated with with all those types of power relations and structural constraints which can preclude the follow-up of regional planning reccommendations. First, there are financial feasibility constraints; for example the W.M.P.A.C. report to the Secretary of State concerning the Blue Book noted that, because of the financial costs involved,

> *any large solution of the Conurbation's population growth and housing problems which is solely based on commutting across the Green Belt would probably not be feasible*
>
> (W.M.P.A.C., 1974, para. 54)

Close-in developments were, therefore, seen as necessary if the strategy reccommendations were to have a follow-up.

Second, there are economic feasibility constraints revealed, for example, by the J.M.S.G. statement that the updated West Midland regional strategy

> *recognizes that there are powerful economic forces at work in the Region which may have differential effects on particular areas but which are unlikely to be amenable to control without detriment to the economic system*
>
> (J.M.S.G., 1979, para. 201)

This argument was used to reject the adoption of the strategic option which argued for the concentration of efforts on the urban and economic regeneration of the region's older urban areas, and the restriction of further development

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(151) - See W.M.R.S. (1971), esp. para. 142.

(152) - See J.M.S.G. (1979), esp. paras 135-143.

in already built-up areas. The argument underlying this rejection was that the market forces guiding housing and industrial location decisious pushed towards developments in middle-ring locations and that the imposition of strict controls in this respect could only reduce much needed investment[153].

Third, there are admnistrative feasibility constraints linked, for example, with the system of 'localist' territorial politics referred to earlier. Thus, when formulating the 'preferred strategy' of the Blue Book, the Director of the W.M.R.S. was well aware that the reccommendations for the location of overspill had to be seen as fairly balanced, in terms of not creating an excessive burden on any particular local authority[154]. In the Blue Book the preferred strategy was introduced as the one

> *that would best meet the needs of the Region the objectives of the study and the criteria for an effective strategy*
>
> (W.M.R.S., 1971, para. 200) (my underlinings)[155]

Commenting on the strategy Prof. Gordon Cherry argued that it was basically

> *a process to allocate overspill to the areas which didn't have it in the past*
>
> (Cherry, 1971, p. 8)

Finally, there are party-political feasibility constraints related, for example, to the ideological commitments of the government in power. Thus, the wording of the J.M.S.G. report to the Secretary of State (J.M.S.G., 1979) was carefully worked out in order to soften criticisms of the effects of central government policies in the region, and to enhance the role attributed to the private sector in the processes of urban regeneration and economic

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(153) - See J.M.S.G. (1979), paras 158-174 and 181-185.

(154) - Personal interview with Mr. John Moreton 23 March 1981. He made the point in this way: *"the Team did not shut themselves up in an Ivory Tower"*.

(155) - It was the need to take into account admnistrative feasibility constraint constraints that, in part at least, made a mockery of the sophisticated evaluation exercise conducted by the consultants. According to Dr. Gibson (personal interview 21 January 1981) in the end the consultants did not understand themselves how their study had led to the adoption of the preferred strategy!

revitalisation[156]. Further it was decided to split the 'physical' and the 'economic' aspects of the strategy in order to make the submission, in part at least, acceptable to a government strongly committed to easing controls on market mechanisms (see above, pp. 249-55).

At this point of the discussion it is important to emphasise that feasibility constraints are not necessarily structural constraints. In some cases they are mere rational constraints and, therefore, they can be consciously, or unconsciously, overlooked by the less powerful actors. For example, the Northern Region Strategy Team was able to produce a strategy which proved to be politically unacceptable to both Labour and Conservative governments (N.R.S.T., 1977).

Two further points need to be made in relation to the effects of constraints on regional planning outputs. First, constraints can push in opposite directions. Thus, in the West Midlands case, financial and economic feasibility constraints were often contradictory with political and admnistrative ones in regard to, for example, the issue of development close-in to the conurbation (especially if within Green Belt area). Second, because feasibility constraints an associated with particular perceptions of the context they are, to a certain extent, subjective in character. In these circumstances their importance in the specification of political outputs derives as much from the actual importance of the constraints, as from the extent to which these manage to capture the imagination of the activity's more powerful actors.

IV.5.6 - CONCLUSIONS

Regional planning as an activity involves an enormous variety of outputs. These outputs are framed and specified through a complex web of power

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(156) - See J.M.S.G. (1979) paras 205-7.

relations involving actors (individuals, groups, organisations) belonging to both the state apparatus and the civil society. Regional planning outputs cannot be adquately analysed if either one or other of these two main groups of actors is not considered in the analysis.

In regional planning activity, as indeed in society at large, there is no single locus of power. Different regional planning outputs are determined by different actors, who happen to be the most powerful elements in the power relations through which such outputs are determined. The various actors, however, do not have, a priori, the same ability to shape regional planning outputs. The power relations associated with regional planning take place in a context which is, itself, pre-structured by wider power relations. There is, however, no necessary homomorphism between the distribution of power in society at large and the distribution of power in the regional planning activity. The latter can only be interpreted through the empirical analysis of the processes through which regional planning outputs are specified.

Regional planning outputs, however. are not only determined by power relations. Structural and rational constraints set limits, objective and subjective, to what can be achieved through power relations. The latter include processes of decision-making, non-decision making of various types and control over the political agenda of the activity. Decisions and non-decisions are always specified within the context of a given political agenda, and this situation means that control over the political agenda is of fundamental importance in relation to all outputs.

Given that regional planning is a state activity all legitimate decision-making powers are invested in actors belonging to state organisations, both in constitutional (elected members) and practical (elected members plus state employees) terms. Other actors can only influence regional planning outputs through the mediation of state actors.

Because regional planning activity involves an enormous amount of interactions between state organisations, the power relations between these

organisations (and associated 'dominant coalitions' of actors) are of crucial importance in the specification of outputs. It is in this context that central government organisations and actors enjoy a position of overall supremacy in regional planning. This position derives, to a large extent, from their greater ability to unilaterally modify the context in which power relations occur.

Within central government, 'departmental interests' provide the basis for most power conflicts between different actors in relation to regional planning. 'Territorial conflicts' ('localist' and 'central-local' conflicts), however, constitute the majority of power relations in the sphere of regional planning involving state organisations.

Control over the political agenda of regional planning sets the scene for most of the power relations associated with the activity. In England the regional planning agenda has been heavily influenced by environmental and professional ideologies, with party political ideologies playing only a minor part in the process. Further, because power relations in regional planning occur mainly, through processes of interorganisational relationships, the role of unorganised individuals and groups in the specification of the outputs of the activity has been minimal. The obvious difficulty of unorganised actors, and groups, to intervene in an activity where interorganisational relations are of crucial importance, has been compounded by the lack of mass support for the type of social movement which might, potentially, play an important role in the activity - regionalism.

The role of pressure groups in the specification of regional planning outputs has also tended to be limited. This situation reflects two main factors. First, that the characteristics of the organisational arrangements and setting of the regional planning activity present few points of direct access to actors outside the state apparatus. Second, that because the state organisations which were supposed to follow-up regional planning outputs (e.g. recommendations of regional planning) have a low degree of commitment to these outputs, there is little point in pressure groups wasting their resources in attempting to shape

outputs which will have few, if any, practical consequences. Of course, this tends to reinforce, by default, the importance of state agents in the shaping of regional planning outputs.

A major exception to this rule, occurs in relation to the role played by certain principle pressure-groups in the definition (until recently) of the regional planning agenda. Because other pressure groups did not pay much attention to the activity - as a result of the overall weaknesses of the latter - these pressure-groups have managed to assume a role in regional planning which far exceeds their normal importance. This fact was made possible because for a significant period these groups provided state agents with the only coherent, and developed, operational model of regional planning that was available. Further, as authors such as Allison (1975) and Hulse (1976) have noted, there was a good deal of overlaping membership between these groups and the relevant professional associations and state actors. This situation meant that, for some two decades, the control over the political agenda of regional planning was associated with sets of values and attitudes which had little to do with the main productive interests of society. Regional planning was consumption-oriented rather than production-oriented. The distribution of outcomes reflected, mainly, consumption potentials in relation to land uses.

In recent years this situation has been modified. Increasing awareness of the weaknesses of the activity was paralleled by substantial changes in the ideologies and theories upon which the activity was based. This led to increasing emphasis being given to questions of feasibility in regard to the specification of the activity's outputs. Feasibility considerations, however, proved to be highly subjective and often contradictory; as such, they did not provide a coherent alternative operational rationale for the activity.

This shift in the activity's rationale was associated with a tightening of the constraints (organisational, financial, etc.) within which the activity occurred and the articulation of the two proceses cast doubts on the practical relevance of the activity in this new context.

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

This thesis is already too long; so its conclusions must be short. They will be, mainly, restricted to relating the analytical findings of the study to the two research objectives set out in the Introduction. A few remarks on the prospects for regional planning in England take up the remainder of the chapter.

REGIONAL PLANNING - A POLITICAL-ORGANISATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

In the introductory chapter of this thesis it was suggested that it would consider two major objectives. The first objective would be to provide a plausible interpretation of the changing fortunes of regional planning in England in recent years, more specifically during the period from the mid 1960s to the early 1980s. The second objective would be to develop a political-organisational framework for the analysis of regional planning practice. A detailed case-study of regional planning in the West Midlands region supplied most of the evidance on which the argument was based.

From the start it was clear that the two objectives were closely related. The adoption of a particular research perspective, and the subsequent development of an analytical framework stemming from that perspective inspires, not only a particular interpretation of regional planning events, but also the questions from which that interpretation originates. In this sense the development of the analytical framework was the primary objective of the study and the interpretation of events a secondary one. From this perspective, also, the interpretation put forward here is considered to be only a partial one and no claim is made concerning the coverage of all the elements that influence the fortunes of regional planning. In the field of social science research it is often better to settle for partial, but empirically grounded, interpretations of complex phenomena than to look for some form of 'grand theory' (Mills, 1959). As Newman (1991) argues in relation to current debates on planning theory:

> *Explanation is partial not universal, problematic not standardised. The question of adequacy relates to particular objects and the questions we wish to ask, it is not a question of how well we trace back elements of planning practice, say, to essential relations of production.*
>
> (Newman, 1981, p9)[1]

The analytical framework developed in Part IV is associated with a political-organisational perspective on regional planning. Such a perspective involves two major elements. On the one hand, it accepts that the organisational context of regional planning, and the specific organisational arrangements through which the activity is carried out, significantly influence the problems which are considered, what policies are put forward to tackle them and what chances these policies have of being implemented. On the other hand, however, it rejects the idea that a mere analysis of the organisational features of regional planning, and of its context, provide an adequate basis for the study of the activity. It is important to consider these two elements in turn.

There is a certain consensus amongst practitioners and academics that regional planning has been attempted in England, in the past, within an unfavourable organisational context and without the benefit of specific organisational arrangements which might compensate for that situation (see above, Introduction). Until recently, however, this basically sound idea was associated with inadequate notions concerning the structure, and operational mechanisms, of the state political-admnistrative machinery and the characteristics of the regional planning process. The former issue was approached with the help of hypotheses and concepts which originated in Weber's ideal type of bureaucracy. The latter was seen in relation to positivist approaches to planning and the attempt to develop the regional planning process in accordance with the rational model of decision-making.

The organisational approach to regional planning developed out of a critique of the two sets of notions outlined above. Against the idea of the

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(1) - The expressions 'explanation' and 'interpretation' are used here as synonimous.

political-admnistrative machinery as a sort of huge bureaucracy, organisational approaches emphasised the importance of 'bureaucratic dysfunctions' and informal relations of exchange within the state apparatus. Moreover, organisational approaches called attention to the fact that the political agenda and outputs of the activity were strongly influenced by relations of power and exchange between state organisations. From this perspective the analysis of regional planning practice in terms of the rational model of decision-making, and its implicit assumptions of consensus about policy goals and instruments, was seen as clearly inappropriate.

In the English case most of the studies of regional planning using an organisational perspective originated, directly or indirectly, in research projects commissioned by the DOE during the 1970s. The findings of these research projects provided useful insights into the internal structure, and developments, of regional planning processes. Further, they allowed for a careful examination of the relations between regional planning and other policy planning systems, operated by non-departmental public bodies and central and local governments. The conclusions of this examination suggested, for example, that in the current institutional context regional planning processes could not be expected to provide a powerful mechanism for coordinating the various policy plans and programmes involved (see above, ch III. 2).

In spite of the important contributions these studies made to the understanding of a number of problems afflicting regional planning practice, they suffered from a number of methodological, theoretical and practical shortcomings, which were analysed in some detail in chapters III. 2 and III. 3 above. Thus, analyses were often dominated by empiricist research methods; organisational phenomena were isolated from the social context in which they were embedded; and, policy recommendations were put forward with narrow pragmatic concerns in mind, to mention only some of the most common analytical flaws. As a result of these shortcomings, and of the lack of a political level of analysis, certain procedural and substantive developments in the late 1970s, which led to

the demise of regional planning in England - at least in the short-term - were wrongly seen as heralding a major boost to the activity (see above, chs III. 2 and IV. 3).

The criticisms levelled at the organisational approaches to regional planning provided some of the supporting arguments for the analytical framework developed in Part IV. Other elements originated in the detailed analysis of regional planning developments in the West Midlands region presented in Part II, and in the review of 'critical organisational literature' briefly outlined in chapters III. 3. and III. 4. There is no need here to repeat arguments which were developed at length in previous sections of the study. It is worth, however, commenting on a number of selected aspects of the analytical framework, which relate to theoretical arguments presented elsewhere in the study.

The analytical framework developed, and tested, in Part IV was orientated towards the study of regional planning outputs, that is decisions and actions taken within the context of the regional planning activity. This is not, generally speaking, the most appropriate process of studying the political dimension of a state activity. The analysis of outcomes, i.e. the distribution among the different social actors (individuals, groups, institutions) of the effects of outputs is, arguably, a better process of studying that political dimension. However, as explained in chapter IV. 1, in the particular case of regional planning the identification of outcomes, and their assessment, is particularly difficult. In these circunstances a 'second best' solution (analysis of outputs) was adopted in the study.

Because regional planning is a state activity which cuts across different policy sectors and levels of political admnistration its outputs are directly determined by the actions of, and interactions between, state organisations. These interactions are part of the field of intergovernmental relations which is, itself, a subdivision of the wider field of interorganisational relations (see Fig. 25, p. 361).

One of the major analytical flaws shared by most organisational

approaches to regional planning concerns, exactly, the way in which the interorganisational relations associated with regional planning are analysed. Initially, it was assumed that these relations could all be analysed with reference to the 'exchange model' of interorganisational relations (e.g. Friend, Power and Yewlett, 1974; Friend, Norris and Carter, 1978). This model takes for granted, for example, that all relations are voluntary and for the mutual benefit of the organisations involved.

Perhaps the most significant contribution of Skelcher (1979, 1982) was to show that, as far as regional planning practice was concerned, the validity of these and other assumptions of the exchange model could not be taken for granted. Further, he showed that, in the field of regional planning, interorganisational transactions involved both relations of exchange and power.

However, it is contended here that the way in which Skelcher theorised power relations between organisations was, also, inadequate. Drawing on the 'political economy' model of interorganisational relations, he restricted his analyses of power relations to situations of resource control and dependency. This left outside his field of enquiry situations in which power relations were rule induced, or resulted from phenomena of mobilisation of bias (see above chapters III. 2. and III. 3).[2]

Underlying the controversy concerning the analysis of interorganisational relations are the questions of how to define and operationalise the concept of power in social relations. As explained in Appendix D to this study, these questions have generated an enormous variety of theoretical positions, which have a direct reflection on the study of power in inter-organisational relations. By concentrating on phenomena of resource dependency and control, the 'political economy' approach to interorganisational relations is able to identify power relations involving processes of decision-making and some forms of non-decision-

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(2) - The same error is also apparent in the works of Benson (1975, 1980) and other authors subscribing to the political economy perspective on interorganisational relations.

making. It is unable, however, to analyse the more complex varieties of non-decision-making and those relations of power resulting from 'systemic mobilisation of bias' (see Appendix D, and ch. IV. 5 above).

The analysis of power relations in regional planning requires the consideration of the interest structure of the activity. This involves, in the first place, the identification and classification of the actors who play a significant role in the definition of regional planning outputs. Secondly, it requires the analysis of the action orientations of those actors in relation to the various types of outputs. Finally, it is necessary to consider the relative importance of different actors in the definition of outputs. It is important to briefly comment on these issues.

Although regional planning is a form of state activity its outputs are framed and specified not only by actors belonging to the state apparatus but also by individuals, groups and organisations of the civil society. As noted in ch I. 1. state outputs reflect, in part at least, political demands and conflicts which have their origins in the sphere of civil society. However, these demands and conflicts are only transformed into planning issues, and finally into outputs, through the operation of the state apparatus. Given this fact, in the last instance, it is up to state agents (elected members and/or public employees) to decide the timing, contents and form of the outputs. It is in this context that central government agents enjoy a position of overall supremacy in regional planning practice (see chs IV. 4. and IV. 5).

The above statement needs, however, to be qualified in two respects. Firstly, the characteristics of regional planning outputs depend very much on how the problems to which those outputs relate are formulated and on the instruments available to the relevant state agents to tackle those problems. These elements are, themselves, significantly influenced by the features of the problems being considered, and by the characteristics of the broad relations between state and civil society in the relevant social formation. Secondly, the action orientations of the state agents often can only be adequately understood

in relation to 'symbolic interests' (ideologies, doctrines, etc.) developed in the civil society sphere. For example, the dominance of a particular form of 'environmental determinism' over the regional planning agenda in the West Midlands, during the 1950s and 1960s, was largely responsible for the characteristics of the outputs of activity during that period. Insofar as that form of 'environmental determinism' was associated with the interests (material and symbolic) of specific groups and organisations in the civil society these actors were able to decisively, albeit indirectly, determine the broad features of regional planning outputs (see ch IV. 5, pp. 490-501).

It would be erroneous, therefore, to talk about a single locus of power in relation to regional planning outputs. Different outputs are determined by different actors who happen to be the most powerful elements in the specific power relations through which such outputs are determined. Although the specific power relations associated with regional planning take place in a context which is prestructured by wider power relations, there is no necessary homomorphism between the distribution of power in society at large and the distribution of power in the regional planning activity. It is important to clarify this statement.

In modern societies, and due to the importance of production-based demands and conflicts, the relations between state and civil society are largely determined by the characteristics of the relationships between state on the one hand and capital and labour interests on the other. Drawing on Offe (1975) and Offe and Ronge (1975), it was argued in ch I. 1. that as the state apparatus depends for its operation on a process of accumulation which it cannot directly organise (in capitalist societies), state agents have an implicit interest in promoting those conditions most conducive to capital accumulation. Given that capital is the most direct - although not exclusive - beneficiary in any improvement of the conditions for accumulation, there is, generally speaking, a greater responsiveness of the state to demands formulated by capital than in relation to demands formulated by any other type of social actor. This

responsiveness is reinforced by the superior ability of capital to organise pressure-groups (due to its command over financial resources) and to provide state personel with data and analyses required for the smooth running ot the state machinery. Given this perspective it is particularly important to develop specific interpretations of state decisions and actions which do not conform to this general pattern of relationships between state and civil society.

The analyses developed in previous chapters of this study (especially in chapters IV. 4 and IV. 5), strongly suggest that, as far as regional planning is concerned, there is little evidance of a dominance of the interests of capital over the outputs of the activity. On the contrary, substantial evidance can be put forward in support of the argument that regional planning outputs, in the West Midlands at least, have often gone against the interests of productive capital. For example, the containment-overspill solution to problems of metropolitan congestion can be seen as against the interests of capital in both its dimensions. The containment side, for example, prevented housing and industrial developments in the peripheral green field sites which were more attractive to private investors.[3] A recent, and particularly notorious, illustration of this fact is provided by the successive controversies concerning industrial and commercial developments in the area around the NEC - Elmdon Airport complex (see above, ch IV. 5 pp. 492-4). The overspill side of the equation was no more positive. Attempts to divert population from the conurbation, to locations beyond commutting range, at a time when firms in the conurbation suffered from labour shortages, were not welcome by the local business community, namely because they tended to push up wages.[4] To further complicate matters in this respect the operation of IDC controls did not make

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(3) - The negative effects of the restrictions on housing developments was consistently denounced by the Housing Builders Federation. The locational preferences of industrialists also frequently indicated that they favoured peripheral sites (WMEPC, 1978).

(4) - This was a point repeatedly argued by the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, e.g Birmingham Chamber of Commerce (1969)

it easy for manufacturers to introduce labour-saving productive methods, as these often required new plant lay-outs, with a much higher ratio of space per employee and IDCs operated, uniquely, through floor-space controls.[5]

However it was not only the broad features of the containment-overspill planning solution, and the operation of the IDC controls, that went against the interests of industrialists. For example, when the decision was made to create a New Town in the region the Board of Trade emphasised the need to choose a location with good lines of communication. However, as The Economist later argued the first New Town to be designated-Dawley (Telford) - and to a lesser extent the second-Redditch - had *"disastrously bad road communications with anywhere"*[6]. Further the planning study published by the DEA in 1965, West Midlands - A Regional Study, suggested a growth axis in the region which was completly outside the existing, and foreseen, motorway network and led to a vigorous response from the chairman of the WMEPC who was not prepared to accept 'planners' fancies.[7] 'It is also interesting to note that principle pressure-groups in the region, such as the MNTS, consistently opposed major industrial developments in the conurbation periphery such as the Austin application to expand Longbridge in 1963'.[8] Given this opposition, and its own policy, the Board of Trade managed to steer a significant proportion of motor-car expansions to depessed areas such as South Wales, Merseyside and West Scotland. The negative financial consequences of this industrial movement for the car industry were almost immediately apparent (NEDO, 1968).

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(5) - The regional controller of the Board of Trade in the West Midlands in the late 1960s - Mr. Jim Jardine - argued that it would be impossible to operate IDC controls taking into consideration these elements as, for example, labour forces tended to vary quite dramatically with the business cycle. See Birmingham Post of 26 July 1968.

(6) - See The Economist of 2 April 1966. The same point had been raised in the CBI comments to DEA (1965).

(7) - Interview with Dr. Gibson, 21 January 1981.

(8) - See Birmingham Mail of 15 July 1963.

To say that regional planning outputs were not, in general, in favour of the interests of 'capital' does not mean that they were in the interests of the working class or, for the matter, of any other group defined by its position in the relations of production. Indeed, as noted earlier, one of the most pervasive features of regional planning was that space was treated as an object of consumption rather than a factor of production. Given this perspective the distribution of 'costs and benefits' was related more to the consumption potential of the various actors than to their positions in the relations of production.[9] This conclusion finds support in the argument put forward in ch. I. 1. according to which areas of state activity which are perceived as being of marginal importance to the process of accumulation are those in which interests other than those of capital (and to a lesser extent, labour) are more likely to shape state outputs.

In the particular case of regional planning, as argued in ch I. 2, the absence of a 'law of value over space' means that both capital and labour have difficulties in devising strategies for spatial development at a regional scale. This is reflected, for example, in the low levels of intervention by organisations representing capital and labour interests in the regional planning process (see above ch IV. 4, pp. 465-6).

Given these considerations and the fact that the state directly controls a substantial share of investment having a determinant role in the organisation of social space then state agents have, in relation to regional planning, greater discretion than in most other types of state activity. As Roux (1980) notes, in the exercise of this discretion state agents in general, and planners in particular, are influenced by ideological models and doctrines concerning notions such as 'development', 'modernity' and 'adequate environment'. It is important to remember, however, that this discretion is subject to a variety of constraints which establish structural and rational limits to the

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(9) - For similar perspectives see Hall et al (1973) pp 374-6 and 626-8 and King (1980) esp pp 464-5.

outputs that can be put forward (see ch I. 2 and ch IV. 5, pp. 501-7 respectively).

The importance of state investments in the organisation of social space, the direct and indirect influence the state has over the allocation of private investment and the almost monopolistic control it has over crucial data (eg. public investment intentions) means that, in practice, only the state has the capacity to assume the leading role in regional planning. Whether, or not, the relevant state agents decide to take on board this role depends, however, on a number of factors. Of particular importance in this respect are the characteristics of the problems faced by the relevant state agents. The consideration of some of these problems as regional in character, and requiring a regional solution', will constitute, as noted in ch I.3, the rationale for most regional planning practice (see above pp. 89-92). If none of the political, social or economic problems faced by the relevant state agents are seen as presenting these characteristics than a strong government commitment to regional planning is unlikely.

The level of commitment to regional planning will vary, also, in relation to other factors. In the first place, it will depend on the broad commitment to economic and spatial planning at a national scale. In the absence of such commitment regional planning will hardly be more than a mechanism for regulation of localist and central-local conflicts. Secondly, it will depend on the interest of relevant state agents in making explicit their orientations in terms of blueprints for action (programmes) with detailed objectives, measures, allocation of resources, etc. Without this sort of commitment to action, declarations of support for regional planning are: at best, pious statements of intentions without any practical impact on the reality; and, at worst, a sort of mistificatory 'regional discourse' (Dulong, 1978) used to justify practices dictated by factors (e.g. 'national interest' considerations, functional convenience) which have little to do with the specificity of any region in particular (Granados and Martins, 1982).

Thirdly, the practical significance of an explicit commitment to regional planning will depend on the broad characteristics of the territorial organisation of the state apparatus (levels of regional deconcentration and decentralisation of state functions). Without regional decentralisation, regional planning can only amount to a process of regulation of central-local and localist conflicts in which central state actors assume a position of primacy. Without regional deconcentration that supremacy is further compounded - potentially, at least - by the neglect of regional idiosincracies (see ch IV. 2, pp. 363-5). Finally, the practical importance of regional planning and the level of commitment to the activity will reflect, and be reflected in, a movement towards spatial (regional) forms of coordination of state actions to the detriment of functional forms of coordination. The reinforcement of the importance of processes of functional programming cutting across the various levels of political-admnistration will, generally speaking, be associated with a diminution of the significance of regional planning (see above, ch IV. 2., pp. 394-9).

It is important to briefly review how these factors influenced the changing fortunes of regional planning in England, and in the West Midlands region in particular.

THE CHANGING FORTUNES OF REGIONAL PLANNING

Throughout the 1950s regional planning in England took place in an uncoordinated and somewhat implicit way. In the major urban areas the implementation of the containment - overspill doctrine, through the use of Green Belts and Town Development Schemes (T.D.S.s), was carried out without much central government direct involvement and often without the support of updated regional planning blueprints. Regional planning outputs (e.g. on planning enquiries or TDSs) were adopted, apparently at least, in an uncoordinated way at a national scale, and without an explicit recognition of their regional (or national) implications.

In the early 1960s this situation was substantially modified, reflecting changes in two major elements. Firstly, it became obvious that the problems associated with the containment-overspill planning problematic were growing and that there was a need for a more energetic attitude from central government to stop this growth. Secondly, there was an adhesion to technocratic ideologies, that is to say, to the belief that the adequate use of technical and scientific expertise could solve the existing social problems. Together these elements meant that greater importance was attributed to regional planning, not only as an instrument to tackle existing problems but also as a device to prepare a better future.

The regional planning effort initiated by the 1960 - 1964 Conservative government received, apparently, a major boost with the election of a Labour admnistration in 1964. However, the emphasis on regional planning, and economic planning in general, was short-lived and marked by a number of fundamental weaknesses and shortcomings (see above, section IV. 3.1, pp.402-12). It is important to recall some of these elements.

First of all, regional planning in England in the mid-late 1960s was mainly seen as being associated with land-use matters. Economic and social considerations played a minor part in the process and only insofar as they were directly relevant to land-use planning. But even in strict land-use planning terms regional plans were not so much comprehensive statements 'mapping the future' of the region, as partial mechanisms to deal, mainly, with conflicts between local authorities insofar as these had clear land-use implications. As a result of this situation regions (e.g. East Midlands, South-West) and parts of regions (e.g. 'rural west' in the West Midlands) which fell outside the area of 'localist conflicts' often did not receive much attention. These aspects were evident in the regional planning documents prepared for the West Midlands during this period (see above chs II. 1 and II. 2).

Secondly, regional planning processes were carried out in relative isolation from each other and without the benefit of clearly defined national

land-use, urban and regional development policies. This situation appeared to a general shortcoming of English government policy-making at the time. Foley (1960) beautifully characterised that state of affairs when he wrote that:

> *policy is often more fully expressed in reactions by the central government to specific proposals or decisions by local authorities... than in advance, general policy statements by central government*
>
> (Foley, 1960, p.73)

That situation had two major consequences. On the one hand, it was impossible for those involved in regional planning in the regions to clearly integrate their proposals with policies being formulated and implemented by central government. On the other hand, and partly as result of the previous point, regional plans could easily be accused of 'introversion' and 'regionalism' by central government actors. This was, exactly, what happened whenever these actors did not agree with reccommendations made in those documents. There was, therefore, lack of coordination.

Thirdly, it is important to stress that the regional planning activity was almost devoid of specific positive instruments. New Towns and TDSs were the exception to this rule but they did not provide the required mechanisms because of a number of weaknesses. As Aldridge (1980) shows the ad hoc nature of the designation of NTs and the diversity of the goals they were supposed to achieve (relieve urban congestion, promote economic development, etc) effectively made the whole New Towns issue 'a programme without a policy' (Aldridge, 1980). Furthermore, TDSs were always constrained by financial shortcomings and were themselves the cause of a good deal of 'localist conflicts'. It is obvious that both NTs and TDSs were associated with a particular doctrine of regional planning (containment-overspill) and shared all the shortcomings associated with that doctrine. The weaknesses of these instruments, even to solve traditional land-use planning problems, were abundantly demonstrated in the West Midlands throughout the 1960s.

Fourthly, with the exception of the two instruments referred to above,

regional planning had to rely on 'reactive' instruments (e.g. approval of Structure Plans, locational controls) and these could hardly cover the gap created by the lack of positive instruments. Further, some of these instruments often served policy objectives which were at odds with those contained in regional plans. This aspect was illustrated by events in the West Midlands region in relation to regional policy instruments (see above ch II.2, pp.160-9).

Underlying the four aspects referred to in the previous paragraphs was the poor central government commitment to, and appreciation of, regional planning. It engaged in regional planning not because it was a sensible, desirable thing in its own right but because it offered a means of helping sorting out other problems, whether they be land-use planning conflicts between local authorities or the 'overheating' of particular labour markets. As a result of this poor commitment and appreciation, regional planning neither became statutory nor did it constitute the basis for the programming of major public investments. Moreover, regional planning did not provide the impetus for major changes in the structures and processes of territorial political-admnistration. As the discussion in ch. IV. 2. revealed there was little deconcentration of central government functions to the regions, and no regional decentralisation at all.

In spite of these shortcomings, it would be unjustified to pass a wholly negative veredict on the regional planning experience of the second half of the 1960s. The more active role played by central government in the resolution of localist conflicts, associated with the containment-overspill problems, made it possible to overcome some situations of stalemate in this respect. Further, it provided the impetus for a remarkable development in regional planning techniques and methodologies. It is important to note, however, that this more active role, played by central government and non-departmental bodies appointed by central government such as the REPCs, gave rise in some regions to a strong reaction from local authorities. This reaction was, in turn, responsible for a large number of central-local regional planning

conflicts in the late 1960s, not least in the West Midlands region (see above, ch II.2, pp.158- 60). These conflicts occurred between local authorities and the EPC, between the latter and central government and, finally, between local authorities (organised in standing conferences) and central government.

In organisational terms the most obvious response to these conflicts was to bring together the three sides previously involved in regional planning, namely: central government, local authorities and the EPCs. By doing so it was hoped to achieve two objectives. Firstly, establish a basis of mutual understanding between the various parties involved, at early stages of the regional planning process. Secondly, increase the level of commitment of the various parties in relation to the analyses and reccommendations made during that process.

The tripartite arrangements for regional planning which resulted from these considerations were to provide the organisational model for the activity during the 1970s, in most English regions. The model was used to prepare, and review, not regional plans in the traditional sense of the expression (blueprints), but rather regional strategies. These were seen as providing a context within which local planning authorities might frame structure plans and a framework for major decisions by public bodies (central government departments and non-departmental public bodies) having investment, or environmental, responsabilities within the regions concerned.

From the start, however, the tripartite model of regional strategic planning suffered from a number of ambiguities and weaknesses. First of all, there was a basic ambiguity concerning the exact meaning, and relative importance, of the two objectives of regional strategic planning outlined in the previous paragraph. Secondly, a number of organisations, namely central government departments other than the DOE and executive non-departmental public bodies, were involved in regional planning in an involuntary way (e.g. because of their membership of the EPBs in the case of central government departments) and their level of commitment to the activity was always very low. (see above

chs IV. 2 and IV. 3).

A third aspect which is necessary to note is that the ambiguities surrounding the objectives of regional strategies, and the poor commitment of a number of organisations to the regional planning processes, resulted into two types of developments. In some cases there was a tendency to gloss over difficult problems, and to frame reccommendations as to achieve a minimum of consensus among regional planning bodies. In other cases the tendency was for the regional strategies to come out with reccommendations unacceptable to one of the parties involved, generally to the central government side of the arrangements. The development of one, or the other, type of situations depended on a number of factors, namely: the type of control exerted by the sponsoring bodies over the early stages of preparation of the strategies, the type of the organisation forming the core of the 'intelligence networks' of the activity ('independent team' or 'multiorganisation'); and the nature and seriousness of the perceived regional planning problems.

A fourth aspect which it is necessary to bear in mind concerns the progressive realisation, in the second half of the 1970s, that because of their characteristics (scale, time-span, level of expressed commitment) regional strategies did not constitute an appropriate mechanism to coordinate the large number of operational programmes (e.g. HIPs, TPPs) associated with a variety of policy sectors and public agencies. Indeed, the proliferation of planning systems during the second half of the 1970s not only created a major challange to regional strategies, as coordinating devices, but emphasised, also, a different methodology of coordination, functionally-oriented rather than spatially-oriented.

Finally, it is worth stressing that throughout the 1970s regional planning suffered from most of the shortcoming which had plagued the activity in the second half of the 1960s. Regional strategies were prepared without the benefit of clearly defined national spatial development strategies. The activity continued to suffer from the lack of specific positive instruments. Other

policies and instruments with significant regional impact continued to serve different and eventually contradictory, objectives. Regional planning continued to be non statutory and involved no direct resources allocation. Last but not least, central government, in spite of pledges which suggested the opposite, never regarded regional strategies as a priveleged vehicle for formulating, expressing or implementing policy. This was reflected, for example, in the vague and non-committal characteristics of the 'letters of approval' which various Secretaries of State for the Environment wrote in relation to successive regional strategies prepared throughout the 1970s.

Despite their multiplicity and importance the shortcomings of the tripartite model of regional strategic planning did not become obvious during the early years of its operation. Indeed in the mid 1970s there were still high levels of expectation from the activity, and within certain quarters of the DOE there were even suggestions of formalising the role of regional strategies as a coordinating mechanism in relation to investment programmes associated with a number of policy sectors (see above, ch III. 2., pp.306-12). It was only towards the end of the decade that those shortcomings became patent for all to see. This happened as a consequence of a number of factors. It is important to briefly review some of these factors.

Firstly, the accummulation of experience from regional planning processes called attention to some of those shortcomings (e.g. the different expectations held by the various sponsoring bodies in relation to regional strategies and the blandness of the letters of response from the Secretary of State).

Secondly, the worsening of the national, and international, economic situation operated against the organisational model of regional strategic planning on two fronts. On the one hand, it diminished the relative importance of the type of problems with which regional planning was traditionally concerned (e.g. redistribution of demographic and economic growth). On the other hand, it narrowed the financial and economic constraints within which regional

planning had to operate. As a result of these factors there was - rightly or wrongly - an exacerbation of the traditional functional bias in British policy-making. Consequently, the role of policy programmes, especially those which could be used to control public spending, was emphasised to the detriment of planning systems such as regional strategies which operated with 'real resources'.

Thirdly, and more important for the short-term future of the activity, there was an aggravation of the political ambiguities implicit in the organisational model of tripartite regional strategic planning. Progressively, as economic problems increased, some regional strategies sharpened the tone of their criticisms about central government economic policies and widened their scope to suggest modifications to an ever-wide range of government policies. Nowhere was this more evident than in the case of the Strategic Plan for the Northern Region which was widely considered in Whitehall (whether rightly or wrongly is not relevant in the discussion) to be 'a direct bid for extraresources' (Webb, 1980) phrased, moreover, in terms particularly critical of the overall attitude of central government towards the region (Parsons, 1977). Thus, at a time when the results of past experiences and unfavourable changes in its environment already questioned the validity of the existing model of regional planning, regional strategies came out in direct challenge to the more powerful party in the arrangements (central government). These developments which were supported, if not instigated, by a number of academic research reports and 'papers' (see above ch III. 2, pp.312-7) created an uproar in Whitehall which severely damaged the already weakened credibility of regional planning.

The first manifestation of the difficulties afflicting regional planning occurred when the Labour Government 1974 - 1979 failed to respond to the final report of the Northern Region Strategy Team. However, the situation deteriorated particularly rapidly after the election, in the spring of 1979, of a Conservative government generally hostile to the idea of planning. Within the

space of a few months the Conservative government disbanded the EPCs, made it clear that it was only prepared to comment on the land-use aspects of regional strategies and announced that there would be no government response to the Strategic Plan for the Northern Region. More generally, staff at the regional offices of the DOE were instructed to withdraw their participation from regional planning and the Minister responsible for regional planning made it clear that he considered the recent widening in scope and ambitions of regional strategies a waste of time and money (see above, ch IV. 3, p. 435). What these developments meant was that, in formal terms at least, regional planning was put on the shelf.

REGIONAL PLANNING - WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE

Bearing in mind the content of the final paragraphs of the previous section, it is important to conclude this study by presenting a few comments on the prospects of regional planning in England. These remarks serve, also, as a kind of justification for writing a thesis about an issue that, to use the already quoted words of Professor Self appears to many people as

"an obscure ritual or administrative luxury"

(Self, 1980 p 209)

For those who for sometime have been involved in regional planning in England such a justification will, probably, be superfluous. They have, by now, got used to the idea that changes in the fortunes of regional planning, like the four seasons of the year, are unavoidably cyclical. Such as each Winter is inexorably followed by a Summer so they see the current situation of regional planning only as a transitory period, in which there are already plenty of signs that as soon as environmental conditions get better regional planning will blosson, yet again. Indeed, a close scrutiny of developments in the English regions, and elsewhere, appears to vindicate, to a certain extent, this position.

First of all, as the evidence provided in Table XVI (see above, p. 396) reveals, there has been no shortage of informal regional planning activity in the

English regions, in the last couple of years. This work has been, mainly, the result of the interest and activity of Standing Conferences of Local Authorities (or similar). In some regions, though, this work has received, more or less explicitly, support from the regional Offices of the D.O.E. (eg. the 1981 Yorkshire Textile Area Action Plan and the 'A Profile of the Northern Region in 1981'). The formal demise of regional planning had, therefore, no direct correspondence on informal regional planning developments.

Secondly, in recent years, there has been no shortage of calls for a return to formal regional planning. These calls came from two major sources. On the one hand, academics, practioners and pressure groups traditionally involved in regional planning (e. g. Diamond, 1980; Manners, 1982; Self, 1980; TCPA, 1980). On the other hand, political parties, other than the Conservative Party, which have published discussion documents that, in various ways, suggest a revival of formal regional planning (e.g. Labour Party 1982; Social Democratic Party, 1982).

Finally, recent developments in the European Community front also suggest the likelihood of a revival of regional planning in England. If the current Commission proposals for the revision of the Common Regional Policy are approved, without fundamental alterations in this respect, then the United Kingdom government will have no alternative but to return to regional planning. While the existing Regional Development Programmes can easily be dealt with at the level of generalities the same will not be possible if the idea of 'contract programmes' is approved by the European Council of Ministers (Martins and Mawson 1982).

It is, therefore, clear that there are subnational, national and supranational pressures for a revival of regional planning in England. While this study is not concerned with the form and contents that regional planning should take in the future it is, nevertheless, important to draw to a conclusion by identifying some of the issues which will have to be considered in any proposals for a return to regional planning in this country. For this purpose it is convenient to analyse the contents of some of the arguments for regional

planning.

In relation to most of the arguments put forward in favour of regional planning there is a distinct feeling of dējā vu. Arguments can often be considered as both teleological and tautological. The arguments are teleological because the case for regional planning is argued for on the grounds that it is required to meet the challenges of the future, whilst simultaneously its past failures are glossed over. Thus Diamond (1980) claims that regional planning is necessary in order to increase the co-ordination of public investments and to steer the process of social change in an orderly fashion. Unfortunately, the discussion in this thesis clearly shows that it is doubtful whether regional planning can substantially increase the co-ordination of public investments. Further, it suggests that in some cases regional planning far from contributing to the 'orderly management of change' has, in fact, given rise to a number of conflicts. The argument put forward by Self (1980) that regional planning provides an appropriate mechanism for bringing together economic and environmental planning also appears to be problematic, in the light of the discussion of past developments.

On the other hand there are clear tautological overtones in some of the arguments put forward by these authors. Thus Diamond (1980) having initiated his argument with the confession that:

> *I believe that regional planning will, sooner or later, come to occupy an important role in the U.K. government policy formulation and implementation. The fundamental, if simple, reason for this is that regional planning is a wholly necessary part of the machinery of government in civilised societies.*
>
> (Diamond, 1980, p 35)

concludes his confession by saying that

> *what is needed now is clear thinking and imagination over machinery and tools of implementation and not further debate about whether or not regional planning is a necessary put of a civilised government.*
>
> (idem, p 40)

Given the fact that most of the arguments he presented were of a teleological type there is certainly a case for doubting whether this confession will convert

the unfaithful.

In a short, but incisive, contribution to the debate about the need for regional planning Thorburn (1980) touched upon the crucial issue when he stated that arguments for regional planning often revolved around a vicious circle in the sense that:

> *the present organisation of government makes it impossible to progress regional planning, and the planners have not explained how regional planning would bring benefit if the organisation was altered to permit it*
>
> (Thorburn, 1980, p 41)

It would be unfair, however, to suggest that all the arguments in favour of regional planning suffered from these shortcomings. For example, the recent discussion document published by the Labour Party (1982) makes a correct analysis of the shortcomings of the past and attempts to come to terms with some of the problems underlying those shortcomings, namely the failure to adequately relate expenditure planning systems to the preparation of regional planning documents. The level of generality of the document and the incipient integration with developments in other policy areas (e.g. local government reform, town and country planning, financial institutions) clearly emphasises its character as a discussion paper to which further contributions need to be added before it becomes a coherent and operational whole.

Among the issues which need to be considered, in any attempt to formulate a regional planning framework for the English regions, the question of which regions should provide the geographical basis for the activity appears a trivial one. It would be profoundly wrong, however, to take such a position. This issue relates not only to the whole structure of territorial admnistration in this country, but also with the functions of existing local authorities. If representative regional authorities are created what will be the role of county councils if any? Further, it should be noted the proliferation of local economic initiatives and the visible antagonism on the part of local authorities to having such initiatives co-ordinated at a regional level (see above, ch II.5, pp. 428-9).

Moreover, in the current financial and economic climate it would be foolish to expect central government to hand to regional authorities the control over an activity which might, potentially at least, significantly influence the patterns of social and economic development in the country as a whole.

Closely associated with these issues is the question of what machinery should assume responsability for the activity. Past experience suggests that neither bodies such as the EPCs nor a tripartite machinery will do. If regional planning is to have any say in major investment decisions, made by central government or non-departmental public bodies, it is obvious that making Standing Conferences of Local Authorities responsible for the activity would, also, be inappropriate. The remaining alternatives are, therefore, making central government as a whole responsible for the activity or handing these responsabilities to representative regional authorities. The latter alternative is particularly atractive if a strong process of regional decentralisation is to be pursued. In the absence of such a process, however, the central government alternative should not be lightly discarded.

The central government alternative has a priori the advantage of providing a direct antidote to one of the most visible shortcomings of past regional planning practice in England, that is, the lack of a coherent regional planning framework for the country as a whole. Further, if regional planning is to assume a greater role in spatial economic development replacing, in part at least, regional policy, the case for a central government alternative appears even stronger. Against it, however, there is the traditional antagonism of local authorities to direct central government interference in the regions, and the necessity to involve these authorities in any attempt at planning and controlling land-use and fostering economic development (Mawson and Miller, 1982).

In summary, if there are clear signs that regional planning is not dead, it is also evident that there are a number of interrelated issues that need to be carefully studied, in order to avoid repeating the errors of the past. If such a study is not adequately carried out then there is a serious danger that

when regional planning is formally reintroduced in England it will be, like in the past, a sort of regionalist discourse to justify practices which are decided on the basis of localist or national criteria.

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