

**REGIONAL PLANNING IN THE WEST  
MIDLANDS REGION**-a political-organi-  
sational perspective

by

**MÁRIO RUI MARTINS**

**VOLUME II**

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	Page
Appendix A - Outline of research methodology .....	A-1— A-10
Appendix B - Regional Planning in the West Midlands until the mid. 1960s .....	B-1— B-61
Appendix C - Issues on intergovernmental relations .....	C-1— C-15
Appendix D - Power, actors and action orientations .....	D-1— D-42
Appendix E - List of individuals interviewed .....	E-1— E-2
<u>Bibliography</u> .....	Bib.-1— Bib.-25

*All quotations marked with an \* were translated by the author.*

# APPENDIX A

## OUTLINE OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Methodological sections, like this one can be used in two different ways. On the one hand, they can be employed to present the author's ideal-type of faultless research methodology and to discuss, in the light of this ideal-type, a number of methodological issues (e.g. the relationships between theory and methodology; the problems associated with the research methods and techniques used in the analysis, etc.). On the other hand, they can be used to provide the author's perspective on how the research process developed; making clear what was done and why, and what was not done and why not.

Either of the two approaches has its pros and cons. For example, the former type of approach allows the author to show that he is aware of the fundamental problems involved in any research process, but it may lead the author to the adoption of too abstract a view on such problems, and to forget about the specificities of the particular research process which prompted the methodological appendix in the first place. The latter approach, if used without due care, tends to turn the problems upside down and runs the great risk of becoming a sort of preemptive strike in relation to potential criticisms to the research methodology and findings.

In ideal terms any outline of research methodology should encompass both perspectives, thus minimizing the shortcomings associated with each of them. There are, however, a number of elements which may suggest the convenience of opting, in alternative, for one or the other type of approach. The nature and characteristics of the subject-matter of the research, the balance between abstract and empirical elements in the research process are relevant factors in this respect.

Bearing in mind what has just been said and given the characteristics of this thesis (e.g. length, range of issues covered, etc.) the approach adopted

in this Appendix corresponds to the second perspective outlined above. This option aims two objectives. First, to emphasise the importance of case-specific elements in the development of the research process. Secondly, to clarify how these elements contributed to shape the overall analytical framework and research methodology.

Given this perspective this section sets out to answer two sets of questions:

- 1) how were the research theme and fieldwork site selected, and
- 2) what was the approach to the collection, analysis and interpretation of data and to the presentation of research findings.

#### Selecting the Research Theme and Fieldwork Site

The selection of a research theme, in social sciences, depends on a number of factors. Some of these factors are specific to the researcher, namely: his/her personal interests and commitments; his/her professional and academic backgrounds, etc. Other factors are specific to the research theme, such as the level of public and academic debate associated with the research theme, its importance for public policy purposes, etc. A final group of factors relates to the specific and general constraints associated with any research process; namely: research finance, possible length of the research process; whether the research findings are to be subjected to some form of academic examination, etc.

In the particular case of the research reported in this thesis basic constraints were the facts that the research output was to be submitted as part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy; that the author had no more than three years in which to finish the writing of the thesis; and, last but not the least, that the author had, at the moment the research process was started, no specific knowledge of the English governmental structures, let alone of the broader structures of the English society.

As far as factors specific to the author are concerned, he had an

academic background mainly, in Civil Engineering and Urban and Regional Planning, his research interests were wide-ranging (perhaps, excessively wide-ranging), and he had a good deal of curiosity in studying a specific area of spatial planning in England and to, subsequently, relate that study to current debates in his home-country. Thus, these two sets of factors, though limiting the possible range of research themes, did not strictly defined a particular research theme.

In fact, the research theme was selected very much because of factors specific to the research theme itself. A first element important in this respect was the fact that, contrary to what happened with town and country planning and regional policy, regional planning had never established itself as a permanent area of government activity in England. A second element, closely associated with the former, which was important in the selection of the research theme was the circumstance that regional planning had not received much research attention in England in recent years. Thus, the author's curiosity to understand the ups and downs of regional planning did not find many satisfactory answers in the literature. Finally, the author became progressively aware that regional planning matters in England were often discussed in tautological and teleological terms. Regional Planning was defended as the necessary bridge between physical and economic planning, as the priveleged instrument for solving specific social problems, etc. This defence, however, referred more to hypothetical features of regional planning than to the results of past experiences. Thus, the question of whether regional planning had, in the past, been able, or not, to correspond to the expectations deposited in the activity was, by and large, excluded from the argument. It goes without saying it, causal explanations for the characteristics of past results were also missing. This was the backcloth against which it was decided to select regional planning in England as the research theme for this thesis.

When research started it was the author's objective to conduct the empirical part of the research at two levels. On the one hand, to consider the

broad context (legal, institutional, methodological, theoretical, etc.) within which regional planning had been carried out in England. On the other hand, to make a comparative analysis of regional planning practice in three English regions, in the light of the findings of the study of the regional planning context.

Given these two dimensions of research the author's attention moved, subsequently, to the selection of the three planning regions required for the development of the comparative analysis. The criteria used in the selection process included, for each region: level of economic prosperity; status of region in relation to the areas designated for regional policy assistance; type of organisational arrangements used for regional planning purposes; and, finally, 'bias' (physical or economic) of the regional planning documents prepared for each region.

With the help of these criteria three regions were selected for detailed consideration. Two of them (West Midlands and Northern) represented almost antithetical situations vis-à-vis the criteria used in the selection process. Indeed, the West Midlands was a traditionally prosperous region outside the areas eligible for regional policy assistance and subjected, on the contrary, to regional policy locational controls. Regional planning practice in the region had been conducted through different organisational arrangements in the past but, more recently, a 'network multiorganisation' had been responsible for the activity under the aegis of the tripartite model of regional planning. Reflecting the region's past good economic record regional planning practice in the West Midlands had generally shown a clear physical planning bias. The Northern region, in turn, was an area experiencing long-standing problems of economic depression, and totally within the boundaries defining the geographical limits of operation of regional policy incentives. Regional planning practice in the region had also been carried out under various organisational arrangements but in recent years an 'independent team' had assumed responsibility for the activity, within the context of the tripartite model of



regional planning. Further, and because of the region's poor economic record regional planning had often assumed a regional economic development perspective.

Finally, the third region, South-West, presented intermediate characteristics in relation with the former two. The region was characterised by significant intraregional economic disparities and this circumstance was responsible for the fact that while one part of the region was eligible for regional policy assistance the other was not. In terms of organisational arrangements for regional planning the South-West had never adhered to the tripartite model of regional planning, and the South-West Economic Planning Council had always been responsible for regional planning in the region. Finally, the uneven economic prospects of different parts of the region were reflected in the orientations of regional planning documents; some adopting a 'physical planning bias', others emphasising economic development issues. With the choice of the three above regions it was hoped that the diversity of their features would provide a sound basis for a comparative analysis of regional planning in the English regions, and for subsequent extrapolations for England as a whole.

In the event things turned out in a different way. Having started the research process by studying developments in the West Midlands (the region on the doorstep and in relation to which the author had already collected a lot of research material) it became apparent, after a few months of research, that, in order to fully understand regional planning practice in the region, it was necessary to allocate to this region much more research time than that allowed for in the original research time-table. Given this fact the alternative, in practical terms, was either to abandon the idea of a comparative analysis in order to study in greater depth the West Midlands region, or insisting on the comparative analysis and incurring in the risk of conducting the research at a relatively high level of generality.

After careful thought, the first alternative was adopted bearing in mind a number of issues. First, the West Midlands had a long history of planning and decision-making around regional issues dating back, at least, to the

aftermath of the II World War. This aspect became important in order to build up a longitudinal (historical) perspective on regional planning practice. Secondly, the author was granted access to a substantial volume of confidential data (although some data was only made available within the constraints of the Official Secrets Act) and this made possible the study of some, previously, undetected power conflicts and planning disputes. Thirdly, the West Midlands had recently gone through a complete change in its economic climate and this made possible to analyse the behaviour of regional planning actors in a different economic context. Fourthly, the region had been particularly rich in the variety of organisational arrangements adopted for regional planning purposes, and this was seen as compensating, in part at least, for the lack of an inter-regional comparative perspective in this area. Fifthly, it was reckoned that the combination of the characteristics of the case study (its long-time span, the region's changing economic fortunes, etc.) and the existence of another dimension of research (involving the analysis of the changing features of the regional planning context) would minimise the problems associated with generalisations developed from case studies. Finally, and using a cost-benefit analogy, it was considered that what was lost in not developing an inter-regional comparative analysis, was more than compensated by the improvements achieved in the development of the theoretical framework used in the analysis; and in the levels of 'explanatory power' of the conclusions developed within the improved framework. Bearing in mind this argument it is important to briefly describe how research proceeded subsequently.

### Collection and Analysis of Data and the Presentation of Research

#### Findings

It is a well known fact that in reporting research the method of presentation often differs in form from that of inquiry. In this thesis, however, the sequence of chapters provides a reasonable picture of how research work progressed.

As it was already noted the selection of the research theme was associated with a number of questions for which the author did not find satisfactory answers in the literature. These questions related to the interpretation of the changing fortunes of regional planning in England and, more generally, to the analysis of the forces which shape public planning and policies. The author's preliminary thoughts on these matters were discussed with a number of people and, finally were written down in the 'paper' submitted as part of the requirements for the transfer from the degree of M. Phil to that of Ph. D. (Martins, 1980). Several and heavily revised, elements of those preliminary thoughts appear in different sections of Part I of the thesis.

With the help of the analytical framework developed in the context of those preliminary thoughts research attention moved on to the empirical analysis of regional planning developments in the West Midlands region. This phase of the research process involved the analysis of primary, and to a smaller extent secondary, written sources and the realisation of more than twenty semi-structured interviews with individuals involved, in different ways, in the planning of the region(see list of individuals in Appendix E below). In addition to this the author developed informal relations with a number of relevant professional elements and politicians. The selection of people to interview had in mind a number of criteria aimed at illuminating those subject-areas which written sources did not clarify, and to allow for a maximum of different perspectives on each issue and conflict. This process of 'triangulation' of information aims at reducing the biases introduced by the fact that each of the people interviewed could only offer a partial perspective on the issues being studied. The findings of this phase of research, which are extensively presented in Part II and Appendix B below, suggested the need to explore in greater detail a number of theoretical issues, and to partially reformulate and enlarge on the analytical framework developed in the initial stages of the research process.

One of the areas in relation to which the need for further theoretical developments became apparent, concerned the issues of organisational and inter-

organisational influences in regional planning, and more generally, the question of what elements determine the characteristics of inter-organisational relations. These issues were initially explored with the help of a number of unpublished, or scarcely known, research reports which had considered some of these matters. Although the findings of these reports served to illuminate a number of aspects of the problem, the author became increasingly convinced that they were built upon a number of inadequate assumptions and theories. This conclusion prompted the author to return to a more general level of analysis and to explore recent developments in critical organisational and inter-organisational literature. It was based on the consideration of this sort of literature that a critique to conventional organisational and inter-organisational approaches to regional planning was developed, and that the basis of an alternative framework for analysis were set up. That framework adds a socio-political dimension to inter-organisational approaches to regional planning and can be seen as a major development in relation to the analytical framework presented in Part I. This phase of the research process is materialized in Part III of this thesis.

The final major phase of the research process involved the orderly expansion of each of the three levels of analysis defined in the theoretical framework presented in the immediate sequence of the conclusions of Part III of the study. Attention focussed, in the first place, on the organisational and inter-organisational aspects of regional planning. For these purposes the author undertook a survey of inter-governmental relations in England concerning both general features of these relations and those aspects more particularly associated with regional planning. This survey is presented, mainly, in ch IV.1, although some aspects of detail are supplemented in Appendix C.

The results of this survey were subsequently used for a preliminary interpretation of the changing fortunes of regional planning in England, with empirical support provided from examples not only of regional planning in the West Midlands but in other regions as well. For these purposes, the author took advantage not only of his initial analysis of regional planning in England as a

whole, but also of secondary sources (both written and oral) concerning regional planning developments in the other English regions.

Having dealt with the first level of analysis (organisational and interorganisational), research attention moved on to consider the two remaining levels (socio-political). This involved two sorts of processes. First of all further theoretical developments concerning a number of specific issues which had previously only been skipped over. Issues falling in this category concerned the operational meaning to be attributed to the concept of power; the conceptualisation of the action orientations of the actors involved in the regional planning process, etc. While these theoretical developments were of fundamental importance to the subsequent development of the analysis length constraints led to most of these theoretical developments being included in Appendix D.

The second sort of processes associated with this phase of research involved the reconsideration of some of the evidence collected in relation to West Midlands regional planning; in the light of the socio-political levels of analysis defined in the theoretical framework and of the discussions contained in Appendix D. This process of cross-fertilization allowed:

- 1) for a further refinement in the interpretation of the changing fortunes of regional planning in England, and the West Midlands in particular; and
- 2) for checking the adequacy of the various elements of the analytical framework presented in the introductory chapter of Part IV of the thesis.

The final conclusions of the thesis, as usual in these cases, were used mainly to summarise arguments previously developed in greater length, and to add some thoughts on the relevance of the research findings.

From the above description it is apparent that the research process developed in terms of a permanent dialogue between empirical and theoretical considerations, between general and specific aspects. After some empirical work

the first major phase of research attempted a general and theoretical level of analysis, involving the development of a theoretical framework for subsequent research. This framework was, in the sequence, used for an empirical and specific analysis of regional planning in the West Midlands region. When undertaking this research the author became aware of a number of inadequacies in his early writings and this led to a number of explorations in what can be labelled middle-ground theory. Finally, Part IV of the thesis is a truly reflection of a research process combining theoretical developments with empirical illustrations and general formulations with specific examples.

It is, probably, appropriate to finish this methodological section by stating that the author is perfectly aware of the fact that he has provided only a partial interpretation of the phenomena being studied. Furthermore it is also important to state that the author does not claim that his interpretation is, for sure, the one with a greater degree of explanatory power (how could he make such a claim?...). This position, however, should not be understood in terms of the adoption of an absolute epistemological relativism, but merely as an acknowledgment that only future events can provide support for such a claim.

# APPENDIX B

REGIONAL PLANNING IN THE  
WEST MIDLANDS UNTIL THE  
MID 1960's

## CONTENTS

	Page
I - <u>The Foundations of Post-War Planning in the West Midlands</u> .....	B-1 —24
I.1 - Introduction .....	B-1 — 4
I.2 - The Perception of Planning Problems .....	B-5 —8
I.3 - Conurbation Versus Containment and Overspill .....	B-8 —16
I.4 - Conurbation versus West Midlands Plan - Industrial and Social Issues .....	B-17—20
I.5 - Planning Recommendations and Central Government Response .....	B-21—22
I.6 - Conclusions .....	B-22—24
II - <u>The 'Implementation' of the Containment-Overspill Strategy</u> .....	B-25—59
II.1 - Introduction .....	B-25
II.2 - The Assumptions and Changing Context of Regional Planning in the 1950s .....	B-25—30
II.3 - Developments Planning and the West Midlands Plan .....	B-30—33
II.4 - Housing Land Shortage and Town Development Schemes Contribution .....	B-33—41
II.5 - Housing Land Shortages - the Search for Alternatives .....	B-41—49
II.6 - Housing Land Shortage - Action at Last .....	B-49—53
II.7 - Conclusions .....	B-53—59
<u>NOTES</u> .....	B-60—61



# I THE FOUNDATIONS OF POST-WAR PLANNING IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

## I.1. INTRODUCTION

The foundations of British regional planning were laid down in a number of Royal Commission Reports published during or immediately after the end of the World War II (Hall, 1975). 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.

The pace with which these developments took place, and the characteristics they assumed, were, certainly, influenced by the election of a Labour Government in July 1945. There was, however, a broad consensus among the major political parties about the need to strengthen the existing land-use planning machinery. The election manifestos of the three main parties, for example, all referred to the need for a new, and more comprehensive, Town and Country Planning Act and for a more effective approach to the problems of compensation and betterment, etc... This broad consensus was aptly exploited by senior civil servants in Whitehall to press ahead with a number of legislative and non-legislative initiatives based on the less controversial recommendations of the wartime reports.<sup>1</sup> In most of these initiatives they also could count on the explicit support of professional bodies (for example, R.T.P.I.) and other pressure groups (for example, T.C.P.A.).

On the legislative front, the New Towns Act (1946) provided for the designation of New Towns to be financed by the Exchequer and organised under ad hoc development corporations with powers to buy land at existing use-values, to finance housing and infrastructure, to attract firms and employment, etc. A second major piece of legislation was the Town and Country-Planning Act (1947)

which gave local authorities (county councils and county boroughs) powers to plan and regulate land development, and deal with the compensation and betterment problems. In future no change in land-use (other than those explicitly listed in the Act) would be possible without planning permission granted by the appropriate local planning authority. In order to regulate, and control the development of land, these authorities were to prepare 20-year development plans subject to quinquennial reviews. Private developers and landowners were affected by a 100 per cent development charge on all land transactions and developments. With the exception of the financial provisions of the Act, the planning machinery created by the Town and Country Planning Act 1947 was to remain virtually unchanged during the following two decades.

As far as planning practice was concerned developments were also swift. Between 1946 and 1950 no less than 14 New Towns were designated throughout Britain, the majority of them around the London area, in line with the Abercrombie's Greater London Plan of 1944. This plan, in an attempt to end the sprawl of London, suggested the 'containment' of the growth of the built-up area, and the 'overspill' of the excess population into planned New Towns or expanded country towns beyond the existing Green Belt. This approach to the problem of urban growth and congestion was to become the 'best prescription' for planning policy during the following two decades.

In order to redress the pattern of regional disparities the Labour government introduced a system of financial incentives for manufacturing firms wishing to move, or set up, in designated Development Areas and made the creation, expansion, or relocation of manufacturing plants in non-assisted areas dependent on securing an Industrial Development Certificate (I.D.C.) from central government.

The West Midlands was not incentives to these developments. As early as 1941, the Bournville Village Trust published a report arguing that Birmingham was already too big and suggesting the enforcement of a rigid 'green belt' around the

city boundaries, with one or more overspill towns beyond the green belt to absorb surplus population (Bournville Village Trust, 1941). These proposals were in tune with some of the debates taking place in the Birmingham City Council.

As early as 1942 the Council had appointed four advisory planning panels, involving outside technical experts and representatives of local pressure groups to advise on the city's post-war housing and slum clearance programmes. One of these panels was given the primary task of examining the optimum size of the city and its reports suggested that it would be appropriate to restrict the city's growth.<sup>2</sup> The major priority, however, was seen as slum clearance and this was reflected in the Council's use of the prerogatives of the 1944 Town and Country Planning Act (Blitz and Blight Act), in order to obtain the wholesale acquisition of about 1,000 acres of slum property for future redevelopment.<sup>3</sup> The same emphasis on urban redevelopment was also the cornerstone of the Conurbation planning survey published in 1948 by the West Midland Group on Post-War Reconstruction and Planning (W.M.G.) (West Midland Group, 1948).

The origins of this group can be traced back to the 1940 Council to Promote the Planning of Social Environment formed with the aim of promoting research by local groups based on the principles set out by the nine unanimous conclusions of the Barlow Report (Great Britain, 1940). The Birmingham Research Committee was created within the Council early in 1941 but the West Midland Group developed independently after a visit to Birmingham of Sir Montague Barlow. The Group was from the start research oriented and a month after its first formal meeting (7th. January 1941) a memorandum was circulated among its members listing areas for future research. These covered a wide range of issues (land, its use and tenure; population, its growth and tendencies; regional communications; social services; recreational facilities, etc...) but, as a whole, they were oriented to serve

the main purpose of the group that was to

... research into the relevant facts necessary for forming conclusions on the possible reconstruction and planning that the post-war situation will permit.

(C.U.R.S., 1969, p. 5)

Financial support for the Group was provided by the Bournville Village Trust and from the start various members of the Cadbury family actively contributed to the Group's activities, thus continuing the involvement of the family in planning experiments; a tradition established by George Cadbury in 1890 with the construction of Bourneville Village.<sup>4</sup> Other influential members of the twenty strong Group's membership were Birmingham's City Engineer (later Sir) Herbert Manzoni and Professor Sargent Florence, Dean of the Faculty of Commerce at Birmingham University whose studies on industrial linkages were to profoundly influence much of the research into the region's economic structure in the following two decades (Florence, 1948). The Group had published, in 1946, a detailed land-use survey of the conurbation, and Conurbation represented a logical extension of the previous report.

In addition to the considerable amount of planning thinking developed by local groups the Ministry of Town and Country Planning disclosed, also in 1948, its planning proposals for the West Midlands (M.T.C.P., 1948). The Plan had been prepared by a team headed by Professor Patrick Abercrombie and Mr. Herbert Jackson, and a press release of the Ministry stated that it was

... comparable in scope and importance to the Abercrombie Plan for Greater London.

The analysis and proposals contained in these two later documents framed much of the arguments and planning disputes in the region in the years to follow. A joint consideration of these two documents provides, therefore, a convenient way of introducing these issues. However, before moving in that direction, it is useful to briefly summarize the planning problems in the region's core as they were perceived at the time.

## I. 2. THE PERCEPTION OF PLANNING PROBLEMS

During the nineteenth century the population of the Birmingham-Black Country conurbation increased at a rapid rate. In Birmingham alone, the population jumped from 71,000 in 1807 to 401,000 in 1881. This demographic explosion was matched by a similar rate of industrial expansion. The main reason for this expansion was the rapid growth in the demand for metal goods which the Conurbation provided in increasing quantities and variety (Wise and Thorpe, 1950). The influx of working-class population brought about by this industrial expansion resulted in the hasty construction of cheap housing. Most of the houses built during this period were of the back-to-back type, with privies shared by several families and water obtainable only from communal standpipes. Between 1780 and 1876, when the City Council banned its construction, some 50,000 houses of this type were built in Birmingham.<sup>5</sup> In addition to the poor standards of these houses, there was also a problem of overcrowding as house building did not keep pace with population growth. After 1869, but specially after the reform of the building by-laws in 1876, this housing design was substituted in the new residential estates by terraced houses of the two-storey tunnel-back type, with three bedrooms and private facilities. Though of a better standard, these estates suffered chronic problems of overcrowding due to overall housing shortages.

The inter-war period corresponded to a reversal of the previous trends. On the one hand, the rate of population growth slowed down due to outmigration from the Conurbation (Table I). On the other hand, housebuilding programmes were stepped up, mainly under the form of residential estates of semidetached houses with large gardens and very low (12 houses to the acre) densities (Table II). During this period a substantial proportion of the back-to-back houses were knocked down. However, at the end of the war, there was still some 30,000 back-to-back houses in Birmingham alone.<sup>6</sup>

During the war the situation deteriorated again, due to population increases which were not accommodated by house building, and loss of housing

Conurbation	Population changes 1911 - 1939 average per annum			
	1911 - 21	1921 - 31	1931 - 34	1934 - 39
Total Increase	13,972	12,831	6,511	21,622
Natural Increase	18,742	15,129	9,744	11,670
Net Migration	- 4,711	- 2,298	+ 3,233	+ 9,952

Table I : Population Changes in the Conurbation 1911 - 1939

Source: W.M.G. (1948)

Area	Older and Post-1918 Houses in 1945		
	Older Houses	Post-1918 Houses	Total
Conurbation	333,600	254,100	587,700
Birmingham	184,000	113,600	297,600

Table II: Older and Post-1918 Houses in the Conurbation and Birmingham

Source: W.M.G. (1948)

caused by war damage and natural deterioration. The first post-war estimate made by the West Midland Group, of immediate housing needs in the conurbation suggested a figure of 128,000 houses. On top of this the Group argued that there was a need for an additional 95,000 housing programme to be initiated immediately after the slum clearance had been completed.<sup>7</sup>

The housing need was, however, very unevenly distributed within the conurbation with some two thirds of the problem concentrated in Birmingham. As the redevelopment of slum areas, at densities considered acceptable at the time would only allow for the in situ rehousing of some forty per cent of the

families involved, the problem was, in land-use terms, one of severe land constraints in the core of the conurbation.<sup>8</sup>

Birmingham's difficulties in solving its housing problems within its own administrative boundaries was not a new problem. Indeed the problem had been in existence since the late 1920's and had already served as the major justification for the City Council's approval, in 1938, of a five year clearance programme involving the construction in the central areas of some 7,500 flats. This figure represented more than forty per cent of the clearance programme and was a fundamental shift away from the corporation's traditional policy of building semi-detached housing at low densities.<sup>9</sup> After the war, the shortage of housing land became of paramount importance. However, the City Council moved away from the traditional solution of pressing for boundary extensions to cope with land shortage. This was reflected, for instance, in the Council's decision not to apply to the Local Government Boundary Commission for an extension of the boundaries in 1946.<sup>10</sup> It should be emphasised, however, that prior to 1946 there had been no major conflicts between Birmingham and the neighbouring local authorities concerning boundary extensions.

Aside from this shortage of housing land, the region's core was relatively free from any other substantial planning problems. Its economic structure was seen as being sufficiently prosperous and diversified as not to present particular problems in the years ahead.<sup>11</sup> Unlike London, for example, the conurbation was not facing problems of commuting on any major scale.<sup>12</sup> Finally in terms of the problems urban sprawl and encroachment on good agricultural land, or access to leisure areas, the problems were also relatively minor, either because expansion was taking place in land of indifferent agricultural quality, or because leisure areas such as the Clent and Lickey Hills were already in the own of the National Trust, or in covenant with it.<sup>13</sup>

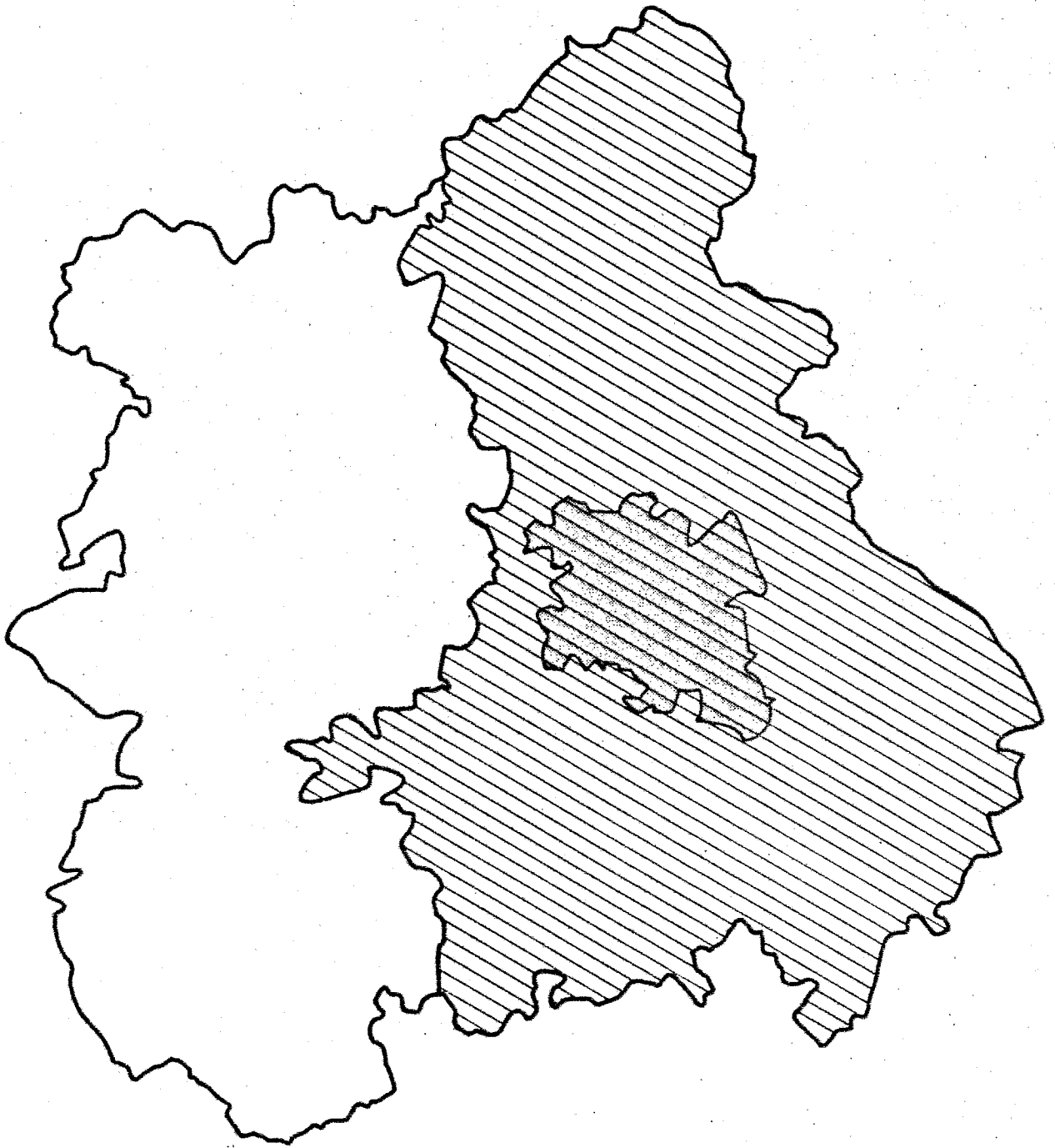
Given this perspective on the region's problems, which was largely shared by both the West Midland Group and the Abercrombie's team, the emphasis of the two documents was placed on the problems of a small number of areas within the conurbation where pressures on space were considered to be too great. In practical terms this meant the formulation of physical planning strategies which sought to relieve those pressures and prevent their recurrence.

### I. 3. CONURBATION VERSUS CONTAINMENT AND OVERSPILL

In spite of a common perspective on the region's planning problems there were fundamental differences in both the form and content of the two documents. The most obvious distinction concerns the area of coverage. As its title suggested, the West Midland Group study was only concerned with the Birmingham-Black Country conurbation; that is to say the area of continuous urban development embracing Birmingham and the Black Country, which in 1948 encompassed some 24 local authorities in the counties of Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire ( Map. I). The spatial contours of the West Midlands Plan were much wider as they were defined by the external boundaries of the three above mentioned counties, though for policy purposes, the North Staffordshire area was considered separately. The difference in the area covered by the two documents was, however, of minor practical consequence as both documents concentrated very much on the major planning problems - urban congestion in certain areas within the conurbation.<sup>14</sup>

Of more practical importance is the fact that the two documents were prepared with quite different objectives in mind. Conurbation is one of the few examples of a strategic planning document produced outside the state apparatus, by a pressure group organised on a regional basis. As such it had no





Conurbation



West Midlands Plan

MAP 1: Areas Covered by Conurbation and the West Midlands Plan

direct connections with the statutory planning system which was being developed at the time. Undoubtedly because of this background the Group defined its document not as a plan but rather as an

... assembly of facts and figures collected on the spot, and the examination of those bases on which the good life may be securely founded in the Conurbation area.

(W.M.G., 1948, p. 15)

The fact that the document was prepared outside the planning system made it possible for the Group to concentrate on the essentials of a suitable planning strategy for the area and forget about the details. Ironically, this stress on the essentials contributed to the transformation of Conurbation into a strategic planning document whilst, simultaneously, it enhanced the appeal of its imaginative and well argued proposals.

The option to deal only with the broad guidelines of a strategic planning proposal was not open to the Abercrombie and Jackson's team. In fact the West Midlands Plan had been commissioned by the Ministry of Town and Country Planning in order to provide a detailed regional framework for the development plans resulting from the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947.<sup>15</sup> As such it was rooted in the methodology of the Master Plan as a general framework, and detailed source of information, upon which the local authorities could build up their forthcoming development plans.

But the style of the West Midlands Plan was as much a product of the circumstances as it was a result of its authors' choice. Indeed the team not only seemed to accept the Master Plan methodology, but also made a strong defence of its underlying philosophy of control:

... As a result of much research during recent years, we now know with greater accuracy than hitherto the spaces necessary for urban population. This knowledge is the town planner's basic stock-in-trade. He is now able to say to the economists, 'The exploitation of this or that resource will entail so much urban expansion here and that much congestion there, the former absorbing this much agricultural land, the latter costing so much in terms of urban butchery to relieve ', and to the agri-

culturalists, 'Deny me this land for urban expansion and the cost will be that much in uneconomical building elsewhere', and so on.

(M.T.C.P., 1948, Vol. I, Foreword)

It would be erroneous, however, to attribute the major substantive differences between the two documents to their differing relationships with the statutory planning system. Although these made possible the different levels of detailing adopted in the two documents, the explanation for the major substantive differences between the two documents needs to be looked for elsewhere.

Given the consensus concerning the nature and underlying causes of the region's planning problems it is not surprising that both documents called for an immediate halt to migration into the region's core. This suggestion had already been put forward in the Barlow Report as an element of the planning attempt to simultaneously reverse the problems of urban congestion and sprawl in the South-East and West Midlands and the declining fate of many northern local economies (Great Britain, 1940).

The two documents differend markedly, however, in their planning proposals to accommodate the remaining population. These differences are better understood by referring to the divergences in the demographic assumptions and forecasts of the two documents.

The West Midland Group started by considering the Registrar-General's forecast of the total future population of Great Britain contained in the Barlow Report. This indicated an increase in the population of Great Britain from 46.6 million in 1941 to 47.5 million in 1951, and for the period afterwards, an actual decline to 47.2 million in 1961 and 45.0 million in 1971.<sup>17</sup> In the West Midlands, the Group expected natural increase to be higher than the Great Britain average and inward migration to continue despite the government commitment to maintain population in the backward areas. Unless appropriate action was taken they estimated that an increase of the population of the conurbation of some

300,000 people would take place by 1970. If some measure of control over immigration was exercised they concluded that it would be necessary to wait some years after their introduction before stopping the flow of migration into the conurbation. This would restrict demographic changes to the natural balance of births and deaths which in the long term, according to the above forecasts, would lead to an absolute decrease of the population. They rejected, however, any action which sought to create a net outmigration from the conurbation.<sup>18</sup>

This attitude of the West Midland Group was explained by their analysis of the existing demographic patterns within the Conurbation. Though they accepted that there was urban congestion in certain areas they firmly rejected the image of the conurbation as a continuously built-up area. The overall density of population within the conurbation did not exceed 12.1 persons per acre and they concluded:

... superficial observation might lead to the conclusion that the Birmingham and Black Country area is densely built up. The map reveals that 'undeveloped' land, open spaces and derelict land represent 56.0 per cent of the total.

(W.M.G., 1948, p. 25)

Given this perspective the Group argued that what was required was an energetic policy of urban redevelopment and control within the conurbation involving reclamation of waste land, preservation of the unspoiled places and restoration of misused land. It was argued that by means of a spatial redistribution of population within the already built-up area, it would be possible to allow two-fifths of the conurbation area to remain as open space.<sup>19</sup>

Even if the more unfavourable population forecast prevailed and keeping overall densities of 20 persons per acre, this would amount to a 20 per cent increase of the built-up area by 1970 still leaving 30 per cent of the conurbation as open space. In these circumstances, the Group could forcefully conclude:

Whatever problems of planning the Conurbation presents, therefore, can find their solution within the limits of its present area.

(W.M.G., 1948, p. 186)

The West Midlands Plan concurred with the West Midland Group 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 rejected the West Midland Group's proposals for treatment of vacant and derelict land in the Black Country on the grounds that they

... prefer rather to emphasise the complementary need for a fuller cross-section of all classes of people to appreciate and help pay for such amenities.

(M.T.C.P., 1948, Foreward)

This statement, which is never fully explained in the body of the Plan, was probably nothing but a deliberately vague justification for the preferred strategy. In fact the redistributive social effects of reclamation programmes would certainly be larger than those of the preferred containment-overspill strategy. But this is to prejudge the discussion.

A second reason why the Plan did not press for a redevelopment strategy was that the population forecasts of the West Midlands Plan were more substantial than those of Conurbation. The Abercrombie team had access to the 1947-based overall population forecasts of the Registrar General. These forecasts indicated that in 1947 the population in the conurbation was already 100,000 above the 1939 level. Further it estimated a higher rate of natural growth leading to an additional increase of some 200,000 people by 1962. On top of this the Plan considered that even if central government policies were implemented in order to stop further migration from the development areas these would not immediately stop the flow of migrants. Accordingly they assumed a net inflow of population into the conurbation of some 50,000 people until 1962. This, in fact, was already a conservative estimate as it merely matched the net gains by migration of the conurbation during the 1936 - 1939 period. When all the elements were added together the team forecasted a population increase of some

350,000 in the period between 1939 and 1962, in comparison with a West Midland Group estimate of 300,000 for the period up to 1970. Though, the fundamental difference between the two documents in this particular respect was not so much one of population forecasts but rather of the approach which was proposed to cope with them.

The West Midland Group argued that special measures should be introduced to stop the inflow of population into the conurbation. This attitude was consistent with the Group's strategic proposals of redevelopment of the region's core. On the contrary, the Abercrombie team's attitude was self-defeating and contradictory. On the one hand, they recognised that due to a number of, what they called unknown factors of the equation - economic conditions, export drive, policy of full employment - migratory flows might continue to occur and though inconvenient they would have to be dealt with. On the other hand, the team put forward a strategic policy which relied not only on halting inward migratory flows but further on a complete reversal of their direction.<sup>20</sup> This basic contradiction pervades the whole Plan and, together with other factors, seriously damaged its feasibility. This is easily clarified through a brief summary of the methodology used in the formulation of the policy and its actual outcome.

The team started by an investigation of the conurbation's capacity to absorb the forecast increases in population. This was undertaken using the principles of neighbourhood design and the residential neighbourhood density standards recommended in the Housing Manual of 1944. The application of this methodology involved three phases.<sup>21</sup> Firstly, the land occupied for non-neighbourhood purpose such as: golf courses, hospitals, cemeteries, reservoirs, aerodromes, water and sewage works, universities, etc., was deducted from the whole area. Secondly, the areas occupied by old housing of good quality, or post-1918 dwellings were treated as static which means that no substantial redevelopment would take place there for a considerable time. Thus their population, roughly esti-

mated by means of a sample, would also remain static. Finally, the potential population capacity of the remaining areas left for development or redevelopment was measured in the light of a series of recommended density standards related to the existing densities in, or nearby, the area under review. These varied from an overall neighbourhood density of 60 persons per acre to be used in the high density central areas of the conurbation to an open development density of 20.5 persons per acre.

The use of this methodology, and accompanying standards, led to the conclusion that unless some of the population already in the conurbation could be induced to move away, the result would be an excess of some 260,000 people in the conurbation in relation to its potential population capacity. Having attained these results from the analysis the Plan then went on to explain the rationale of their strategic proposals.

The capacity of the conurbation has been calculated in relation to a given spread. The number of people that can be accommodated within certain limits are now displayed with a reasonable measure of accuracy. Beyond this amount it is a question of either development well away from the conurbation, peripheral spread about the existing built up areas or higher densities within them. We adduce powerful arguments against the two latter and urge the former.

(M.T.C.P., 1948, Vol I, Foreward)

They argued against higher densities on the grounds that it would be both expensive (as it would involve high-rise blocks of flats) and detrimental to the standards of living of the population.<sup>22</sup> With regard to peripheral development it was argued that this would entail additional transportation problems and further isolate city dwellers from the open countryside.<sup>23</sup>

The rationale of the strategy was presented in a very clear-cut fashion. The actual proposals were much less so. In fact, they ascribed to areas peripheral to the conurbation, more than half of the population to be moved away from it (see Table III). The rationale of population overspill away from the region's

	West Midlands Plan				Minister's Memorandum		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(2')	(3')	
1947 Population (000)	Expected Population (000)	Target Population (000)	Proposed Overspill (-) or Intake (+) (000)	Expected Population (000)	Target Population (000)	Proposed Overspill (-) or Intake (+) (000)	
Conurbation	2173.3	2428.1	2176.0	-262.1	2380.5	2209.0	-171.5
Rest Central Area	244.4	274.4	390.0	+115.6	270.6	339.0	+ 68.4
Warwickshire Coalfield and Industrial Area	371.3	443.4	463.0	+ 19.6	415.3	463.0	+ 47.7
Mid Staffordshire	131.0	140.6	166.0	+ 25.4	140.1	158.0	+ 11.9
Warwickshire Rural	202.8	220.2	277.0	+ 56.8	219.2	272.0	+ 52.8
Worcestershire	261.4	278.6	313.0	+ 34.3	274.3	293.0	+ 18.7
Total	3384.2	3785.4	3785.0	- 0.4	3700.0	3734.0	+ 54.0

Table III: Proposed Redistribution of Civilian Population within the West Midlands Plan Area 1947 - 1962

Sources: M.T.C.P. (1948) and M.T.C.P. (1950)



core was then betrayed by the detailed planning proposals. To a large extent, the Plan preached one thing and recommended the other. To deal with the remaining overspill population the Plan did not suggest unlike the Greater London Plan, 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. The creation of the Green Belt was seen, however, as a temporary measure until a more positive policy could be designed and put into practice to halt the process of urban sprawl. The underlying long-term idea was, undoubtedly, that this could be achieved through a selective distribution of building licences and housing allocations by the various local authorities.<sup>24</sup>

In spite of having been prepared before the Abercrombie-Jackson Plan, the West Midland Group study appears to be a direct response to the containment-overspill strategy suggested therein. The basic contention of Conurbation in this respect was that the translation of the Green Belt philosophy into a complex of new urban developments separated from the congested urban areas by a green belt was both inadequate and unnecessary. This view was maintained on the grounds that the conurbation did not have one single centre but rather two focal points for development - Birmingham and Wolverhampton - situated opposite each other and on the edge of the conurbation. Furthermore, it was argued that more than half of the area of the conurbation was still unused. The appropriate planning solution, the Group argued, should be focussed on the redevelopment of the existing built-up areas rather than promoting green field development.

Given this perspective, and to the green belt idea of a continuous band of countryside encircling the urban area and its zone of probable expansion, they opposed the concept of development in a green setting. This would, hopefully, lead to a pattern of nucleated development in a rural framework. Or as the Group phrased it, the constitution of an

... archipelago of urban settlements isolated from its neighbours and set in green, open land, from which all development other than for agriculture or amenity is rigidly excluded.

(W.M.G., 1948, p. 200)

This solution, based on the preservation of those green wedges existing within and on the marginal land of the conurbation, would involve:

- 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 or urban development by the introduction of open spaces.

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

Hall (1973) has argued that this type of approach clearly expressed a rejection of the principle of urban containment. However, as Saunders (1977) has suggested, it reflected rather an imaginative adaptation of the overall principle to the conditions of the West Midlands whose specificity was overlooked in the government sponsored strategy. It may be argued, however, that the Conurbation strategy, due to its emphasis on reclamation and redevelopment of derelict and misused land, was financially unattractive to both public, and private, developers and this appeared to offer, in practical terms, a less clear-cut solution to the Conurbation's pressing housing problems. The Conurbation proposals, which reflected the feeling of the Birmingham City Council at the time, were both an attempt at imaginative and flexible planning, and a rejection of any restrictions on the growth of the conurbation imposed by central government against the will of the local community.<sup>25</sup>

I. 4. CONURBATION VERSUS WEST MIDLANDS PLAN - INDUSTRIAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES

This rejection, by the local community, of external controls being imposed on the conurbation's development prospects can be further explored through a discussion of the industrial proposals contained in the two documents and of the local reactions to the organisational framework suggested to implement the West Midlands Plan.

A significant but largely unnoticed disagreement between the two documents developed around the issue of the conurbation's industrial future and of the best way to manage it. The West Midland Group argued for the spatial dedistribution of industry within the conurbation along the major roadlines, and for the redevelopment and rejuvenation of existing industry through the introduction of new branches of production within already existing industrial sectors. However, 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). Further, they objected to the expansion, or establishment in the region, of industries shown to be less closely linked with the existing industries in the Conurbation. Finally, they reacted against the potential negative economic effects of the enforced relocation of industry away from the conurbation.<sup>26</sup>

Such views were supported by research being carried out at Birmingham University under Professor Sargent Florence. This research suggested that the efficiency of the industry within the conurbation resulted from the interdependence among existing firms, and from the existence of a pool of skilled labour and technicians in a number of trades (Florence, 1948). This picture of the conurbation's economy as constituted by a large number of small, specialised and highly interlinked firms undoubtedly served to provide an authoritative

background to the West Midland Group proposals. But it is also difficult not to interpret the Group proposals, as an attempt to protect the existing industrial status quo in the area against the threat of social and economic disruption by external forces, either in the form of large firms or state intervention. It is useful to elaborate on this point.

The Group's objections to the establishment in the conurbation of new large self-contained firms can be interpreted as deriving from three factors. Firstly, and at a basic level, it was a matter of being consistent with its own recommendations that a halt should be called to immigration into the region's core. Secondly, it represented an attempt to overcome the related problems of labour shortage and high wages which prevailed in the conurbation. In fact, immediately after the war, the conurbation experienced a combination of lower than average unemployment rates with higher than average activity rates. This in turn gave rise to high wage demands. Given this context the introduction of large firms in new sectors, probably with productivity levels beyond the capacity of existing firms, was obviously a threat to the local captains of industry. Not only because it would put further strain on an already tight labour market, but also because it would create conditions for the development of more aggressive trade unionism. This latter problem was particularly unwelcome in an area where high wages and paternalist management had historically resulted in a stable climate of industrial relations.<sup>27</sup>

Finally, the Group's arguments against the enforced relocation of industry away from the conurbation amounted to a protectionist plea on behalf of the local business community. In line with previous criticisms of the Distribution of Industry Act, local industrialists were clearly contesting the Industrial Development Certificate controls introduced by the Town and Country Planning Act 1947. It was argued that these controls amounted to intolerable restrictions on

the freedom of industrialists to expand where they wished and that they would delay area redevelopment and the replacement of obsolete factories. The Honorary Secretary of the Group and Vice-Chairman of the Cadbury firm - Paul Cadbury - had been one of the outspoken critics of the Distribution of Industry Bill and so it is not too bold a proposition to suggest a link between the Group's proposals in this field and the views of the local business community concerning the central government measures controlling industrial location.

For obvious reasons the West Midlands Plan could not lend its support to the industrial proposals of the West Midland Group report. The Plan argued that the Group proposals were unacceptable on the grounds that the international trading position of the United Kingdom was rapidly deteriorating and that any expansion would result in pressure for growth in the West Midlands. It was in the interests of the country as a whole that such growth should be accommodated.

The person responsible for this particular section of the Plan who, curiously, had also conducted the Industrial survey for Conurbation claimed that the recent developments in the national economic position required a different approach to the planning of the region's industrial future. It was pointed out that the economic situation was becoming serious and he ended his proposals with a sharp statement:

For if anything is done to handicap the efficiency of British Industry during the next two or three decades there will assuredly be no town and country planning at all.

(M.T.C.P., Vol III, final paragraph)

However, once more the Plan's specific proposals did not match up with the clarity of the analysis. The Plan merely proposed the decentralisation of industry along the lines which had spontaneously developed in the past (for example, the movement of the Cadbury's plant to Bourneville) and asked for a relaxation of the development controls concerning the separation of residential and industrial space.

The extent to which these industrial proposals coincided with the settlement strategy previously described is clearly open to question. On the one hand, the success of the strategy of overspill of population to urban developments well away from the conurbation depended on the promotion of an adequate rate of industrial overspill. On the other hand, the Plan rejected the notion that controls should be brought to bear on the location of new large firms within the conurbation. This conflict pervaded, and negatively influenced the efforts which were made to implement the Plan during the following two decades.

However, this was not the only issue in which the West Midlands Plan appeared to be internally contradictory. One of the most interesting chapters of the Plan examined the problems associated with the movement of the wealthier section of the population to the fringes of the conurbation. The Plan concluded that this movement reflected a number of problems associated with the conurbation's core, namely the poor quality of the housing stock, the lack of social facilities and the unattractive industrial landscape therein. Further, it argued that the net result of this movement would be a diminution of the income basis of local authorities in the inner parts of the conurbation and the development of a downwards spiral leading to further deterioration of social and environmental conditions. The Plan presented a clear view of the potential outcome of these trends, and recommended, as a matter of great urgency, the development of residential areas, for those in the higher and medium incomes, in the core of the conurbation.<sup>28</sup> It was felt that this strategy, if undertaken when there was a reasonable chance of success, would be a key element in reversing the spiral of decline. However, the decision not to press for an extensive programme of reclamation of derelict and misused land in the conurbation clearly weakened the possibilities of the Plan reversing the process of social and economic spatial polarization within the region. Also in this respect Conurbation seemed better equipped to deal with the problems exposed by the analysis.

## I. 5. PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS AND CENTRAL GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

The West Midlands Plan did not suggest the creation of any New Towns in order to implement the recommended overspill strategy. Given this fact the implementation of the strategy was dependent on the goodwill and coordinated efforts of a large number of local authorities or, alternatively, on the creation of a single conurbation planning authority to deal with the problem of overspill.

Although calling for the establishment of an organisation to achieve adequate exchange of information, and consultation, between the planning authorities at all stages of implementation of the strategy, it was made clear that only the creation of a single planning authority covering the whole of the conurbation would create adequate institutional conditions for the implementation of the strategy.<sup>28</sup>

The first proposal did not raise any problems. Since 1923 there had been a local authorities' consultative body in existence to deal with planning issues in the region's core. This organisation, the Midlands Joint Town Planning Advisory Council, had been reconstituted in 1945 as the Warwickshire, Worcestershire and South Staffordshire Advisory Planning Council and was already fulfilling the role of the administrative organisation suggested in the Plan.

In contrast the creation of a single conurbation planning authority faced vigorous opposition. Early in 1949, and at the Minister's request, a technical committee composed of the principal planning officers of the conurbation local authorities, was set up to report on the major proposals of the West Midlands Plan. In the aftermath of that report a meeting of the conurbation local authorities, in July 1949, agreed that it was

... neither necessary nor desirable to set up a single planning authority for the area, as Abercrombie had proposed.

(Sutcliffe and Smith, 1947, p.70)

The Minister's memorandum on the West Midlands Plan published in 1950 agreed that there was no need for a single planning authority for the whole of the conurbation. This was one of the two major ministerial concessions to the conurbation local authorities meeting. The second concession was to slightly increase the population target of the conurbation by extending the size of certain urban units. Though the population targets suggested in the Minister's memorandum were very similar to those of the Abercrombie's team the revision meant an increase in the Birmingham target population from 990,000 to the psychologically important threshold of one million. These concessions seemed to largely diffuse local opposition to the proposal of the West Midlands Plan.<sup>29</sup> Further the Minister's memorandum concluded on the basis of the experience of the years 1946 - 1948 that net migration into the region had ceased to be a factor of importance in the growth of the region's population and thus it was possible to diminish the overall population targets by some 50,000.<sup>30</sup> These were the main differences from the original West Midlands Plan proposals (Table III).

In the analysis presented here a number of conflicts have been pointed out between the positions of the local community and the proposals of the West Midlands Plan. The resolution of these conflicts occurred in a number of different ways. The local authorities were successful in opposing the imposition of a single planning authority, and the population targets for most conurbation local authorities were slightly increased in line with their demands. No concessions were obtained, however, in relation to the important problems of conurbation redevelopment and industrial location controls.

#### I. 6. CONCLUSIONS

It is now possible to make some concluding comments on the two documents. They were both in their rationale and specific purposes profoundly different.



Conurbation presented in the physical planning field a set of highly flexible and imaginative proposals. Further, it constituted a coherent whole with policy proposals in the socio-economic and organisational spheres 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 community from the perceived disruptive interference of external forces either in the form of large self contained firms or central government controls. Obviously this was not acceptable to a Labour Government committed to a high level of state intervention in the management of the economy.

In contrast the West Midlands Plan was less imaginative, flexible and internally coherent but had nevertheless 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. On the other hand it recognised that the application of these prescriptions to the region had to be balanced with the important economic role the region would play in the Labour government's export led expansionist policy. This certainly explains the Plan's ambivalent attitude towards the accommodation of industrial employment, and its refusal to suggest the creation of any new towns in the region. This, in turn, contributed to the practical difficulty of speedily implementing the plan and, in the absence of this, reinforced the spatial socio-polarization in the region so well described in the Plan itself.

The two documents clearly illustrate some of the recurring themes of the decentralization debate. On the one hand the superior variety and flexibility of decentralised policy-making, but also the dangers of 'parochialism' and lack of an overall perspective. On the other hand, the more global perspectives of centralised policy-making but also the dangers of rigidity.

In the end, the West Midlands Plan was adopted with the minor alterations described and since that time has acted as a general framework for the planning of the region. It is now useful to examine its influence on the region's development.

## II THE 'IMPLEMENTATION' OF THE CONTAINMENT-OVERSPILL STRATEGY

### II. 1. INTRODUCTION

The 'implementation' of the overspill strategy suggested by the West Midlands Plan has often been analysed in terms of a moral tale with the characteristic dichotomy between victims and villains (Ash, 1969). Depending on the version the role of villain is played by Birmingham (Ash, 1969; Stranz, 1972), middle-class 'ruralist' interests in the shire counties (Hall et al, 1973), the shire counties themselves (Central Housing Advisory Committee, 1967), central government (Borg, 1961), etc..

The fact that probably all the different versions contain some element of truth indicates the complexity of the problems involved in the process. But it also points out the need to analyse the existing evidence in a more dispassionate manner. This task is facilitated by the publication of key and previously unavailable information which has thrown much light on the events (Cullingworth, 1979; Sutcliffe and Smith, 1974). This new evidence indicates, as Smith (1972) suggested, how a policy never openly disputed over a period of twenty years can still be marred in its implementation by a variety of conflicts and deficiencies in public planning and administration.

### II. 2. THE ASSUMPTIONS AND CHANGING CONTEXT OF REGIONAL PLANNING IN THE 1950's

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 (M.T.C.P., 1949). 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.<sup>32</sup>

The planning strategy for the West Midlands was based on three important assumptions (Cullingworth, 1968). Firstly, that firms could, and would, move from the Conurbation to new and expanding urban settlements with benefit for themselves, their workers, the conurbation and the newly developing areas. Secondly that the scale of this potential movement would be commensurate in timing quantity and direction with the population movement which would take place as a result of planned public and private house-building programmes. Last but not least, that the planning machinery would be capable of enforcing this strategy. In practical terms the machinery to implement the strategy was devised as a push-pull mechanism. On the push-side, the restriction of growth opportunities, both for housing and employment, within the conurbation. On the pull-side, the provision of these opportunities elsewhere in the region in attractive (type, costs, location, etc.) planned overspill locations. Before analysing the performance of these mechanisms it is important to point out some of the elements which significantly influenced the development of events.

As Hall et al (1973) showed, the planning legislation, and practice, during and immediately after the Second World War were based on a number of broad assumptions. These included the ideas that population would be fairly static (both in spatial and growth terms) and that land-use development would, mainly, take place either in New Towns or under other forms of public sector initiatives. The role of the private sector was expected to be minimal and strictly regulated,

and controlled, by the state, through a system of building licences, planning permissions, industrial development certificates, etc.. A clear illustration of this assumption is provided by the speech made by the Labour Minister with responsibilities for housing when introducing the Housing Act 1946. In this speech Aneurin Bevan referred to the target of building five public housing units for each one constructed by the private sector.<sup>33</sup> In the event developments took a different course.

To begin with, in 1947 the Labour government had to face a balance of payments crisis which led it to impose a wage-freeze in 1948 accompanied by cut-backs in public expenditure and, eventually, to the devaluation of sterling in 1949 (Glynn and Harrison, 1980). The growth of exports became the government's first priority and, in this context, development controls were enforced less forcefully. Further, the cutbacks in public expenditure meant that, in practice, the state could no longer aim to be the main force behind land-use developments, unless it severely endangered the pace of reconstruction. It was against this backcloth of financial difficulties that a ceiling of 200,000 public sector housebuilding was imposed in 1949 and that the financial provisions of the New Towns Act 1946 started to be questioned in Whitehall.<sup>34</sup>

While the previous developments could be seen as temporary adjustments, in the face of difficulties, the election of a Conservative government in October 1951 was to herald a major change in direction. The Conservative Party came to power under the slogan 'Set The People Free' and under an election manifesto which committed the prospective government to dismantle most of the planning machinery created by its predecessor. This included an explicit commitment to 'drastically change' the Town and Country Planning system (Conservative Party, 1951). The consequences of this commitment were manifold, as far as the planning system was concerned.

Firstly, the Government decided in 1951 to substitute the Ministry for Housing and Local Government for the Ministry of Local Government and Planning in a move

... designed to emphasise the new administrator's interest in housing and reflecting a disillusionment with Planning.  
(Cullingworth, 1971, p. 16)

Secondly, it decided not to designate further New Towns. Instead, it suggested that

Large cities wishing to provide for their surplus population shall do so by orderly and friendly arrangements with neighbouring authorities ... all these arrangements should be reached by friendly negotiation and not imposed by arbitrary power.<sup>35</sup>

The legislative backing for this suggestion was provided by the passing of the Town Development Act 1952 which allowed neighbouring local authorities to establish between themselves agreements for the creation of Town Development Schemes ( T.D.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 financial participation in their implementation. Further to this, the government strongly encouraged private sector housebuilding for owner-occupation leading to a dramatic shift in the ratio of public/private sector house building from 85/15 in 1950 to 64/36 in 1955 and 44/56 in 1960. Thirdly, two successive Acts in 1953 and 1954 repealed most of the financial provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1947 concerning compensation and betterment and reintroduced the inter-war system under which local authorities had to compensate private developers for refusal of planning permission. Fourthly, the successive Conservative governments throughout the 1950's, aided by the prevalent context of almost full employment, adopted a laissez-faire approach to locational policies making little use of financial incentives, relaxing the system of I.D.C.'s and abolishing in 1954 the building licences. Fifthly, the government progressively dismantled

the network of regional offices of central government departments in the regions, for example, withdrawing the regional offices of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government in 1956. Finally, and of particular importance to regional planning, no regional (or sub-regional) plans or studies were prepared throughout the 1950's with the involvement of central government.

These developments were to undermine the key post-war assumptions of public sector direction and control of land-use developments. But, to further complicate the situation, the sequence of events was no more favourable in relation to the other assumptions (Hall, 1975). Contrary to the assumption of a slow rate of growth of population, a 'baby boom' immediately after the end of hostilities, (repeated in the period 1955 - 1964) led to higher than expected increases in population. Further, the average size of households diminished below all expectations with a rapid increase in the number of smaller households (young couples, third age households, etc.). Finally, due to the continuation of inter-regional migration and the dramatic increase in inter-regional commuting associated with the expansion of car ownership (2,258,000 in 1950 to 5,525,000 in 1960) the levels of population mobility proved to be much higher than expected. Thus during the 1950's all the major assumptions upon which regional planning in general, and the West Midlands Plan in particular, were undermined. This course of events, of course, did not augur well for the future of the regional planning process in the West Midlands as this was carried out on the basis of a Plan completed in 1948.

In addition to these overall developments the particular context of the West Midlands was also not very favourable. Firstly, and as far as the Birmingham City Council was concerned, the Conurbation study with its emphasis on urban redevelopment appeared much closer to its priorities than the overspill strategy envisaged in the West Midlands Plan. Secondly, the local authority rejection of the proposal for the creation of a single planning authority to cov-

er the whole of the Conurbation, and its subsequent withdrawal from the approved version of the Plan, clearly weakened any efforts at co-ordination. Thirdly, the representatives of local industrialists had already made it clear to central government that they would appose any measures aimed at curtailing their freedom in investment location decision matters.

### II. 3. DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AND THE WEST MIDLANDS PLAN

The preparation of the Development Plans and Town Maps under the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947 provided the local authorities with the first major opportunity to express their views on the Plan's specific containment and overspill proposals.

At this stage it is appropriate to recall that under the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947 the responsibility for the preparation of Development Plans rested with the County and County Borough Councils. Within the West Midlands, and in strategic terms, the most important documents were obviously those for the Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire Counties, and for the County Boroughs of Birmingham and Coventry.

According to the original proposals of the West Midlands Plan and the amendments to those introduced by the Ministry memorandum, Birmingham would be the origin of more than eighty per cent of the population planned to be relocated from the Conurbation during the implementation of the Plan. Though Birmingham had previously formally accepted the population target contained in the Minister's Memorandum, the Report of Survey of the City's Development Plan published in 1952 took a fresh look at the problem (Birmingham County Borough, 1952). As against a target population of Birmingham of 990,000 in the Abercrombie-Jackson plan and of 1,000,000 in the Ministry's Memorandum, the City Council approved a target of 1,081,000 as the ultimate capacity of the city.



At the same time the Council also approved a recommendation of its Public Works Committee stating that there should be no extension of the existing city boundaries.

The city's population target was calculated on the basis of its redevelopment programme which also indicated the scale of possible overspill during the following twenty years as ranging from 60,000 to 190,000 people. The lower figures was obtained taking into account only forced overspill due to demolition and redevelopment at lower densities. The higher figure included, in addition, the people included in the city's housing register and voluntary movement away from industrial areas.<sup>37</sup>

As far as the provision of industrial land was concerned the Development Plan suggested an increase of 23.8 per cent in the area of land zoned for industry. This increase was described as 'severely limited' and justified by stressing the key position of the city's industries from a national point of view, and the need to relieve industrial congestion and modernise outdated existing premises.<sup>38</sup> As a whole it is obvious that the Plan did not fit very well into the framework laid down by the West Midlands Plan.

Meanwhile, the surrounding counties were also completing their Development Plans. Their attitudes concerning the acceptance of overspill population varied considerably. Staffordshire and, to a certain extent Warwickshire - by far the largest reception area - conceded that provision had to be made for the reception of overspill population. In Warwickshire, for instance, provision was made for a net immigration of some 94,000 people in the period up to 1971. However, roughly two thirds of this provision was allocated to the areas on the fringes of Birmingham (Solihull, Sutton Coldfield, Castle Bromwich, etc.) and only one third in areas far afield from the Conurbation (Warwickshire County Council, 1952). Contrary to the other two County Plans the plan for Worcestershire, published in 1951, virtually ignored the West Midlands Plan.

It forecasted a mere 6,000 population increase up to 1971, to be achieved by small scale migration. As far as reception of overspill population from Birmingham was concerned the report stated that it could not be expected that authorities in Worcestershire would make serious preparations for the reception of overspill population, until Birmingham made a comprehensive statement of its planning problems and proposals and it was known that the Ministry of Housing and Local Government did not disagree with it (Worcestershire County Council, 1951).<sup>39</sup>

Finally, the Coventry Development Plan accepted, in principle, the case for a planned Birmingham overspill of 40,000 with accompanying industry. However, the acceptance of this overspill was subjected to the proviso that the city's own social problems (housing shortage, lack of social facilities, etc.) had to be solved prior to any arrangements being made for the accommodation of overspill population (Coventry County Borough Council, 1952).

Interestingly enough none of the County plans made specific proposals for the creation of green belts around Birmingham or Coventry, though both Warwickshire and Worcestershire left as 'white land' the areas around the two cities. So, when in 1955 the Minister of Housing - Duncan Sandys - asked the counties to submit proposals for the Green Belt boundaries they were able to reply in a matter of months. Birmingham submitted independent proposals, allowing for more peripheral expansion, in 1957 and in a revised form in 1958 (Gregory, 1977). However, none of these proposals was formally approved and the Green Belt boundaries were only fixed in the mid-70's. This left the door open for an almost continuous flow of planning disputes, concerning some of the land earmarked as green belt, in the years ahead.

Most of the Development Plans were approved in the mid and late 1950's, without substantial alterations. The Birmingham Development Plan, however, was only approved in 1960, after lengthy negotiations between the City Council and the Ministry. A good deal of the problems which were responsible for the delay arose from the Plan's proposals for the expansion

of the city's industrial land by some 23.8 per cent. In april 1955 the Minister told the representatives of the Birmingham Corporation that he considered this expansion to be too great in view of the "already serious lack of balance between industry and housing in the city".<sup>40</sup> As a response to this Ministerial position a new statement was inserted, in 1957, in the Written Statement of the Plan asserting that areas allocated for industrial use were intended mainly for existing industries in the city and as nurseries for new starters 'in the local tradition' (Borg, 1961). The Minister, however, was not satisfied by this addendum and subjected the approval of the Plan to a further amendment reducing the increase in the area allocated for industry to 18.3 per cent. This was finally accepted by the city council.

#### II. 4. HOUSING LAND SHORTAGE AND TOWN DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES CONTRIBUTION

While the Development Plans were prepared and approved, attempts to secure the planned overspill targets of the West Midlands Plan were under way. The Development Plan for Birmingham did not anticipate the need for overspill to occur before the late 1950's. However, the pace of developments was much faster. In order to allow its ambitious city centre redevelopment programme to get off the ground, Birmingham needed to built houses to which the relocated population could be moved so as to allow for the demolition of the slum housing in the centre. Unfortunately, as far as this programme was concerned, the building record of the city council in the first few years after the war was extremely poor (Table IV). This was a reflection of shortage of labour and the refusal of the Labour controlled City Council to allow for the use of non-traditional building techniques and materials (steel, concrete).

The low rate of housebuilding and the fact that a considerable amount of these houses were allocated to tenants not directly affected by redevelopment

schemes severely damaged the city centre redevelopment programme. When, in 1947, the City Council decided to allocate only one quarter of the new housing to dislocated tenants it became obvious that any substantial redevelopment would only be possible after the housing building rates expanded considerably. However, bearing in mind the poor rate of slum clearance the council decided early in 1948 to carry out improvements in slum property. The pace of slum clearance was only to substantially increase after 1952. It is now important to see why this happened.<sup>41</sup>

The housing shortage was a major issue in the Birmingham local elections of May 1949 in which the Conservatives obtained a big majority. The incoming Council majority saw the problem of a slow rate of house building as deriving from acute labour shortages. Thus it adopted the position of inviting big national firms to come to Birmingham and use non-traditional techniques to build on a large scale. However, the inter-war council policy of building semi-detached housing estates at low densities was not immediately abandoned.

From 1948 to 1951-52 the number of dwelling completions more than trebled and this, together with the continuation of the policy of build at low densities, put a lot of pressure on the existing zoned residential land. By the end of this period the Council had already been informed by its officers that at the current building rates, and densities, all building land inside the city boundaries would be used up within some five years. The acquisition of a 250 acres housing estate (Kingshurst Estates) in 1952 provided some momentary relief but it was obvious that something of a more lasting nature had to be undertaken to solve the city's housing shortage. Shifting the emphasis of council housing policy towards high-rise flat building was one of the alternatives and it was adopted (see Table IV). However, this shift in policy was not sufficient, as higher than expected rates of population increase and household formation, together with a steady decline in the average size of households increased the housing shortage beyond the most pessimistic forecasts.

Year	Houses	Flats	Total	(%)	Housing List	Demolitions	Land Acquired (acre)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(3/4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
1945	-	-	6	-	34,494	-	327
46	-	-	413	-	50,787	-	467
47	-	-	816	-	61,739	-	181
48	-	-	1400	-	67,740	160	144
49	1032	192	1227	15.9	72,631	356	129
1950	1700	316	2016	15.7	77,530	411	144
51	1339	128	3467	3.7	42,913*	267	206
52	4528	216	4744	4.6	55,260	320	473**
53	2960	1046	4006	26.1	60,659	609	309
54	1756	1249	3005	41.6	63,932	911	309
1955	1307	1703	3010	56.6	63,536	1262	95
56	796	1765	2561	68.9	67,316	1298	239***
57	681	1829	2510	72.9	70,818	996	37
58	550	1869	2411	77.2	64,878	876	11
59	432	1650	2082	79.3	58,327	1424	15
1960	327	1776	2103	84.5	50,000	1403	21
61	320	1794	2114	84.9	44,282	1906	31
62	838	1485	2323	63.9	46,574	1590	361****
63	948	1560	2508	62.2	39,188	1522	11
64	1011	1495	2506	59.7	37,966	2093	45
1965	925	3111	4036	77.1	38,828	2241	1484*****

Table IV: Birmingham: Relevant Housing Statistics 1945 - 1965

Sources: City of Birmingham: Abstracts of Statistics (various)

- \* New Housing Register
- \*\* Of which 250 acres were in the Kingshurst Estate
- \*\*\* Mostly ceded by the Calthorpe Estate
- \*\*\*\* The great majority of which constituted by the Castle Bromwich
- \*\*\*\*\* Almost all of which were in Water Orton (Chelmsley Wood)

Given this background, the passing of the Town Development Act of 1952 seemed to open up the opportunity of a lasting solution to the city's housing problems. The Act provided for agreements to be made between County Boroughs - as exporting authorities - and County Councils and County Districts - as receiving authorities - for the planned overspill of population from the area of one local authority to the other. Though depending on approval by the Minister of Housing and Local Government, the Town Development Schemes, as these planned overspill arrangements were named, were initially a matter for negotiation between the exporting authorities and the county councils as planning authorities. However, as the counties were not housing authorities the implementation of a Town Development Scheme always resulted in a division of responsibilities between the expanding town, the county council to which this belonged and the exporting authority, concerning housing, planning, road provision, education, etc.. The Act also empowered the Ministry to make discretionary grants towards the expenditure of the receiving authorities in respect of the annual rate fund contribution; acquisition of land for development; site preparation; provision, extension or improvement of main water supplies, and sewerage services in respect of work required by the town development. A further housing subsidy was payable by the exporting local authority in return for the right to nominate tenants.

The Town Development Bill was presented to Parliament with two main objectives. One, clearly visible in the Minister's speech (see above) was to provide an alternative to the perceived centralist and collectivist bias of New Town legislation. The second, and less explicit objective was to find an alternative to the short term financial burden on the Exchequer created by the New Town's solution to overspill problems.<sup>42</sup> Given this latter objective, and in sharp contrast with the financial provisions of the New Towns legislation, the Exchequer's financial help for Town Development Schemes was intended only to

be sufficient to get the schemes off the ground. This disparity in the financial provisions of the two Acts was to prove a major cause of conflicts in the years to follow.

The Town Development Act was generally welcomed by the county borough authorities. Wolverhampton, for instance, rapidly concluded a pilot agreement with Staffordshire, and Birmingham immediately contacted the three surrounding counties in order to negotiate a number of Town Development Schemes. As a matter of fact, and despite the contribution they had to make to the receiving authorities, the Act provided a relatively cheap solution to the problems of the exporting housing authority. Not surprisingly the view that the potential receiving authorities had of the financial provisions was less favourable. As Borg (1961) noted, in the negotiations potential receiving areas generally agreed that the overspilling authority had a problem but their position was that as the problem was a consequence of a relatively high level of prosperity they should bear most of the costs. Exporting authorities, on the other hand, recognised that small authorities could not support the burden imposed by the financial implications of Town Development Schemes. But they argued that the problem, and the policy devised to tackle it, was a national one. Accordingly their position was to ask central government for more resources, and implementing instruments, for its solution.

The initial stages of the negotiations indicated different attitudes on the part of the three shire counties. Warwickshire stated that it would be possible to accommodate some 70,000 overspill population over twenty years in the fringes of the Conurbation (Solihull, Sutton Coldfield and Castle Brownich. No mention was made of the small towns in the rural west of the county outlined as areas for expansion on both the West Midlands Plan and the Warwickshire Development Plan. The position of Staffordshire was more sympathetic as it immediately suggested three locations, Aldridge, Lichfield and Tamworth; the

latter two being beyond the proposed Green Belt. As far as Worcestershire was concerned the county representatives, though stressing that no provision had been made in the Development Plan for the reception of overspill, suggested that Droitwich and Redditch could be expanded to take simultaneously industry and population. They made it clear, however, that finance constituted a major problem.

At this stage Birmingham City Council decided to bypass the county councils and approach directly the districts. This led to a storm of protests from the counties and the Minister himself had to intervene. A meeting, in April 1955, between the Minister, Birmingham and the three shire counties smoothed over much of the acrimony between exporting and receiving county authorities. Rumours that the new minister of Housing - Duncan Sandys - was considering the opportunity of designating a New Town in the Midlands was instrumental in reducing tensions.

As an immediate result of the new climate in the relations between Birmingham and the shire counties, Birmingham sent a circular letter to the three surrounding counties inviting them to set up a joint committee on overspill. This was rapidly agreed and in July 1955 the Committee held its first meeting where the following terms of reference were agreed.

To examine the whole field of the problem posed by overspill as it affects the movements both of population and of industry and the methods to be adopted for its solution, together with any allied subjects.<sup>43</sup>

Later in the same year this Committee of elected members decided to set up an advisory body of planning officers, the Technical Overspill Committee.<sup>44</sup>

To clarify further the situation the Minister made a statement in Parliament announcing the financial arrangements for Town Development Schemes.<sup>45</sup> These amounted to a uniform 50 per cent Exchequer grant for water and sewerage schemes and the guarantee that an extra Exchequer grant would be paid to the re-



ceiving authority after the 10 year statutory rate fund contributions if a heavy burden was falling on its rates. The financial contributions were altered in 1956 by the Housing Subsidies Act which substituted the statutory rate fund contribution by a discretionary one and fixed the housing subsidy conceded by central government at £29 per dwelling. The housing subsidy paid by the exporting authority in return for the right to nominate tenants was £8 per dwelling during a ten year period. However, these conditions were insufficient to enable Town Development Schemes to provide quick relief for the city's problems, particularly when the receiving county authority did not favour these. This is best analysed through some examples.

In the case of Redditch, for example, contacts between Birmingham and the district authority started as early as 1952.<sup>46</sup> Ambiguities surrounding the scale and characteristics of the scheme persisted during 1953 but when early in 1954, the firm Super Oil Seals and Gaskets approached Redditch Urban District Council in order to set up a new factory worth somewhere between 600 to 1000 new jobs, it quickly removed Redditch's reluctance to accept overspill. Even so, the District Council told Birmingham that it was only prepared to receive overspill if this was constituted by a "genuine crosssection of the city's housing applicants".

The dispute between Birmingham and the shire counties referred to in the previous page meant that the negotiations had to be adjoined for almost a year. When they were resumed late in 1955 it became apparent that with the 'high' interests rates of 5 per cent at that time being charged by the Public Works Loan Board, overspill houses would cost 7s a week more than the average rents being charged in the local council housing. So, a new proviso was added to the agreement stating that this was "made subject to financial arrangements being come to" and further assistance was asked from the unwilling county council. Without this assistance the levelling of overspill housing rents with

the existing council houses would imply either: a) an increase in the rents of existing council houses by 2s a week, or b) an increase of local rates of 7d. Neither of these alternatives was, of course, very attractive.

Negotiations continued throughout 1956 and the first part of 1957, but in July of that year, with the decision of Super Oil Seals and Gaskets to renew their existing leases in Birmingham, the sense of urgency was lost. Discussions of detail continued up until 1961 without further significant progress being made. Nine years had been wasted in fruitless negotiations.

In the case of Droitwich, the other potential scheme initially suggested by Worcestershire, it was the county itself which took the initiative in preparing a Town Development Scheme. But, as half of the suggested population intake was to come from places other than Birmingham, the city was, not surprisingly, unhappy with the arrangements. So was the Ministry which in 1959 made it clear that difficulties could arise in providing the Exchequer grants for water and sewerage schemes. However a final decision was avoided as a town poll held in Droitwich in April 1960 rejected the whole scheme.<sup>47</sup>

Similar decisions to reject overspill were also registered in two out of the three local authorities initially suggested by Warwickshire as able to receive overspill. Both Sutton Coldfield and Solihull were middle-class residential suburbs and their refusal of major council housing developments, in their areas, for incoming population, reflected the general attitude of

... resistance by suburban leaders and citizens to the  
'decanting' of a working class population to the suburbs.<sup>48</sup>

(Young and Kramer, 1978, p. 233)

Birmingham Willingness to conclude Town Development Schemes agreements was therefore experiencing a number of setbacks. Up to 1961 Birmingham had negotiated Town Development Schemes with no less than 112 local authorities but had only signed agreements with 38. Of these some were as small as 60 houses in Tutbury Rural District (Staffordshire) and others as far afield as Weston-Super-Mare in Somerset. By far the most successful results had been

achieved in Staffordshire but as a whole the pace of overspill was obviously insufficient. In 1961, of the 4,768 houses programmed in Town Development Schemes, only 1,557 had been completed.<sup>49</sup> This figure is best appreciated against the backcloth provided by the 1961 Census results which indicated that during the 1951 - 61 period some 80,000 people had 'voluntarily' moved out of Birmingham mainly to peripheral locations.

## II. 5. HOUSING LAND SHORTAGE - THE SEARCH FOR ALTERNATIVES

The slow progress in securing overspill agreements was the key factor in the decision of Birmingham Council to press for the designation of a New Town from the mid 1950's onwards. This position received an unexpected boost when, in December 1955, the Minister answering a question from a local Labour M.P. admitted that the creation of a New Town in the Midlands had not been completely ruled out.<sup>50</sup> The Minister's statement was, probably, a bluff in order to influence the existing disputes between Birmingham and the shire counties. However, Birmingham immediately sought to take advantage of this statement. In May 1956 a deputation of Birmingham Councillors met with the Minister and pressed for the designation of a New Town. This was followed in July by a letter from the Council formally stating the request. Meanwhile, and in a concerted move with the City Council, two other local Labour M.P.s pressed in Parliament for the same objective.<sup>51</sup>

The initial motives for Birmingham pressing for a New Town were financial and administrative. A New Town would qualify for much more Exchequer financial help than Town Development Schemes and its implementation would be guaranteed by the constitution of a New Town Development Corporation. Later the Birmingham decision began to reflect more and more an awareness of the difficulties involved in industrial overspill. On the one hand, the larger size of a New Town

was seen as an important factor in encouraging industrialists to move out of the Conurbation. On the other hand, it was felt that the Board of Trade would be more sympathetic to industrial movements to New Towns than to Town Development Schemes, and this would serve to counterbalance its departmental responsibilities concerning Development Areas.<sup>52</sup>

The replacement of Duncan Sandys by Henry Brooke as Minister in January 1957 seemed to increase the chances of an agreement, as Sandys had come to be known as being strongly opposed to the New Town idea. Birmingham arranged for two joint meetings with local M.P.s and the Minister and invited the Minister to come to Birmingham in March 1958 for a further meeting. However in April of the same year the Minister wrote to the City Council refusing any central government help and suggesting that Birmingham should build a new town on its own. This proposal was, not surprisingly, completely ignored by the City Council which preferred rather to press for a boundary extension.

Soon after the Minister's visit to Birmingham the majority Labour Group asked the City's Engineer - Herbert Manzoni - to prepare a confidential report on the strengths of the city case for a boundary extension and suggesting potential sites where that could take place. Manzoni's report pointed out that, both because of the Minister's general attitude and the city's small overall housing deficiency, there was little chance of the extension being granted. In his view the only solution was to argue the case on the grounds of the city's need to increase the pace of slum clearance. Even so, the report concluded:

If you really want an extension I am certain that you<sup>53</sup> will need a far better case than the figures suggest.

The conclusion of the report proved to be insufficient to alter the Labour Group's determination to follow up its initial idea. After a period of discussion at Committee level the council was asked in March 1958 to approve a proposal for a two square mile boundary extension at Wythall, within the

proposed Green Belt area. Birmingham wanted to develop that land, partly in the Solihull County Borough and partly in Bromsgrove Rural District (Worcestershire) in order to house 48,000 people.

The request raised a substantial number of objections from residents, farmers, etc.. The case was then referred to a public inquiry starting in July 1959. Birmingham's case was presented along the lines suggested by its City Engineer but as he had forecast it proved not to be a successful line of attack.<sup>54</sup> The opposition came mainly from the representatives of the two shire counties of Warwickshire and Worcestershire and from the Midlands New Towns Society. This latter had been formed as a pressure group in 1955, when it was expected that the designation of a New Town in the region was a matter of weeks, and was firmly committed to the implementation of a New Town-Green Belt policy for the solution of the conurbation planning problems.

The argument of these bodies, identified an evident contradiction in the Birmingham case. In the short term Birmingham did not need that extension to proceed with its clearance programme. In the long run, on the other hand, that extension would prove inadequate and further peripheral extensions would be required. The inspector's report concluded that the extension was not justified and the Minister's decision confirmed that judgement. As a positive gesture, the Minister offered help for future overspill negotiations and indicated that at a later stage a small part of the Wythall area could be developed when required. This reflected the ongoing change in the attitude of the Conservative government towards the solution of the overspill problems.

A number of factors contributed to that change in attitudes. Firstly, population forecasts indicated that population growth would be higher than previously expected (Table V). Secondly, the Treasury began to express doubts concerning the cost-effectiveness and lack of financial controls over Town Development Schemes when compared with New Towns. This was underlined in a re-

port prepared by a senior Treasury official in 1960 which concluded:

The Treasury should prefer New Towns to Town Developments if there has got to be an intensive effort to deal with overspill.<sup>55</sup>

Year of Projection	Base Population (millions)	Total Population Projections (millions)		
		1980	1990	2000
1955	49.8	51.7	51.5	-
1960	51.1	56.1	58.9	62.0
1965	53.1	59.6	64.9	72.5
1970	54.3	56.4	60.2	64.0
1975	54.5	54.6	56.4	58.0

Table V: OPCS Overall Projections of Population (Great Britain)

Source : Cullingworth (1979)

Thirdly, and as the Minister echoed in a statement in Parliament in November 1960, there was the feeling that apart from the financial problems involved in the receiving areas,

... building by a government agency is very much more acceptable to the people in the county concerned than building by one of these (Birmingham, Liverpool) great municipalities. <sup>56</sup>

On this occasion Henry Brooke also took the opportunity to indicate that he was considering possible sites for a New Town near Dawley in Shropshire. Indeed 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.<sup>57</sup>

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, 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 suffered a process of economic decline after the closure of the mines. Though more expensive to develop than other alternative sites it had the advantage that it could be presented as an 'imaginative project' of land and social redevelopment which would do minimal damage to agricultural land. Furthermore, Shropshire County Council favoured the project.

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. However, it was seen as too far from Birmingham to facilitate industrial overspill, and too close to Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme to prevent future coalescence. But, more important, as the Minister of Agriculture stressed, its location on good farmland would attract enormous criticism from Government supporters.

As discussions evolved the focus of attention moved to Redditch. Development there corresponded to the initial suggestion of the Board of Trade, no substantial agricultural objections existed and the District Council favoured the development. The Minister 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.<sup>58</sup>

The final compromise 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 Da ley area.

Meanwhile the financial arrangements for overspill had been substantially improved. The Housing Subsidy Act of 1961 had increased the government housing subsidy and this was followed in 1962 by a similar Birmingham decision to raise its contributions from £8 over ten years to £12 during a fifteen year period. Given these developments the prospect for the whole programme to be speedily implemented seemed good. However, events were not to prove favourable.

Later in the same year two voluntary organisations, the Midlands New Towns Society and the Town and Country Planning Association, published a joint report urging the implementation of an effective overspill strategy to solve the Conurbation planning problems (M.N.T.S. & T.C.P.A., 1961). The Midland New Towns Society had already played a key role in the first Wythall inquiry and with this document it wanted to push its arguments further, not only looking at the Conurbation problems but also drawing attention to the problems experienced by the rural areas of Herefordshire and Shropshire.



The main argument of the document was as follows: during the 1950's, the Conurbation population had increased by roughly five per cent. As some 120,000 people had 'voluntarily' moved out of the more congested parts of the Conurbation this meant that the outer areas - Aldridge, Solihull, etc. - had already reached the 1971 population targets laid down in the respective Development Plans. This situation had, of course, created a 'filling up' of the previously undeveloped green land. Meanwhile the slum clearance programme in Birmingham had only knocked down some 8,000 out of the 50,000 houses declared as slums in 1955 (see Table IV).

The report then went on to add that as a result of the redevelopment programme (44,000), the increase in the number of households (100,000) and the need to relieve overcrowding (50,000) a further 200,000 houses would be required in the Conurbation up to 1981. By developing vacant sites and by further increasing densities it was considered that some 100,000 housing sites could be found in the Conurbation. This left, of course, a housing site deficit of the same magnitude which could only be overcome, the authors suggested, by planned over-spill. If this failed dormitory building would increase and would eventually make a mockery of the Green Belt policy. If the proposed strategy succeeded it could also make contributions to halting the decline of the western rural parts of the region.

The major suggestions of the report were.

- a) The designation of New Towns at Dawley and Wafferton-Offerton near the Hereford-Shropshire border and on the main road linking Hereford with Shrewsbury. These two locations would accommodate some 100,000 people.
- b) The implementation of Town Development Schemes at Bridgnorth, Burton-on-Trent, Hereford, Leominster, Ludlow, Nuneaton, Owstry, Ross, Rugby, Wenlock, Wellington, Worcester (150,000).
- c) Further Town Development Schemes outside the region (Forest of Dean, Mid Wales) (50,000).

Interestingly enough, the report made almost no suggestion to overcome the financial difficulties or to diminish the problems of industrial overspill which had consistently damaged the projects of Town Development Schemes in the past.

Given the overall tone of the report and the planning ideological affiliations of the two organisations concerned, it was not surprising that it greeted the government proposals for development at Redditch, and principally at Wythall with disdain. When in the following year Birmingham submitted a planning application to develop the Wythall area according to the Ministry's proposals, the Midlands New Towns Society was in the forefront of objections to the Birmingham application. Also not surprising was the fact that county and district authorities which had already formed a coalition in 1959 joined the Midlands New Towns Society in these attacks. In the event the outcome of the public inquiry was to prove a surprise.

The inspector's report was, on this occasion, inconclusive but as the initial suggestion came from the Minister it was to be expected that a positive answer would be forthcoming to the application. However, in the meantime, Henry Brooke had been replaced by a new housing Minister - Charles Hill - who was apparently impressed with the arguments put forward by the objectors. Accordingly, he turned the application down.

In the case of Redditch the course of events also did not follow the path suggested in the Ministry's proposals of 1961. Because of the Wythall application, Redditch District Council retreated from its previous attitude of co-operation concerning the setting up of a Town Development Scheme. Negotiations only restarted after the government turned down the application and the attention was focussed on the financial implications of the Town Development Scheme. A joint report by officials of central government and local authorities published in November suggested that, taking into account the growth of

rateable value and all available grants, the Town Development scheme would imply a rates increase of somewhere between 1s and 1s4d in the pound. Further it indicated that in the absence of a rate subsidy either overspill housing would cost at least 50 per cent more than the rents charged in the Redditch area, or it would involve a rate rise from 1d in the second year to 4s/5d in the twelfth year.<sup>59</sup>

Given the financial implications of the deal, and the refusal of Worcestershire County Council to provide support, Redditch Urban District Council asked the Minister for further financial help as a precondition to conclude the agreement.

## II. 6. HOUSING LAND SHORTAGE - ACTION AT LAST

The rejection of the second Wythall planning application had been made by the government on the grounds that a strong defence of the Green Belt by the Ministry would stimulate a more co-operative attitude from the potential receiving authorities towards overspill. However, it soon became apparent that Worcestershire was only making arrangements to receive one-fifth of the overspill the Ministry wanted it to accommodate.<sup>60</sup> Birmingham itself decided to concentrate technical and financial resources in one Town Development Scheme. In relation to this scheme Birmingham undertook to shoulder the main financial burden of land purchase, the construction of houses and the letting of building of factories during the first development period, and also to provide architectural and planning assistance in the drawing of the overall plans for the approval of the County Council. The Scheme to which Birmingham Council decided to give preferential assistance was that of Daventry in Northamptonshire, significantly outside the West Midlands Region. Given the continuing deadlock in negotiations, and presented with new population forecasts which suggested that population increases would be much higher than previously expected central

government was forced to adopt a more positive stance. This was facilitated by an overall shift in the ideological climate within the Conservative Party associated with the accession to the leadership of the Party of Harold McMillan. He had a longstanding sympathetic attitude towards indicative public planning and state intervention and in the new political climate it was not surprising to see central government adopting a more positive role in dealing with the overspill problem.

The alternatives open to central government were:

- a) creation of a special body to supervise the implementation of overspill;
- b) designation of New Towns; and
- c) allow for peripheral developments.

The first alternative, specifically the creation of a Regional Development Agency to promote, in partnership with local authorities Town Development Schemes, was rejected by the Cabinet early in 1963. The other two options were adopted instead.

In May 1962 the Minister 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. Birmingham's attitude was more cautious. The fact was that, though the New Town could be presented as an imaginative exercise of urban and social rehabilitation, both its location and the poor standards of communications made it an unsatisfactory answer to the overspill problems of the Conurbation, and Birmingham in particular. Given these circumstances it is not surprising that Birmingham immediately began to ask for a second New Town.<sup>61</sup>

Later in the same year a more significant development took place. Sir Keith Joseph who had taken over from Charles Hill as Minister of Housing, in

July 1961, began to press for faster rates of slum clearance in the cities of Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester and promised that land would be made available for this purpose. He asked the city authorities to consult with the surrounding county authorities and put forward the necessary proposals.

In January 1963 he sought Cabinet approval for the designation of a New Town at Redditch arguing that

We cannot look for town developments under its present statutory arrangements for fast and large building .62

The designation of a New Town at Redditch, with one third of the designated area within the proposed Green Belt and suggested overspill intake of some 40,000 met considerable opposition from the shire counties of Warwickshire and Worcestershire, the districts involved, the Midlands New Towns Society, etc.. 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 inquiry and the critical points of the inspector's report. As a leading member of both the Midlands New Towns Society and the Redditch District Council remarked at a later stage.

One cannot help wondering why the enquiry was held except that it was required by law.

(Stranz, 1972, p. 31)

Meanwhile, and without following the Minister's suggestion to consult with the County Councils beforehand, Birmingham wrote to the Minister in June 1963 claiming that there was a conflict between the city's housing need and the needs of the Green Belt policy. Further it argued that bearing in mind the Ministry's statements in February 1963 designating Redditch New Town, it was clear that the boundaries of the Green Belt could not be fixed until the housing problem of Birmingham and the rest of the Conurbation had been settled or was in sight of solution.

Later in the year Birmingham discussed its proposals for land develop-

ment with the two shire counties, but no agreement was reached. In January 1964 Birmingham submitted two planning applications to develop 1,540 acres east of the city at Water Orton and 420 acres at Wythall. Though the real interest of Birmingham was in the Water Orton area, much of the discussion during the public inquiry which followed these applications was centred around the Wythall area. The Inspector's report was based on the Minister's past statements concerning the provision of land to the large local authorities for their slum clearance programmes. The fact that the Birmingham case was argued at the public inquiry in terms of its total housing needs seemed to pass largely unnoticed (Smith, 1969).

The outcome 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 of Housing, Richard Crossman, accepted the Water Orton development though turning down, once again, the Wythall application. In a letter to the Birmingham Town Clerk, he argued that of the two sites Water Orton was more suitable for the City's purposes because its size and topography were better for industrialised building and its development would do less harm to amenities. The gamble Birmingham had made of presenting, simultaneously, two planning applications had paid off.

So, over a period of 2 years, Birmingham's fortunes had considerably changed. Because of a shift in central government attitudes towards Town Development Schemes, two New Towns had been designated (Dawley and Redditch), and a substantial (50,000 people) peripheral development had been allowed at Water Orton (Chelmsey Wood). Simultaneously the city had concluded negotiations for two Town Development Schemes at Droitwich (population to increase from 8,000 to 30,000) and Daventry (6,000 to 25,000). It seemed that Birmingham's planning problems had been solved.

Elsewhere in the region, the situation was less satisfactory. As a re-

sult of the failure of the West Midlands Plan strategy of dispersal of population and industry beyond the Green Belt, the Conurbation had increased its population by some 150,000 during the period 1951 - 61. The corresponding figure for the Coventry commuting belt was of 87,500 (D.E.A., 1965). Together they accounted for some three quarters of the total regional population growth during the period.

Most of this growth had fallen, in the urban areas around Birmingham and Coventry, as the combined result of natural growth and the flow of people from the Conurbation's more congested areas and from the outer fringes of the region. Areas like Castle Bromwich, Solihull and Sutton Coldfield in the conurbation; Bedworth and Kenilworth around Coventry had already achieved their 1971 population targets or were very near to them.<sup>63</sup> Meanwhile the North Staffordshire area and the rural parts of Hereford and Shropshire continued to lose population by outmigration.

In 1963 the City of Coventry Development Plan quinquennial review argued that if no nounter measures were adopted, as part of an agreed Regional Plan, pressures would continue to build up in the middle ring and would either destroy the Green Belt or largely increase the commuting problem.<sup>64</sup> A similar statement could certainly have been made in relation to the Conurbation.

## II. 7. CONCLUSIONS

At this point it seems important to take stock of the experience of regional planning in the West Midlands in the period up to the early 1960's, concentrating on the containment-overspill problem. A crucial issue in this respect is to assess the influence of regional planning decisions over the evolution of events in the region.

In this respect a number of evaluative comments can be put forward on the basis of the evidence presented in the previous sections. Firstly, as

Gregory (1977) clearly showed there can be no doubt that 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. It is well known that Hall et al (1973) considered this physical containment the major success of the planning system created after the Second World War. Coleman (1976), however, without directly questioning Hall's assessment, argued that the 'containment' occurred inefficiently from a land-use point of view, as development took place in a piecemeal fashion either at the fringes of built-up areas or in green area developments immediately beyond the Green Belt. The evidence presented in the previous sections lends support to this assessment.

Secondly, the influence of planned overspill (T.D.S.'s or N.T.'s) on the broad movement of population was quite negligible. In the period 1951 - 1961 'unplanned' population overspill from Birmingham (mainly to locations adjacent to both sides of the Green Belt) was more than ten times larger than overspill within the context of Town Development Schemes (no New Towns existed in the region). It was, mainly, the difficulty of co-ordinating these private developments within a coherent whole which led to the inefficient land-use patterns which have been described by Coleman (1976).

Thirdly, as a result of higher than expected population growth, the effective operation of Green Belt controls and the failure of Town Development Schemes, the population in the conurbation increased by more than 150,000 people in the period 1951 - 1961. This figure assumes particular significance when compared with the West Midlands Plan population target for the conurbation which suggested that this should remain static. 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 densi-



ties, high-rise council housing programmes. This happened at a time when local authorities were being urged by central government to reduce housing standards in order to cut costs.

Fourthly, the failure in the building of Town Development Schemes - and the government's refusal to designate New Towns for overspill purposes - contributed to a progressive social-spatial imbalance within the region. The movement of population out of the conurbation occurred, almost exclusively, to private sector developments for owner occupation. Not surprisingly, the flow of people moving out was biased towards middle and upper income strata of the population leaving behind those who could not afford the costs of home-ownership. This process of polarization was exacerbated by the lack of housing-land for private developments in the conurbation's core as local authorities there attempt to use, or reserve, all suitable housing-land for their efforts at slum clearance and urban redevelopment.

It is therefore obvious that far from working in a co-ordinated way the various elements of the containment-overspill strategy (Green Belt controls, Town Development Schemes, etc.) were used with quite different strength if at all (for example, New Towns). In the period up to the early 1960's as far as planned developments on a regional scale were concerned, the system was all 'containment' and no 'overspill'. The reasons for this situation were manifold and involved financial, political and social aspects. They can be summarised by referring to the problems confronting the main 'actors' in the process, namely: central government, 'exporting' and 'receiving' local authorities.

Looking first to central government it may appear surprising that having commissioned and approved the West Midlands Plan it did little to follow-up its planning recommendations. It is necessary to bear in mind, however, that while the Plan was Commissioned and approved by a Labour government sym-

pathetic to the idea of positive planning throughout the 1950's it was the Conservative Party that formed the governments. Having come to power committed to dismantle the planning machinery and get rid of the state intervention cherished by the Labour government of 1945 - 1951 it did so with considerable vigour. Of particular importance to regional planning were the decisions not to designate further New Towns, the minimal financial backing provided to Town Development Schemes, the broad commitment to market solutions in relation to the problems of land compensation and betterment and the encouragement of private sector housing developments for owner occupation to the detriment of support to public sector housebuilding. Financial considerations were of paramount importance for a number of these decisions (for example, shift in the ratio of public/private sector house building). Others seemed to have been more directly influenced by party political and ideological reasons (for example, attitudes concerning land values). Finally, other decisions were, probably influenced by a combination of the two types of consideration (for example, attitudes concerning New Towns and Town Development Schemes).

Party political and ideological considerations also played an important role in determining the support given to the protection of the countryside against 'council housing' encroachments. This was evident not only in the encouragement given to Green Belt policies but also in a number of Ministerial decisions on public inquiries. The overall attitude of central government concerning the containment-overspill was, undoubtedly, the major influence on the evolution of the region. The impact of central government attitude on events should not only be assessed through its direct effects but also by its influence on the behaviour of the local authorities involved in the negotiation of Town Development Schemes. Looking first at 'receiving' authorities they had to confront important financial and social problems. The financial problem was that 'receiving' authorities had to incur considerable expenditure in advance of the influx of

of population and therefore in advance of the growth of rate income or rate support grant income. In addition, they had the longer term problem of the additional financial burden arising from the concentration of large-scale capital expenditure in a short period of time (to provide local government services for an incoming population usually of an age structure creating heavy demands on major services such as education and health). When the receiving authority was a non-county borough or a district council these functions were the responsibility of the respective County Council and this somewhat eased problems. This was not the case, however, when the receiving authority was a county borough council. Indeed the evidence shows that rate increases were higher in 'receiving' authorities than in comparable local authorities. Central government, on top of the actual housing subsidy contributed only to the costs of water and sewerage schemes which was seen as clearly inappropriate by 'receiving' authorities. The fact that this financial problem was only likely to last for a period of 15 - 20 years did not help very much either.

'Receiving' authorities had also to face important social problems. Authorities had, of course, to consider the disruptive effects of overspill schemes on the social lives of small communities. Further, particularly for local authorities far away from the conurbation, there was the extra problem of guaranteeing that the influx of population was accompanied by an adequate jobs influx. Given the Board of Trade's first priority to shift 'mobile' investment to assisted areas this was not particularly easy. Finally local authorities representing wealthy communities in 'rural' areas (more often than not rural 'suburbia') were generally unsympathetic to accept large scale council housing developments in their areas.

As far as 'exporting' authorities were concerned they had also to face difficult financial, political and social problems. In financial terms the problem was that the 'exporting' of population, in particular child population, led

to a reduction in the rate support grant without it being practicable, in the short term at least, to make equivalent reductions in the cost of local government services. A further factor involved was that exporting authorities were generally committed to redevelopment on a large scale entailing additional costs for a lower density population. Thus, while the financial contributions they made to overspill housing appeared to be relatively small the point was that they were not in a financial position to substantially increase their contribution.

However it can be argued that the main problem 'exporting' local authorities had to face were associated with industrial overspill (Smith, 1972). The likely prospect of success for Town Development Schemes, particularly those outside commuting range from the main job centres in the conurbation, depended on the creation of a balance between population and job influx. However it was not easy to ask an elected local authority - for example, the Birmingham City Council dominated by small businessmen, shopkeepers, builders, etc. (Morris and Newton, 1970) - to restrict growth and export industry in the interest of a long term solution to urban sprawl. The main problem in this respect was political, as up until 1958 industrial hereditaments were subject to a 75 per cent derating and contributed, therefore, little to the overall rateable value. (Industrial rates as a percentage of all rateable value increased in Birmingham from 5% in 1955 to 25% in 1963). There was also potentially at least, a social problem associated with industrial overspill. Firms moving to overspill areas tended to take with them management and skilled workers but left behind unskilled and semi-skilled workers. Given the scale with which overspill was taking place this was not, of course, a very serious problem but the political perception of the problem tended, naturally, to overestimate its importance.<sup>65</sup> In any case, it is relevant to note that it tended to reinforce the polarization problem created by the 'unplanned' overspill of population.

This was, in summary, the situation in the early 1960's. Of course, the state of affairs took a turn for the better in the early 1960's when, finally, the Conservative central government adopted a more positive attitude towards the problems of overspill. However, the effects of this change in course would only become apparent later in the decade.

NOTES

1. See Cullingworth (1975), pp. 251 - 258.
2. See Sutcliffe and Smith (1974), pp. 120 - 124.
3. See Borg (1973), pp. 38 - 41.
4. For a detailed account of the Group's activities, see Centre for Urban and Regional Studies (1969).
5. See Sutcliffe (1974), pp. 181.
6. See Sutcliffe and Smith (1974), p. 220.
7. See West Midland Group (1948), pp. 87 - 99.
8. The in situ rehousing rate was obtained in an interview with Professor Neville Borg, former Birmingham City Engineer and Surveyor (27.2.8.).
9. See Sutcliffe (1974), pp. 187 - 200.
10. See Sutcliffe and Smith (1974), p. 122, note 2.
11. See West Midland Group (1948), p. 250.
12. See Briggs (1952), pp. 311 - 312.
13. See respectively McPherson (1944), pp. 747 - 755 and Buchanan (1944), p. 539.
14. Since the beginning of their activities, the West Midlands Group extended their action to the area embracing the five counties of the region. See C.U.R.S. (1969).
15. This had apparently constrained not only the format of the Plan but also the time period available for its formulation. See M.T.C.P. (1948), Vol. I, Introduction, Para. 8.
16. It is indeed very difficult to go along with Hall (1973), p. 515, when he claims that the two documents differed only in matters of detail.
17. See West Midland Group (1948), p.78, Table VIII.
18. Idem., pp. 85 - 86.
19. Idem., p. 201.
20. See the justification of the strategy presented in M.T.C.P. (1948), Vol. I, Foreword.
21. For a detailed presentation of the methodology used, see M.T.C.P. (1948), Vol. 4, Chapter 5.
22. Idem., Vol. IV, Chapter 3, Para. 1.
23. Idem., Vol. I, Introduction, para. 15.
24. Idem., Vol. IV, Chapter 1, para. 17.
25. For a brief analysis of the position of the Birmingham City Council concerning urban sprawl, see Sutcliffe and Smith (1979), pp. 120 - 122.
26. See West Midland Group (1948), pp. 133 - 137.
27. See Sutcliffe and Smith (1974), pp. 169 - 173.
28. See M.T.C.P. (1948), Vol. IV, Chapter 10.
29. At the time the conurbation contained not less than nine independent planning authorities. See M.T.C.P. (1948), Vol IV, para. 11.5 to 11.8.
30. See Sutcliffe and Smith (1974), p. 127.
31. See M.T.C.P. (1950), p. 3.
32. This position stemmed, of course, from the environmental determinism of the 'garden city' movement as expressed by Howard (1989), for instance.
33. See Mackay and Cox (1981), p. 117.
34. See Cullingworth (1979), pp. 489 - 495.
35. Harold MacMillan, Minister of Housing and Local Government in Hansard, House of Commons Debates, Vol. 496, Col. 7256 of 25 February 1952.
36. See Mackay and Cox (1981), p. 80.
37. See Birmingham C.B. (1952), pp. 35 - 38.

38. Although the Plan made a generous provision of industrial land, the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce complained that the long term implications of the Plan raises concern in the business community. See Sutcliffe and Smith (1974), pp. 113 n.
39. Despite the position of the County Council some town expansion schemes prepared at the time made provision to accommodate overspill from Birmingham. See, for example, Stranz (1972).
40. Quoted by Long (1962), p. 36.
41. See Sutcliffe and Smith (1974), pp. 227 - 229, also Borg (1961).
42. See Cullingworth (1979), pp. 486 - 495.
43. Joint Committee on Birmingham Overspill, Minutes, 1st. Meeting, 26 July 1955.
44. Idem, meeting of 4 October 1955.
45. See Hansard, Vol. 540, Col. 43 - 45, 25 April 1955.
46. This example draws heavily on Stranz (1972).
47. Joint Committee on Birmingham Overspill, Minutes, meeting of 26 April 1960.
48. See Birmingham Mail, 26 September 1956 and Birmingham Post, 17 October 1956. For other examples of the same overall attitude, see Collison (1963) and Wilmott and Young (1960).
49. See Technical Overspill Committee, 1961 Report, para. 70.
50. See Hansard, Vol. 547, Col. 985 - 986, 13 December 1955.
51. See Hansard, Vol. 559, Col. 241 - 242, 12 June 1956 and Col. 1223 - 1224, 17 June 1956. See, also, Sutcliffe (1967).
52. See Sutcliffe and Smith (1974), pp. 138 - 140. The expression Development Areas is used to designate, indifferently, all areas receiving regional policy assistance of any kind.
53. Quoted by Sutcliffe and Smith (1974), p. 142.
54. See Long (1962), passim and pp. 1 - 34 and 95 - 113 in particular.
55. Quoted by Cullingworth (1979), p. 164.
56. Hansard, Vol. 629, Col. 808 - 809, 8 November 1960.
57. See Cullingworth (1979), pp. 167 - 175.
58. Quoted by Cullingworth (1979), p. 173.
59. See Stranz (1972), pp. 20 - 26.
60. See Birmingham Mail, 28 April 1962.
61. See Sutcliffe and Smith (1974), p. 148.
62. Quoted by Cullingworth (1979), p. 192.
63. See Warwickshire Development Plan, Quinquennial Review, Town Maps for Bedworth, Coleshill and Castle Bromwick, Kenilworth, Solihull, Sutton Coldfield, all 1963.
64. See Coventry C.B. (1963), p. 20.
65. It should be remembered, though, that a similar problem existed in relation to firms moving to Assisted Areas.

# APPENDIX C

ISSUES ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS



CONTENTS

Page

1 - Recent Theoretical Debates Concerning Central-Local Government Relations .....	C-1— 5
2 - Instruments of Control and Influence in Central-Local Government Relations .....	C-5—13

This Appendix concentrates on two types of issues: 1) recent theoretical debates concerning the broad features of central-local government relations, and 2) instruments of control and influence in the relations between central government and local authorities. These issues are considered in the following two sections.

1) Recent Theoretical Debates Concerning Central-Local Government Relations

In recent years the issue of central-local government relations has received a great deal of attention; in particular associated with a view that central government has been unable to control local government expenditure (S.S. R.C., 1979). However, as more recent studies by Jones (1980) and Rhodes (1981) have convincingly argued it would be an unpardonable error to reduce the complexity of these relations to simply the financial dimension. Further it can be argued that in a subject area like the one dealt with in this thesis financial aspects are not, in themselves, a major issue.

Before attempting to substantiate this claim it is worth recalling some of the major features of the literature on central-local government relations. For this purpose the work of Rhodes (1979, 1981) constitutes a necessary point of reference. According to this author the study of central-local government relations was until recently dominated by a 'conventional wisdom', based on a twofold distinction between the 'agent' and the 'partnership' models of central-local government relations. In the 'agent' model local authorities were supposed to implement national policies under the supervision of central departments. Local authorities were considered as enjoying little discretion in discharging their functions. Conversely, in the 'partnership' model local

authorities were thought of as having considerable discretion to design and implement their policies. They were seen as co-equals with central government under Parliament.

On the basis of this distinction the 'conventional wisdom' then moves on to assert the existence of a centralising trend in which local government moves from being a partner to being an agent. This assertion, according to Rhodes, is based on two main arguments. First, that central government exercises increasingly tight control over capital expenditure of local authorities whilst, at the same time, local authorities become increasingly dependant on central grant. Second, that central government acquires more powers of detailed control over local authorities.

To this 'conventional wisdom' Rhodes opposes the 'conventional critique' of the agent and partnership models developed, inter alios, by Stanyer (1976). This argues that because central government does not necessarily apply all the controls at its disposal, or use them in an incoherent way, and because local authorities differ in their response to central controls - e.g. as revealed in the discrepancies in the pattern of local authority expenditure - local autonomy is alive and well. Rhodes goes on to suggest that neither one nor the other approach provides an adequate picture of central-local government relations as they both tend to overemphasise the importance of financial elements, construct their positions on the basis of selective evidence, biased in favour of their respective arguments and, finally, they ignore recent evidence discussed in various reports such as the Layfield Committee on Local Government Finance (GB, 1976) and the Central Policy Review Staff (C.P.R.S.) report on central-local government relations (C.P.R.S., 1977).

In broad terms Rhodes (1981) argues that functional links within policy sectors are rational, that links between policy sectors are ambiguous and that when the relations are viewed as a whole the pattern of relationships appears as confused.

Given this overall perspective it is not surprising that Rhodes

decided to draw on the 'sociology of organisations' in order to devise a framework for the study of central-local government relations. This was presented, in the first instance, in terms of a 'resource-dependency' variant of the exchange model of interorganisational relations. The framework for analysis was put forward as the development of five basic propositions which is worth quoting in full:

- 1) *Any organisation occupies a complex environment which has manifold repercussions upon it because this environment is composed of other organisations which are sources of needed resources,*
- 2) *In order to achieve their goals, the organizations in this network of relationships have to exchange resources,*
- 3) *Although decision-making within an organisation is constrained by other organisations, the dominant coalition retains some discretion. The appreciative system of the dominant coalition influences which relationships are seen as a problem and which resources will be sought,*
- 4) *The dominant coalition employs strategies within known rules of the game to regulate the process of exchange*
- 5) *Variations in the degrees of discretion are a product of the goals and the relative power potential of interacting organisations. This relative power potential is a product of the resources of each organisation, of the rules of the game and of the process of exchange between organisations*

(Rhodes, 1979, p 14)

The major shortcomings of this framework were identified by Hogwood (1982) with reference to regional issues. For this author the flaws of the framework were based on the fact that it was atheoretic and, partly as a consequence of this fact, could offer no explanation of the dynamics of the evolution of relations over time. Further he argued that in the case of 'regional issues', more than in central-local government relations in general, central government has a greater unilateral capacity to change 'the rules of the game' and the form of the key actors (their composition, their functions, etc), especially those located in between central and local government levels. This criticism was illustrated by referring to the creation in the mid 1970s of the RWAs despite fierce opposition from local authorities (District Councils in particular). Further he argued that it would be necessary to improve the dynamics

of the framework namely by

*relating changes in the nature of relations to changes in the activities of government and how the state attempts to manage territories over which it claims responsibility.*

(Hogwood, 1982, p 14)

In this respect he suggested that the increasing importance of regional offices of central government departments had to be seen as part of a wider attempt by central government to disentangle itself from a number of functions discharged by local authorities whilst, simultaneously, continuing to oversee their execution.

The first criticism levelled by Hogwood is, to a certain extent, misconceived. In fact Hogwood adopted a broad definition of central government - including Parliament - while Rhodes appears to adhere to the strict definition - excluding Parliament. There is more basis, however, to the second criticism. In more recent work Rhodes (1981) has improved the framework to take into consideration these, and other, criticisms. The improvements introduced relate to three main issues. Firstly, the concept of power was extended so as to encompass not only the notion of power as resources and rule-governed interaction (game), as defined in the original framework, but also power as the 'mobilisation of bias'. Secondly, and closely linked with the previous aspect, it is stressed that in addition to studying power relations and the rules governing them in a static manner, it is necessary to explore the origins of the rules, the values and distribution of power supporting them and the pressures for change. Thirdly, Rhodes provided an overall interpretation of recent changes in intergovernmental relations in the light of the 'corporatist thesis' put forward by, among others, Schmitter (1977).

At this stage both the criticisms levelled at Rhodes's early framework and the improvements he introduced came as no surprise. The shortcomings of conventional organisational analyses were discussed in some detail in Part III of this thesis and so were the possible ways-out of this particular theoretical cul-de-sac. Given this fact, the two first modifications Rhodes introduced in the

framework do not require further comment. The same, however, cannot be said about the use of the 'corporatist thesis' to analyse regional planning developments. This issue was already dealt with in the main body of the thesis (see chapter I. 3) and so it seems more important here to consider some practical issues related to central-local government relations.

## 2) Instruments of Control and Influence in Central-Local Government Relations

Before outlining the major channels of communication and control between central government departments and individual local authorities it is convenient to briefly consider the relationships of the former with the national associations of local authorities.

The associations, rather than individual local authorities, are now consulted as a matter of course on all significant proposals affecting local authorities as a whole. In addition to this, informal personal contacts have developed between officials of government departments and the secretaries of the associations. Finally, the relations are formalised in ongoing discussions through joint bodies such as the European Joint Group, which deals mainly with European Community matters affecting local authorities, and the Consultative Council on Local Government Finance. This last body was set up in May 1975 to ensure a two-way flow of information and consultation on policy matters affecting local authorities which have major financial implications.

The Council has no terms of reference and its practical importance is difficult to assess. Rhodes (1981) has argued that one possible way to interpret its creation is in terms of the potential it offers of

*diffusing opposition to cuts in public expenditure and for turning the opponents of cuts into agents for implementing central government policy.*

(Rhodes, 1981, p 5)

Whether this capacity has already been realised is, certainly, a matter for debate. A similar open judgement needs to be made on the overall influence of

the local authority associations. Isaac-Henry (1980) argues that local authority associations were not able to influence in any significant way either the process of local government reform in the early 1970s or the reorganisation of water and health services conducted, roughly, at the same time. However, given the lack of detailed research in this area it is prudent to treat these conclusions with a good deal of caution.

Relations between central government departments and individual local authorities constitute the bulk of interactions between the two types of bodies. They take place through a multiplicity of overlapping channels both formal (contacts derived from statutes or formal agreements) and informal (consultations, etc).

Though the DOE has overall responsibilities for the structure of local government and the working of the local government system many other departments are closely involved with local authorities. The Home Office for Police and Fire Service matters, the Department of Health and Social Security for local authority personal social services, the Department of Transport for public transport highways and traffic, etc. The combined effect of the multiplicity of overlapping channels of communication and of the number of different central government departments involved is inevitably complex.

One of the most frequent complaints made by local authorities about the state of central-local government relations concerns the enormous number of 'potential controls' available to central government (the word potential being used here to emphasise that these are not always employed). A recent count made by the national associations of local authorities listed more than 1,000 controls (Association of County Councils et al, 1979). In the sequence of that report central government set up an interdepartmental committee which eventually suggested the abolition of no less than 300 of these controls (GB, 1979). Of course, this still left unchecked an enormous amount of controls, mostly of a formal type.

All powers available to central government to influence the action of

Local authorities can, in the last resort, be traced back to legislation passed in Parliament. In the first place legislation imposes duties, gives powers and prescribes procedural requirements which are to be observed. Secondly, it provides in various ways for formal contacts between central government departments and local authorities. In most cases these contacts can be used as instruments of influence and control.

In broad terms the main channels of influence and control can be classified as follows (illustrations provided by reference to DOE functions, planning in particular):

- 1) Regulations - These are made prescribing how certain services should be provided, both in procedural and substantive terms, e.g. how local authorities shall handle planning applications for members of the public
- 2) Circulars and Memoranda - The contents and style of circulars varies widely: from delicate suggestions to mandatory requirements; and from the request of information to advice on the administration of services, on standards to be achieved, etc. Circulars are supplemented by technical memoranda on design standards, guidances on methods and objectives e.g. Circular DOE 18/74 'Structure Plans' provides guidance on the preparation of Structure Plans both in form and contents. As it was mentioned earlier the publication of important circulars is now invariably preceded by consultations with the local authorities' associations. However this does not mean that they are agreed with them.
- 3) Directions - These perform the same functions as regulations but are aimed at particular circumstances and particular authorities, and not to the general administration of a service by all authorities, e.g. directing a planning authority that permission is refused for a development not consistent with a Development Plan or likely to create difficulties or dangers on trunkroads.



- 4) Confirmation, Consent and Approval - A number of local authorities decisions require confirmation from the Secretary of State for the Environment, e.g. housing compulsory purchase orders; others need Ministerial consent, e.g. certain local authority statutory appointments of employees. Finally, some local authorities decisions are subject to Ministerial approval, e.g., the adoption of Structure Plans.
- 5) Appeals and Public Inquiries - Members of the public have the right of appeal to a Minister, or a Court of Law, against certain decisions of a local authority. The circumstances in which the right of appeal holds are defined in statutes or in regulations and it is in the field of planning decisions that they are more often used. Developers have the right of appeal to the Secretary of State against decisions involving either a rejection or the attaching of conditions to a planning consent. In the majority of cases these appeals are decided on the basis of reports prepared by planning inspectors (who are members of the DOE staff but are not subject to departmental direction) after the exchange of written representations and a site visit. In the remainder of cases, which include those which are of more than local importance, those which raise important policy issues and those which present special political difficulties; a local enquiry is held chaired by a Planning Inspector. On the basis of the evidence submitted, the Inspector prepares a report to the Secretary of State including recommendations on the basis of which the Secretary of State takes the decision. Planning applications may be 'called in' by the Secretary of State even before the local planning authority takes a decision on them.
- Regional Offices of the DOE play a major part in the whole process specially by handling Inspector's Reports, by referring possible

'call in' cases to Ministers and finally by issuing the final decision after consultations with Ministers as appropriate. In the cases in which either the applicant or the local authority so require a public inquiry is held before a decision is taken, the same process takes place for the applications 'called in'.

- 6) Enforcement of Statutory Duties laid on Local Authorities - Certain legislation imposes specific duties on local authorities; for example County Councils (and the Greater London Council) are required to prepare Structure Plans for their areas. These Structure Plans constitute the cornerstone of the town and country planning function and once approved provide a framework for the local plans against which planning applications are decided.

Some statutes contain provisions to enable the central government to enforce action in connection with a local authority function. These are of two kinds. On the one hand central government can approach the High Court for an order of mandamus. This was the course of action adopted by the previous Labour government to enforce the adoption of comprehensive education. On the other hand, some Acts allow the relevant Minister to declare a local authority to be in default through failure to perform a statutory duty and then to transfer that function to a different body - from a District Council to a County Council or from the local authority to the Minister himself or to a person appointed by him. This was the course of action adopted by the previous Conservative government when in 1973 the Clay Cross Urban District Council refused to implement the Housing Finance Act 1972 which required local authorities to charge more 'commercial' rents for council housing. In the sequence a Housing Commissioner was appointed to exercise the Council's powers under the Act. Reflecting the complexity of central-local government relations the results of this decision

were scarce not only because of the lack of cooperation by the Council made the task of the Commissions very difficult, but also because the General Election of February 1974 returned a Labour government to power which swiftly abolished the Act altogether (Skinner and Langdom, 1974). The current Conservative government has also used this form of action to bypass Norwich District Council which refused to implement the sale of council housing policy under the Housing Act 1980.

All the previous channels of influence and control are non-financial in character and although financial forms of control are not so important in the planning field as in other areas of central-local government relations it is necessary to briefly summarise the main features of this type of relationship.

The control of public expenditure is one important element in macro-economic management. Given this fact there is in all schools of economic thought a rationale for the control of local government expenditure (Barlow, 1981). While, at the moment, individual local authority expenditure is not directly controlled by central government-local authorities are relatively free to determine their own level of current expenditure and levels of rates - it can be influenced in three complementary ways.

First, within the framework of the Consultative Council on Local Government Finance, local authorities and central government jointly consider the implications for local authorities services of keeping within the limits of expenditure plans published in the previous Public Expenditure White Paper, and identify pressures affecting individual services. While the primary purpose of this process is to enable Ministers to have a knowledge of local authorities viewpoint before taking decisions on the public expenditure survey, it also provides some guidance to local authorities on the amounts of cash likely to be available in the coming years.

The second channel through which central government influences local authorities expenditure is through the amount of grant made available each year.

The overall Aggregate Exchequer Grant is, in practice, calculated at a specified percentage of the forecasted local authority 'relevant expenditure' (roughly current expenditure net of incomes from rents, fees and charges). The estimate of relevant expenditure on which grant payments are based are the plans in the previous Public Expenditure White Paper, and in recent years the percentage used to calculate the Exchequer contribution has been around 60 per cent of the relevant expenditure. From the overall Exchequer grant, deductions are made for specific grants (mainly for police expenditure) and Supplementary Grants (for Transport and National Parks) with the rest being distributed as Rate Support Grant (RSG). The aim in distributing this grant among local authorities is to ensure that authorities needs and resources are met in such a way that every authority may provide a similar level of service for a comparable rate poundage. Until recently the distribution of the RSG (outside London) was undertaken through a combination of three elements: a) the needs element which sought to compensate authorities for variations in the amount of expenditure per head of population required to provide a broadly comparable level of service; b) the resources element which provided a compensation for variations in the authorities' rateable resources, and c) the domestic element which compensated local authorities for the amount by which they were required to reduce the rate poundage charge to domestic ratepayers. The operation of this machinery was considered unsatisfactory by some commentators, not least in the Conservative Party, because the way in which both the needs and resources elements were calculated tended to favour 'high spending' authorities to the detriment of others, as the overall grant 'goal' was fixed in advance. In order to tackle this problem the current Conservative Government proposed, and Parliament approved, a proposal to replace the needs and resources element by a single block grant. The way this is calculated incorporates a threshold above 'standard expenditure' (theoretically the level of expenditure which would be typical of authorities with similar characteristics providing a comparable level of services) beyond which Government support through grant will be limited by paying

progressively reduced rates of grant on increasingly higher tranches of expenditure. In recent years the overall amount of grant being made available has been limited by cash ceilings.

The final process through which central government influences local authorities expenditure is by the operation of borrowing consent powers and the setting of cash limits on capital expenditure. Most of local authority capital spending has been traditionally financed from borrowing. In the 'key sectors', i.e. services for which Ministers have a special responsibility for determining standards or co-ordinating developments on a national basis, specific borrowing approvals are given by the appropriate Minister either for a whole programme or for individual projects. The expression 'key sector' refers to functions such as housing, highways, education, personal services and police which taken together account for over four-fifths of local authority capital expenditure. In the 'locally determined sectors' (those other than 'key sectors') each local authority gets a block borrowing approval for a year which it may use according to its own priorities.

In recent years local authorities have moved to finance capital expenditure from their internal resources and this has complicated the operation of the system of cash limits related to local authority capital expenditure (some controls were based on borrowing, others on the value of projects started or approved). In order to tackle this problem the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980 introduced a new system of controlling local authority capital expenditure. Local authorities now receive annual capital allocations for capital expenditure on housing, education, transport, etc. The functional allocations are to be made by the appropriate departments (often with the help of policy programmes such as HIPs and TPPs) and co-ordinated by the DOE who undertakes subsequent monitoring of the total. Authorities are free to aggregate these allocations into one single block and then to decide their own priorities for expenditure as between services. The overall amount of capital expenditure is subject to a single cash limit which takes in account not only expenditure

financed from borrowing but also that financed by the sale of existing assets and through revenue. Overall the new system strengthens central government control over the overall levels of local authority capital expenditure while giving them greater freedom between areas of investment.

# APPENDIX D

POWER, SOCIAL ACTORS  
AND ACTION ORIENTATIONS

## CONTENTS

	Page
1 - <u>The Concept of Power - Problems of Definition and Application</u> .....	D-1 —10
. Relational and Functionalist Definitions of Power .....	D-2 — 6
. Manifest and Latent Power .....	D-6 —10
2 - <u>From Interests to Action Orientations</u> .....	D-10—20
. Operationalisation of the Concept of Real Interests .....	D-12—20
3 - <u>Actors in Regional Planning</u> .....	D-20—41
. Political Parties .....	D-20—28
. Pressure Groups .....	D-28—35
. Public Participation .....	D-35—37
. Regionalism .....	D-37—41
NOTES .....	D-42



This Appendix deals with three types of issues. Firstly, it considers the concept of power, discussing some problems of definition and use of this concept. Secondly, a discussion is made of some of the problems involved in the definition and operationalization of the concept of 'real interests'. Finally, the third section of this Appendix enlarges on a number of issues, which were very briefly dealt with in ch. IV. 4., concerning the role of certain actors in regional planning.

#### 1. The Concept of Power-Problems of Definition and Application

*The concept of power is, definitively, an 'umbrella concept'. Terminological inconsistency, conceptual ambiguity and acritical use of the word all give raise to major misunderstandings.*

(Ferraroti, 1972, p VIII)\*

These two sentences of the italian sociologist Franco Ferraroti synthesise, most probably, the only opinion held in common by those involved in debates concerned with the concept of power. Indeed, Gallie (1955) went as far as including the concept of power in his list of 'essentially contested concepts', that is, among those concepts which by their very characteristics

*inevitably involve endless disputes about their proper uses on the part of their users*

(Gallie, 1955, p 169)<sup>1</sup>

Whether the misunderstandings which surround the debates are a result of 'intrinsic' characteristics of the concept, or not, the fact is that the abstruse and unfruitful characteristics the debate itself has assumed has led a number of authors, either to question the practical usefulness of the concept (e.g. Riker, 1964), or to renounce to its use altogether (e.g. Loschak, 1977). Other authors, however, prefer to stress the pluridimensional nature of the

concept and from this feature conclude that competing definitions tend to be far from comprehensive. For these analysts (e.g. Lukes 1974; Clegg 1979), what is necessary is to work towards a recomposition of the concept.

There is no need, or space, here to attempt a review of the debates concerned with the concept of power and its uses. Besides, splendid summaries of the literature are now easily available (e.g. Clegg, 1979; Goetschy 1981) and there is little the author can add to those. There is a case, however, for making clear, as far as possible, in what way the concept is used in this thesis. This can be done with reference to a couple of major controversies which have surrounded the debates.

#### Relational and Functionalist Definitions of Power

For the authors located in the 'weberians' and 'marxists' traditions the concept of power is firmly associated with the idea of unequal relations between social actors (individuals, groups, classes, institutions, etc.). Thus, Weber defined power as

*the probability that one actor within a social relation will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests*

(Weber, 1947, p 152)

From a 'marxist' perspective Poulantzas (1978) defined power as the

*capacity of a social class to realize its specific objective interests... (and stressed that)... the field of power is strictly relational*

(Poulantzas, 1978, p 139)

These type of definitions have been subjected to criticisms presented by authors themselves proponents of a more strictly relational definition of power. The central plank of criticisms is that these definitions have, tendentially, the effect of equating power with a sort of general capacity of the actors involved in social relations, rather than associating the concept with a characteristic of specific social relations developed in specific social contexts. Foucault is particularly articulate in this respect,

*power is not something that can be acquired, seized or shared, it is not something that can be kept or lost... it is not an institution, nor a structure, nor a possession; it is the name we give to a complex strategic situation in a particular society.*

(Foucault, 1976, p 123)\*

These arguments serve well to illustrate the subtlety of many definitional disputes between authors adhering to a broadly similar concept of power. In this case, however, the emphasis laid on the strictly relational character of power has important theoretical consequences. Firstly, it emphasises the aspect that power relations always involve two (or more) competing parties (social actors). Secondly, it stresses that, as far as power is inseparable from the multiplicity of social relations at work in a particular society, power relations are ubiquitous and lack a single source of origin. Thirdly, despite the emphasis put on the asymmetrical characteristics of power relations, this conceptualization has implicit the idea that power relations are never absolutely unidirectional or, in other words, that reciprocity is not totally excluded.

This idea of reciprocity in power relations has been conceptualized in different ways and it is possible to attempt a classification of relational theories of power on the basis of how this idea is formulated (Goetschy, 1981). Without entering in the details of the various formulations it is useful to briefly outline the main positions in confront. First, there are the 'theories of resistance'. Foucault, for example, argues that where there is power there is resistance, not in the sense of a different or contrary relation, but as a feature intrinsic to the power relation itself. Cartwright (1959), on the other hand, preferred to see power as the resultant of opposite, and unequal, forces, thereby introducing a Mechanics metaphor in the study of power.<sup>2</sup>

A second approach to the issue of reciprocity in power relations - widely used in organisational analysis - is associated with the 'exchange of resources' theories developed, inter alios by Blau (1964) and Thompson (1967). For these authors it is the inequality in the distribution, and mobilisation, of

scarce resources that gives rise to dependency relations and to their obverse, power relations. As no social actor (individual, group, institutions) is absolutely devoid of resources there is always (potentially at least) a chance of reciprocity.

Finally, there are those who argue (e.g. Wrong, 1968), that due to the multiplicity of relations in which they are involved, social actors operate through a division of their actions in terms of areas in which they attempt to impose their will, and areas in which no such attempt is made. In these circumstances the consideration of the behaviour of a specific actor in some relationships may suggest that the actor is powerless while, in practice, he is simply concentrating his 'powers' (resources) on other relations. The reciprocity aspect of power relations can, in these circumstances, only be revealed through the consideration of all interactions in which the actor is involved.

A common feature of the relational theories of power is the idea that power relations are asymmetrical and involve some form of conflict between the parties involved. 'Functionalist' and 'institutionalist' approaches to the study of power, however, are based on quite different premises. Talcott Parsons, for example, defines power as a:

*generalized capacity to secure the performance of binding obligations by units in a system of collective organization when the obligations are legitimized with reference to their bearing on collective goals and where in case of recalcitrance there is a presumption of enforcement by negative functional situations - whatever the actual agency of that enforcement*

(Parsons, 1967, p 308)

For this 'functionalist' author the concept of power should only be used in relation to authoritative decisions (i.e. decisions accepted by all those involved as being legitimate) taken to further collective goals. This dissociates, a priori, the concept of power from situations of conflict of interest, in which the less powerful actors do not accept the outputs as being legitimate.

Similarly the 'institutionalist' school of political analysis maintains that the concept of power should only be used in relation to the

complex of political organisations which constitute the state apparatus; this is seen as embodying "*the principle of order, unity and coherence*" necessary for every political system to defend itself from the disorder of a

*"civil society teared apart by conflicts of sectional interests"*

(Chevallier, 1977, p 7)\*

Thus, the 'institutionalist' concept of power, although being more restrictive than the 'functionalist' one, shares with this, the definitional rejection of situations of conflict as basis of power relations.

At this stage it is obvious that the differences between 'relational', 'functionalist', and 'institutionalist' approaches to the study of power stem from basic divergences in the way the concept itself is defined. What one approach describes as power relations (e.g. the consensual attempt to achieve collective ends in the 'functionalist' approach) is considered by another approach (e.g. relational approaches) as a mere exercise of influence and, as such, excluded from the field of power relations.<sup>3</sup> In these circumstances any direct comparison between the approaches is irrelevant and the option for one, or the other, approach appears to amount to a mere expression of arbitrary choice between competing but mutually exclusive, and non comparable, definitions.

Whithout denying that there is an element of truth in what has just been said, it seems important to bear in mind the remarks on this question made by Lukes (1974) and Giddens (1977). First, as Lukes argued, the acceptance of either the 'functionalist' or the 'institutionalist' approach would phase out of the discussion many of the problems generally associated with the study of power; namely, all those associated with situations of conflict. Without being able to tackle these situations the analysis of power would loose much of its raison d'être. Second, as Giddens noted, the definition of power offered by Parsons, and other functionalists, tends to obscure the fact that power relations are not mere abstract 'system properties', but have practical effects on individuals and groups. Further, he argued that Parsons' definition accepts the existence of collective ends as 'given' for the analysis, whithout questioning

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how these ends were defined.

Finally, it seems reasonable to argue that the choice between the definitions in confront should also bear in mind which of them has a wider scope, that is, which can be used in reference to a wider range of social phenomena. In these terms, and given the approach to social relations adopted in this thesis, there is no doubt that only the adhesion to a relational theory of power can satisfy the requirement of internal consistency throughout this work.

### Manifest and Latent Power

Having accepted a relational approach to the study of power it is now necessary to tackle a different problem. This can be phrased as follows: shall the concept of power be used only in relation to situations in which conflicts are overt, and associated with observable decisions and actions, or, alternatively, can it be used in relation to situations in which these elements are not apparent? This question involves both theoretical and methodological aspects and these will be dealt with in sequence.

As far as the theoretical side of the question is concerned the debate on this issue has been aptly summarised by Lukes (1974). According to this author there are three competing views of the problem. First, the one dimensional view associated, inter alios with the works of Dahl (1961) and Polsby (1963). This view of power involves a focus on behaviour, in the making of decisions; on issues over which there is an observable conflict of (subjective) interests, seen as expressed policy preferences, revealed by political participation. Second, the two dimensional view of power developed by Bacharach and Baratz (1962; 1970). This view, which represents a critique of the former, maintains that power concerns not only the making of decisions but also processes of non-decision making. By this, Bacharach and Baratz meant situations where social actors create, or reinforce, barriers to the public airing of conflicts, and limit the scope of the political process, to the public consideration of only those issues which are comparatively innocuous to them. Bacharach and Baratz

identified three types of non-decision making: a) situations in which the more powerful actors impede a decision being taken on an overt conflict; b) situations in which overt conflict is avoided because the less powerful actors become convinced that pressing their demands would be either fruitless, or negative, for them; c) situations in which a

*set of predominant values, beliefs, rituals, and institutional procedures ('rules of the game') operates systematically, and consistently, to the benefit of certain persons and groups, and at the expense of others*

(Bacharach and Baratz, 1970, p.43)\*

This third form of non decision making is referred to as 'mobilisation of bias' after Schattschneider often quoted words:

*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)

In all these cases decisions are prevented from being taken on issues in relation to which there is an observable (overt or covert) conflict of subjective interests, seen as embodied in expressed political preferences, and/or grievences.

Though accepting that the two dimensional view of power represents a progress in relation to the one dimensional view, Lukes (1974) considers the work of Bacharach and Baratz inadequate on three accounts. Firstly, he argues that Bacharach and Baratz by attempting to

*assimilate all cases of exclusion of potential issues from the political agenda to the paradigm of decision-making (give)... a misleading picture of the ways in which individuals and, above all, groups and institutions, succeed in excluding potential issues from the political process.*

(Lukes, 1974, p 21)

Lukes maintains that the bias of the system is not only mobilised through conscious choices but also, and more importantly, by the socially structured, and culturally patterned, behaviour of groups, and practices of institutions.

The second account on which Lukes criticizes the two dimensional view



of power is in its reliance on observable (overt or covert) conflict. Thus he argues that, as the proponents of the mobilisation of bias concept themselves recognise, the net effect of mobilisation of bias is to prevent conflicts from becoming visible in the first place. Through the operation of the dominant sets of values, beliefs, 'rules of the game', etc, the attitudes of the less powerful groups are shaped in such a way that potential conflicts can stay for long in a latent stage.<sup>4</sup>

The third criticism Lukes levelled at the two dimensional view of power is that, just as the mobilisation of bias can prevent the arising of observable conflicts, so it can shape people's perceptions and attitudes, in such a way that they accept relations that are against their 'real interests'. Given this perspective, a reliance on the actor's definition of their own interests appears of problematic validity.

From these points of criticism Lukes developed its tridimensional view of power. This involves the consideration not only of decision-making processes (leading to decisions and non-decisions) in which conflicts (overt or covert) are observable, but also of the various ways in which potentially conflictual issues are kept out of politics, through the operation of certain social forces and institutional practices. This is referred to as 'the control of the political agenda' and, when this is practised, conflicts may stay latent. The 'interests' of the dominant pole in the power relation are, in these situations, antagonistic to the 'real interests' of those they exclude or dominate but, because these latter do not voice, or are even unaware of their interests, conflicts stay in a state of latency.

This tridimensional view of power has gained in recent years increased acceptance. Thus, Rhodes in his more recent work writes

*It is possible to distinguish between power as resources, power as rule governed interactions and power as the mobilisation of bias... Power must be seen as a multifaceted concept*

(Rhodes 1981, p 57-9)

Similar statements could be taken out of the works of Bacharach (1978), Clegg

(1979), Martin (1977), Saunders (1979), Simmie (1981), etc.

Though in this thesis the tridimensional view of power is considered the most appropriate way to study power relations in society, two reservations, and subsequent modifications, will be expressed to the viewpoint put forward by Lukes. The first concerns Lukes exclusive theoretical emphasis on conflicts of interests as the basis for power relations. The second derives from the idea that it is necessary to distinguish the study of power relations in specific social networks, from the study of power in society in general. If this distinction is not made, all analysis of power in society will, tendentially, end up with the same conclusions, no matter what specific relations constitute the object of analysis. These two problems will be discussed in the following section. Before engaging in that discussion, it is important to consider some criticisms to the tridimensional view of power.

Some of the most virulent attacks to the tridimensional view of power concern the idea (common in fact to the two dimensional view) that people, due to the 'mobilisation of bias' of political systems may be unaware of their real interests. Thus Wolfinger dismissed the idea of this form of 'false consciousness', as a

*label for popular opinion that does not follow leftist prescriptions and a shorthand way of saying that they don't know what's good for them*

(Wolfinger, 1971 p. 1066)<sup>5</sup>

This type of criticism, however, is not even shared by the most sophisticated proponents of the one dimensional view of power. While not accepting the idea of 'real interests', and sticking to the concept of preferences (subjective interests), Dahl openly recognised the socially constructed nature of those preferences. Writing about the role of political leaders he stressed that they

*do not merely respond to the preferences of constituents; leaders also shape their preferences... (more generally he stressed that)... almost the entire population has been subjected to some degree of indoctrination through the schools*

(Dahl., 1961; pp 164 and 317)

If the above type of criticism to the concept of 'real interest' does not seem to hold much water, the same cannot be said about the methodological problems associated with the practical use of the tridimensional view of power. Firstly, there is the question, raised by Polsby (1963), of the 'truly insuperable' obstacles to research which derive from the need to study what is not manifest (e.g. how to select the 'non-decisions' which are to be regarded as significant and deserving careful study. Secondly, if an observable consensus exists around a specific question how to decide whether that is a real, or a false, consensus? Of course, in theoretical terms the problem is easily solved by the tridimensional view of power, by referring to the 'real interests' of the actors (individuals, groups, etc.) involved. However, as Lukes (1974) recognizes, in relation to concrete situations it is sometimes extraordinarily difficult to identify what these 'real interests' really are. Indeed, there seems to be no easy way out of these problems. The broad dilemma in this respect is whether or not, the existence of important difficulties in operationalising a concept is reason enough for it to be abandoned, irrespective of its external interpretative utility within a theoretical framework. Critics of the tridimensional view of power appear to opt for a positive answer to this question. As such, they seem prepared to sacrifice the interpretative scope of the analysis to an overriding attempt to establish a close connection between concepts and research methods. Whether this solution is the most appropriate is, certainly, a matter for endless debate. In the end the option for this, or the alternative, solution has, probably, to be taken in terms of a cost-benefit analysis.

## 2. From Interests to Action Orientations

In the previous section it was argued that one of the major problems associated with the tridimensional view of power derived from the idea, put forward by Lukes (1974), that conflicts (overt, covert or latent) of real

interests are the exclusive source of power relations. Indeed, with necessary adaptations in the way the concepts of conflicts and interests are defined, the assumption of an obligatory association between conflicts of interests and power relations constitutes a central plank in most relational theories of power. Given this perspective the questions of how to define, and operationalise, the concept of interests are of the utmost importance.

In the one-dimensional view of power the definition of the actor's interests is unproblematic. Power relations are restricted to positive cases of decision-making, and the interests of the actors involved in the decisions are strictly identified with the actor's perceptions of their interests; through the output preferences (wants) they express during the decision-making process. This definition allows for a mild distinction to be made between interests and wants. Thus, one actor may misevaluate the impact of certain political outputs and, in result of this, express output preferences (wants) which are actually, against his interests. In the absence of such mistakes, however, the identification between preferences (wants) and interests is seen as absolute and unproblematic.

The introduction of the concept of non-decision making cast doubts on the validity of this identification between interests and preferences (wants). In fact, if the more powerful actor(s), in a specific relation, are able to prevent the less powerful to raise a specific issue, or to fully express their preferences, then the preferences (wants) expressed by the less powerful actors during decision-making processes cannot be taken as faithful representations of the interests of these actors. Thus, the two dimensional view of power associates the actors interests not only with the preferences they reveal during decision-making processes, but also with the grievances and concealed preferences (wants) connected with non-decision making situations. Like in the one dimensional view of power, however, the way in which preferences (open or concealed) and grievances are formulated are not questioned; both approaches adopt, therefore, a subjective definition of interests.

For the tridimensional view of power the actors' preferences and

grievances - and, what is more significant, the absence of these latter - may themselves be the result of 'mobilisation of bias' mechanisms, inherent to the social totality in which specific power relations occur. As Lukes notes

*it is not the supreme and most insidious exercise of power to prevent people, to whatever degree, from having grievances by shaping their perceptions, cognitions and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things, either because they can see or imagine no alternative to it, or because they see it as natural and unchangeable, or because they value it as divinely ordained and beneficial?*

(Lukes, 1974, p 24)

Given that the actors' perception of their interests, as revealed by expressed or concealed preferences (wants), is conditioned by the social context in which they exist than, in normal circumstances, a subjective definition of interests will not do. The adoption of the tridimensional view of power requires the acceptance, and operationalisation, of the concept of real (objective) interests. This however, is quite problematic.

### Operationalisation of the Concept of Real Interests

There appears to exist three broad alternatives for the operationalisation of the concept of 'real' (objective) interests. Firstly, there is the structuralist position which argues that interests are inherent to structured social positions irrespective of whether, and how, social actors happen to see them at any given point in time. Poulantzas (1973) early definition of 'class interests' provides a good example of the structuralist method of operationalising the concept of 'real interests'. Thus, for Poulantzas the interests of a given class are defined, in the domain of social practices, by what that class can possibly achieve (in the short and long run) as a result of its struggle against other classes. In this perspective it is possible for social actors, (classes included) to misrepresent their real interests but, as he wrote:

*The concept of interests can and must be stripped of all psychological connotations.... power as the capacity to realize interests refers not to imaginary interests, in a situation where, on account of ideology, they are dislocated from interests - limits*

*(real interests), but to those latter themselves*

(Poulantzas, 1973 pp 112-113)

The main flaw of this method of operationalising the concept of real interests, as with structuralist social theories in general is that it is both tautological and teleological. Indeed as Offe noted:

*Such a method which only supposedly stands in the succession of Marxist 'Orthodoxy', runs the danger of raising to a theoretical premise what is to be demonstrated by analysis (the class character of the organizations of political domination and, at the same time, of reducing to insignificance the historical particularities of the selectivity of a concrete institutional system—whether or not it can be brought into agreement with the dogmatically advanced class concept*

(Offe, 1976, p 86)

Further, it does not allow for the consideration of the dialectical relationships between social structures and political behaviour. It posits a direct, and one-directional, causal relationship between social structures and political behaviour, explaining away how social structures are produced and reproduced, and how human consciousness mediates the structural elements of society. At its worst it considers individuals (classes) as mere 'bearers' of given social structures, mechanically reflecting on their practices the effects of the social structures. Whether in situations of absolute structural determination one might talk about power is itself open to debate.

The second method to operationalise the concept of 'real interests' rests on the premise that these are, in the last instance, subjectively determined, and can only be hypothesised (Habermas, 1976) or unconclusively identified (Lukes, 1974).

For Habermas interests can be hypothesised but not identified. This formulation derives from Habermas' general endeavour to develop a linguistic reformulation of the philosophical foundations of 'historical materialism'. Central in this attempt is the concept of 'discursive will formation', by which he means a process of communicative interaction in which people engage with the sole purpose of judging the truth of a problematic norm (practical discourse).

The speech situation of a discourse requires, ideally, 'a suspension of all the constraints of action', putting out of play all motives, except that of a willingness to come to an understanding of all lateral state of affairs (that may or may not exist) and the correctness of all lateral norms (that may or may not be correct). Further, he argues that in complex societies the separation of pseudo-consensus from real consensus situations can only be achieved by comparing normative structures existing at a given time, with the hypothetical state of a system of norms formed, ceteris paribus, discursively.

As the conditions required for the exercise of 'discursive will formation' are ideal conditions, unlikely to be replicated in concrete social situations, then the ascertainment of interests can only proceed through hypothetical construction. Or as Habermas put it:

*... by counter - factually imagining the limit case of a conflict between the involved parties in which they would be forced to consciously perceive their interests and strategically assert them ... the social scientist can only hypothetically project this ascription of interests; indeed a direct confirmation of this hypothesis would be possible only in the form of a practical discourse among the very individuals or, groups involved.*

(Habermas, 1976, p 114)

Habermas' formulation clearly denies the possibility, under normal conditions, of a given definition of interests being empirically proved truth or false. On the contrary, the approach to the problem developed by Lukes (1974) attempts to come to terms with this problem of justifying the relevant counterfactual. Thus, for him, the identification, by the social actors', of their real interests requires, not the 'ideal' conditions implicit in a situation of 'discursive will formation' but, rather, mere conditions of relative autonomy and choice. These conditions are sought to exist, for example, in situations where submission and intellectual subordination are absent, or diminished, by the removal or relaxation of repressive mechanisms (what Gramsci (1975) called 'abnormal times') and in situations where people react to perceived opportunities to escape from subordinate positions in hierarchial systems.

The main problem with this formulation is that the concept of relative

autonomy tends to give raise to circular arguments. As Bradshaw (1976) notes, it is impossible to precisely set the limits of conditions of relative autonomy and, as such, all arguments which rest on this concept are by their very nature tautological. Indeed, Lukes (1974, 1977) does not dispute this criticism in toto. This would be impossible for him any way as he accepts that

*the notion of 'interests' is irreducibly an evaluative notion ... (and that)... different conceptions of what interests are are associated with different moral and political positions*

(Lukes, 1974, p. 34)

Thus, he accepts that by the nature of the case, that is to say the evidence which can be adduced in support of the relevant counterfactuals, implicit in identifying exercises of power of the three dimensional type, will never be conclusive. Nevertheless he argues that

*one can take steps to find out what is that people would have done otherwise*

(Lukes, 1974 p 50)

The third method of operationalizing the concept of real interests is the one adopted, among others, by Saunders (1979) and Simmie (1981). This method rests on a case by case analysis of what is at stake in any goal-setting or confrontational relation, and in the assumption that 'real interests' refer to the achievement of benefits and the avoidance of costs in any particular relation. As Saunders (1979) recognizes this formulation owes much to Bentham's two principles of pleasure and pain, differing from these, mainly, by rejecting that individuals are the best judges of their own interests. For Saunders this method permits, in every situation, to identify objectively the real interests of the social actors concerned. This claim, however, appears suspect.

Saunders identifies three potential criticisms which might be developed against his definition of interests. It is the author's view, however, that his identification, and subsequent discussion of potential criticisms acts, mainly, as a sort of preemptive strike against criticisms. It is argued, here, that Saunders' operationalisation method offers no particular advantage over the



second method referred to above, and that the attempt to devise a positivist adequacy between concept and operationalisation methodology leads to the adoption of an unduly strict concept of interests. Further, it is contended here that Saunders is pushed to implicitly accept a monocausal determination of human behaviour. In order to justify these assertions it is important to comment on the discussion which Saunders, himself, provides of the potential criticisms to his method of operationalisation.

The first criticism, is that the identification of benefit and cost is, like the definition of interests, on which it is based, unavoidably evaluative. The counterargument put forward by Saunders in this respect is that it is possible to assess costs and benefits in any empirical context, once we have identified the nature of that context. As regards urban politics, for example, he argues that the context is that of policy-making by institutions, which function to allocate scarce public resources among different members of a defined population. According to him, the interests of the different members of that population lie in securing the maximum benefits which can accrue to them through this allocative process (e.g. in terms of the quality of schooling made available to them, on the environmental and locational advantages of the area in which they live, etc...) and in avoiding, as far as possible, costs which are thereby generated (e.g. in terms of local taxation, the location of public resources with negative external effects etc.). The main problem with this counterargument is that it is strictly casuistic and, as such, it rests on the hypothesis that, in each and every case, it will be possible to identify 'the nature of the context'; and, subsequently, how benefits and costs might be assessed. This hypothesis ne va pas de soi and, as such, Saunders' method of operationalisation does not seem robust enough to claim a general applicability. Thus, for example, Saunders claims that having identified the nature of the urban politics context he is in a position to demonstrate objectively which groups benefit from local authority density provisions. In making this claim, however, he seems to assume that low residential densities are a benefit in themselves what is, clearly, an

'irreducibly evaluative statement'<sup>6</sup>

Insofar as the criteria to identify benefits and costs remains undefined the third method of operationalising interests rests, also, on hypothetical assumptions and on evaluative judgements. The only way to escape to this situation would be to establish, prior to the analysis, clear evaluative standards. This is the course of action Simmie (1981) adopt when he equates benefits with the accretion of economic power (i.e., command over the use of a society's scarce resources) between two points of time. In a similar mood Runciman (1970) argued that something is in a social actor interests if it will result in an improvement of his position, in respect to wealth, prestige or social power. However, as Saunders (1979) justly remarks with reference to Runciman's formulation, the acceptance of this formulation would imply a restriction of the whole social context and of the field of interests itself, to relations in which the outcomes affect wealth, prestige or social power. It seems, therefore, that this method of operationalising interests leads either to hypothetical assumptions about the omnipresent ability to devise adequate criteria for the identification of costs and benefits, or to an a priori restriction of the field of interests possible to analyse.

A second point of criticism discussed by Saunders is the possibility that his method, because it derives from a model of interests based upon the pursuit of maximum benefit, may be criticized as not taking into account those situations where people deliberately act in a way which is not intended to bring about maximum benefit for themselves. Saunders counter argument in this respect is that this criticism mixes up two separate things. On the one hand, the possibility of an actor to rationally act against its real interests; and on the other hand, the question of whether this possibility provides sufficient grounds to reject his theory of interests, which postulates an alternative mode of behaviour. Saunders accepts the first point and rejects the second.

Saunders position in this regard only seems acceptable if one accepts as given the terms in which he chose to put the problem. If these are questioned

Saunders position appears less adequate. To begin with there is the question of whether, or not, human behaviour in specific situations is determined by a single 'interest', 'commitment', etc. If, following authors such as Bourdieu, Chamberodon and Passeron (1971) and Touraine (1980), we accept that this may be not the case then the acceptability of Saunders position seems to depend on the validity of a number of assumptions reminiscent of Benthamism. These would include the assumptions that real interests are connexed, that they are related transitively and that the aggregate level of interests attainment can be derived from interpersonal comparison and addition. For these assumptions to be valid, however, it would be necessary to guarantee that all benefits are measurable, in the first instance; and then, that they are measurable according to a standard procedure, this latter assumption being dismissed by Saunders himself.<sup>7</sup> In the absence of this situation the model of benefit maximisation does not make much sense and can be substituted, with advantage, for example, by a model of administrative behaviour (Simon, 1957). Further, a model of benefit maximisation, or cost minimisation, implicitly accepts that only the quantity of benefits (costs) matters. This is questionable on its own as J.S. Mill himself argued on Utilitarianism, that

*the quality of pleasures is important notwithstanding the quantity.*<sup>8</sup>

Given that all three methods to operationalise the notion of real interests present theoretical and/or methodological shortcomings, the question that needs to be answered is which of the three methods appears to offer a better balance of advantages and disadvantages, in the context of the issues being analysed in this thesis. As far as the first method is concerned, it comes as no surprise, at this stage, to say that the theoretical flaws associated with it are so great that it does not deserve much consideration. Given this perspective a choice needs to be made between the second and third methods. The option for the second method will be justified in criteria of methodological and theoretical appropriateness to the analysis undertaken in this thesis.

In methodological terms, the third method of operationalising the notion of real interests appears particularly appropriate to analyses in which the major objective is assessing the political outcomes of a given activity, or social process. In the case of this thesis, however, given the difficulties to establish what the regional planning outcomes really are, the aim of the analysis is the study of regional planning outputs. In these circumstances, it would be totally inconsistent to opt for a method of operationalising the notion of real interests which presents exactly the same difficulties which led, previously, to the option of studying outputs rather than outcomes.

In theoretical terms, the main reason for passing over the third method is that, by definition or practical difficulties, it eliminates from the political process a whole series of forms of behaviour. Thus, not only it excludes, by definition, those forms of behaviour in which social actors act against their 'material interests', but it also excludes those forms of behaviour which are guided by the pursuit of 'symbolic interests' which do not entail benefits, or costs, (measurable at least) for the participants. As this last type of action orientations (pursuit of 'symbolic interests') plays, arguably, an important part in regional planning conflicts, an operational definition of interests which a priori excludes them cannot conduce to an adequate study of regional planning outputs. It appears preferable, in this situation, to rely on a hypothetical process of definition of interests which allows for the consideration of a multiplicity (eventually contradictory) of 'action orientations', in pursuit of 'symbolic' and 'material' interests.

At this stage it is important to emphasise that an analysis in terms of political outputs, instead of political outcomes, permits to avoid many of the problems associated with the identification of tridimensional forms of power relations, meaning by this situations in which the more powerful actors achieve their interests through the indirect mobilisation of bias. This brings the analysis to the second question left open in the previous section, that is, the problem of establishing a distinction between the study of power in relation to

a specific activity (specific social networks) and the study of power in a given social totality.

In this respect what is necessary to bear in mind is that any specific set of power relations associated with a given activity, always take place in a context already structured by other power relations. The outputs of that activity will, therefore, be influenced by power relations which may not be specific to that activity. If the effect of these wider power relations goes unnoticed, then there is a fair possibility that the effects of the wider power relations may be confused with the specific effects of the activity being analysed. For example, it may be attributed to the regional planning activity, as such, effects which result from the operation of market mechanisms in a social formation dominated by capitalist social relations of production. This would amount to completely disregarding the counterfactual argument which, following Allison (1975), must be the cornerstone of any political analysis. How the distinction is to be made however, can only be answered after considering the specificity of the activity, and associated context, being analysed.

### 3. Actors in Regional Planning

This section analyses a number of issues related with the role of political parties, pressure groups and unorganised actors in regional planning. As such, it expands and/or supplements the considerations made on these matters in ch IV. 4 of the main body of the thesis.

#### Political Parties

Max Weber has provided, perhaps, the better known definition of political parties when he referred to them as

*voluntary association for propaganda and agitation seeking to acquire power in order to ... realize objective aims or personal advantages of both.*<sup>9</sup>

This definition encapsulates two interrelated aspects, which is necessary to

consider in more detail. On the one hand political parties can be seen as examples of ideological groups, that is, social groups which are bound together by a common body of rationalised and systematized beliefs, reflecting the situation of the society in which they originate. Because they are committed to 'propaganda and agitation' and to the realization of the 'objective aims' which provided, in part at least, the basis of association, political parties are in the origins of political conflicts. On the other hand, however, political parties are instrumental in the resolution of political conflicts. As Weber's definition suggests, one of objectives of political parties is to acquire 'political power' or share in the exercise of power; they seek to win seats at elections, to name Ministers and councillors, and to take control of government at the various levels of political administration.

According to the majority of authors this second dimension of the definition of political parties, namely the collective pursuit of power, is of overriding importance. Mackenzie goes as far as saying that

*it does not matter whether the party is organized on the basis of a set of principles on which all its members are agreed or whether, alternatively, it represents merely an organised appetite for power*

(MacKenzie, 1974, p 279)

In the absence of a common set of ideological beliefs, no matter how broadly and vaguely defined, it would be difficult, however, to maintain the cohesion of parties, and to legitimise this role viz-à-viz the electorate. In these circumstances, and although accepting that they have uneven importance, it is important to bear in mind the two dimensions of the definition when considering the role of political parties in relation to regional planning outputs.

Looking first to the dimension which associates political parties with the 'pursuit of political power', it is claimed here that this has the effect of focussing the organisational and policy priorities of parties, and of their individual members, at those geographical levels which coincide with major levels of political administration. As English regions do not correspond to any level of political-administration regional matters tend to rank low in the list of

priorities of the main political parties both in organisational and policy terms. It is now important to substantiate this statement.

As far as the territorial organisation of the two main political parties are concerned they are very similar. Both parties have some form of 'regional' organisation (called area organisation in the Conservative party) and below this level (not hierarchically) there are: 1) constituency parties corresponding to every and each MP constituency; and, 2) District and County organisations corresponding to the two tiers of local government. In the case of the Conservative party the country is divided in 11 area offices, staffed by some 40 Areas Officers and assistant secretaries. In the case of the Labour party the country is divided by 12 Regional Offices staffed by an equal number of full time regional organisers. With few exception, noticeably the West Midlands region, the geographical area covered by the regional (area) offices of the parties do not coincide with standard economic planning regions.

Perhaps the main reason for the emergence, and subsequent development, of a regional organisation of political parties was administrative expediency namely: the need to give technical and material support to constituency parties during electoral campaigns and to act as 'eyes and ears' of Transport House and Central Office during the processes leading to the selection of prospective MPs etc... It is, therefore, not surprising that

*regional organisers and area agents act as the field administrative agents of their respective head offices... Although their own relationship with the centre is highly controlled, they themselves lack any formal authority at either constituency or local party level.*

(Wilson, 1975, pp 3-6)

Both parties have also some form of 'democratic' regional organisation. In the Conservative Party each provincial area has an area council with up to 1 200 members nominated by constituency associations. This council meets once a year to discuss all types of issues, and pass resolutions which bind nobody to their application. Not surprisingly the attendance to these councils tends to be much lower than its nominal membership.

In the case of the Labour party there is an annual Regional Conference attended by delegates representing affiliated Trade Unions, constituency parties, co-operatives, woman's organisations, etc. This conference elects a Regional Executive Committee to take care of the routine administrative work of the regional democratic structure. The post of Secretary to this committee is statutorily occupied by the full time appointed regional Conference, like the Conservative Party Area Conference, discusses all sorts of matters, and passes them to the regional executive committee which decides if it forwards them and to whom. The Regional Executive Committee has no authority over anybody except when conducting appeals on matters such as the appointment of members to national panels (e.g. on local government).

In both parties, as Wilson (1975) noted, the experience of these regional (area) councils has not proved very successful, and there are few doubts that the main reason for this situation is the absence of a regional level of administration with which these councils might identify. As a regional organiser of the Labour Party told the author

*If there was regional government the situation would be different*<sup>10</sup>

The lack of a regional level of political administration in England, and the associated paucity of the regional organisation of the major political parties has obvious effects in the most important arena of party politics - the House of Commons. For the majority of regions the oneparty committees, constituted by MPs representing one, or the other, party in that region (Scotland and Wales excepted) have only nominal existence. As far as pluripartidary committees are concerned, until 1975 the English regions had not in Parliament a specific channel for airing their problems; contrary to what happened for their respective areas by the Scottish and Welsh Grand Committees. In June 1975, however, a Standing Committee on Regional Affairs was set up to deliberate on the English regions. Its nominal membership comprises all members for the English constituencies but, as each sitting is, generally, reserved to



discuss matters concerning one region, the turnout in each meeting varies considerably. Borthwick (1978) argues that the creation of the committee has been prompted more by the fact that the House of Commons timetable in the 1974-75 session was overloaded, than by anything else. Further, he argues that the committee is a mere talking shop and could only, possibly, agree on a motion saying 'the committee having discussed the matter X'. Most of the speeches are constituency, rather than regionally oriented even in the discussion of regional strategies. On a whole there is little evidence that its existence has done anything to encourage regional interest and identity among MPs (Borthwick, 1978).

This theme of regional identity among MPs has, itself, been the object of a very interesting piece of research conducted by McDonald (1979). He set up to analyse all speeches (2,061) on regional policy produced in the House of Commons in the period 1968-1976. These speeches were then divided in four groups. On the one hand speeches in which the main emphasis was with the policy as a general instrument of economics policy (overall regional policy). On the other hand, speeches the main emphasis of which was with the policy as it affects a particular area. This type of speeches was then divided into three sub-types according to whether the area concerned coincided with: a) an economic planning region (planning regional interest); b) a constituency (constituency area interest); and, c) a subdivision of an economic planning region bigger than individual constituencies (sub-regional interest).

McDonald argued that only a combination of a big proportion of speeches with a 'planning regional interest' with a low small proportion of 'constituency area interest' and 'sub-regional interest' would reveal that MPs identify themselves with the planning regions where their constituencies are located. As Table 1 shows, this happened only in relation to Welsh and Scottish MPs. Given this situation McDonald concluded that it was unlikely that MPs might provide the impetus for a reorganisation of the territorial political administration, in order to give a more prominent role to the 'interests' of the individual economic planning regions in England. In the light of the above evidence, it

## Speech Origin (interest bias)

Number and percentage

Planning Region	Overall Regional Interest	Planning Regions Interest	Constituency Area Interest	Sub-regional Interest	Raw Total
Norther	61 25	20 8	80 33	78 33	239 100
North-West	78 26	27 9	145 48	54 18	304 100
Yorkshire and Humberside	47 27	32 18	77 43	21 12	177 100
West Midlands	32 34	8 8	50 53	5 5	95 100
East Midlands	36 62	3 5	19 33	0 0	58 100
South-West	60 45	22 17	41 31	8 6	131 100
South-East	136 57	16 7	76 32	11 5	239 100
East Anglia	7 19	9 25	18 50	2 6	36 100
Scotland	57 12	269 59	101 22	32 7	459 100
Wales	30 11	131 47	68 24	49 18	278 100
Total	544 27	537 27	675 33	260 13	2016 100

Table 1: Interests Bias of Speeches on Regional Policy - 1968-1976  
(Source: McDonald, 1979, Table 3)

appears safe to conclude that insofar as political parties act in the 'pursuit of power' they tend to reflect the existing distribution of levels of political administration. Regional matters, and regional planning matters in particular, are therefore unlikely to rank high in the parties list of priorities.

But political parties are, also, ideological groups and it is important to see whether, as ideological groups, these issues are likely to receive more careful consideration. One instance in which arguably the ideological commitments of political parties comes into the open is in the preparation of election manifestos.<sup>11</sup> The analysis of the election manifestos of the three main parties in the period from the end of the II world war onwards permits to draw some tentative conclusions about the positions of the three main parties in relation to regional issues. The main conclusion is that, with the exception of the Liberal Party, the British main political parties did not reveal any systematic concern with the issues of regional government or regional planning. Throughout the 1950s references to these matters hardly found their way into election manifestos. In relation to the general election campaign of May 1955 David Butler could conclude that

*local and Regional questions were neglected even more than before*

(Butler 1955, p 90)

The only exception throughout this period, was the expression of a Liberal Party commitment to devolution to Scotland and Wales.

In the general elections of 1964, and in association with the popularity of the idea of indicative economic planning, the election manifestos of all three main political parties dedicated considerable attention to regional issues. In this occasion, also, the position of the Liberal Party was more advanced than any of the other two major parties. While these argued the case for concentrating powers into regional boards, made of central government officials, the Liberal Party put forward the case for elected regional assemblies in the English regions, with responsibilities for regional planning, the management of public sector capital expenditure in infrastructures, etc.

Afterwards the interest expressed by the two main parties on regional matters declined, and it was up to the Liberal Party to continue to argue the case for elected regional assemblies in the English regions (e.g. in the 1966 general election). The rise of Scottish and Welsh nationalism during the first half of the 1970s provided for a revival of party interest on regional issues, as revealed in election manifestos. The main concerns were, obviously, with the issue of Welsh and specially Scottish devolution, but the English regions were involved in the process, as well.

The main conclusion which can be drawn from these developments is that regional issues found their way into the election manifestos of the Conservative and Labour parties not on their own merits, but because of wider ideological or political developments in the arena of party politics (planning ideology in the first half of the 1960s and nationalist movements in Scotland and Wales during the 1970s). As it is now well documented (e.g. Ducker and Brown, 1980; Keating, 1982) the two major political parties (better the dominant groups in the two major political parties) were never really committed to regional devolution in England or, for the matter, to a regional planning activity formulated and decided at the regional level. Further it has been argued (MacKay and Cox, 1979) that post-war British planning has not been particularly influenced by competing party ideologics, and that politicians have tended to accept the wisdom of technical arguments or expert advice. This conclusion must, however, be qualified.

Regional planning, by its very nature, interwovens with many other areas of government policy (housing, regional policy, etc.). Insofar as these areas are the object of ideological disputes (housing policy is an example of a policy areas where party ideological differences are more evident) regional planning practice is likely to be affected. In these circumstances the fact that one, or other, major party is in office is not indifferent for the determination of regional planning outputs; even if political parties, as such appear to have contributed little to the creation of political-ideological conflicts around the

organisational and substantive aspects of the regional planning activity.

### Pressure Groups

Pressure groups are, like political parties, political organizations, that is organisations which aim to intervene in the relations of influence and power that shape the nature and characteristics of state outputs.<sup>12</sup> Contrary to political parties, however, pressure groups do not themselves seek, in general, to win to their members elected positions in the state apparatus. Their mode of operation is, rather, to bring pressure on those groups within the state apparatus which are influential in the determination of state outputs.

The above definition of pressure groups is by no means uncontroversial. Thus, it excludes from the field of pressure groups all political parties, while Potter (1956), for example, has argued that minor parties are best considered as pressure groups. It seems to the author however, that this latter conception is both static and overlooks the role minor parties play in party politics (e.g. in election alliances or in governmental coalitions). It differs, also, from Kimber and Richardson (1974) definition insofar as it only includes organised groups, that is groups with some kind of formal structure. Finally it is more narrow than the definition presented by Truman (1951), as it considers organised groups only in relation to state outputs and not in relation to all conflicts of interests between groups in society.

The intervention of pressure groups in the determination of state outputs has been considered, and justified, in a variety of ways. According to Finer (1974) two complementary perspectives seem to receive more empirical support than any others. Firstly, 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, etc... Secondly, the thesis of the desirability, and even necessity, of pressure groups as a complement to the primary circuit of representation in the modern representative democracies. According to this view, pressure groups provide response to two sorts of problems: a) Those associated with the fact that elected members of government

are elected for a long period and on a vague mandate, and b) those deriving from the fact that the details of policy are entrusted, not merely for execution but often for formulation, to state officials. In these circumstances, if state outputs are to be effective and/or democratic

*it is necessary that groups that represent the interested publics be in constant contact with the elected representatives on the one hand (in order to supply or contest the details of the programmes) and, on the other hand, with the officials appointed to advise such governments and to execute their final decisions*

(Finer, 1974, p 258)

For the original proponents of the latter view (e.g. Truman, 1951) the 'imperfect pluralist' political system that it implied was not seen as posing 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. More recently, however, it has been argued that the increasing role of pressure-groups has led to the widening of the gap between state policies and popular control. Further, it has been claimed that this development preannounces the shift away from pluralist and towards corporatist political regimes controlled, in practice, not by the principles of representative democracy, but by the interaction of the more powerful pressure-groups with an élite of state personal (elected members and state officials) (e.g. Harrison, 1980).

Before moving on to consider how the whole set of pressure groups might best be divided, to provide an operational classification to be used in the assessment of pressure-groups activity in regional planning, it seems important to briefly consider how pressure groups operate. This involves answering, at least, the following questions: What are the basis of power of pressure groups? On whom they exert pressure upon?; what is the relation between the form in which they operate and their chances of success and failure?; and, finally, in relation to what situation do they operate.

The basis of power of pressure-groups are manifold and vary from group to group. Among the authors who have examined the problem (e.g. Eckstein,

1960; Truman, 1968), there are agreement that they include: the size of the groups' membership; its organisational cohesion; the status and prestige of its members and the political skills of leaders; the usefulness of the group as a source of technical knowledge; the extent to which elected politicians and state officials are formally, or informally, members of the group; the group's financial and economic resources, etc. Allison (1975) divides these factors into two major groups: sanctional and nonsanctional resources. The former correspond to elements which the group can use, or threaten to use, if state outputs do not correspond to their interests (e.g. size of membership can act as a basis for the group to threaten with vote-swinging). Non sanctional resources cannot be used in the same way, but they influence the form in which the group operates and, therefore, its chances of success or failure (e.g. quality of activists).

At this point it is important to stress that the above elements are not equally distributed among the whole set of pressure-groups. Financial and economic resources, technical expertise, etc., are disproportionately distributed between groups and although these elements might be compensated by other elements (e.g. size of membership), there is a good case to suspect that imperfect competition between pressure groups will result in situations of oligopoly (McKenzie, 1974). This is worrying (for supporters of pluralist democracy) on two grounds. Firstly, because it can contribute to the reinforcement of the powers of the dominant groups in society. Finer (1974), for example, has shown that individual participation in pressure groups increases with the level of education and with socio economic status. Given this perspective, pressure groups representing the already more powerful groups of the community are likely to be not only more powerful but also more numerous. Secondly, groups having a wider power basis are likely to be more active on a wide range of issues, than groups which having scarce resources will have to concentrate these resources on selected issues. Thus, on a number of issues only the voices of the more powerful are likely to be heard (England, 1974).

The second question which needs to be considered is on whom pressure-

groups exert pressure. A rough answer to this question would be to say that pressure groups concentrate about any locus of power, and exert pressure on all those who are seen as having an important role in determining those political outputs related to the issues with which the group is concerned. Thus, Clements (1971) noted that after the major proposals of the regional strategy formulated by the South West Economic Planning Council (SWEPC, 1966) were rejected by central government, pressure groups diminished their concern about the S.W.E.P.C.

The more obvious, and traditional, targets of pressure groups actions are the elected members of the state apparatus; MPs and Ministers at the national level and councillors at the local level. The way in which the elected members are pressurised does not, necessarily, involve the organisation of open campaigns, mass-lobbying or other visible methods. In Britain, unlike in America,

*it is a common procedure for government (at both central and local levels) to consult pressure-groups on issues that concern them, and groups are often co-opted into committees considering matters affecting them*

(Fujisham, 1975, p 22)

Kimber and Richardson (1974) for example, revealed that in the early 1970s both the TUC and the CBI were represented, each of them, in more than 120 non-departmental public bodies. Further as Stewart (1974) and Newton (1968) noted, pressure-groups have for long relied on the technique of appointing MPs and local councillors to honorary positions within the groups and by this process create, or increase, the elected member's commitment to the group's objectives.

State officials were traditionally not main targets for pressure groups' activities. This situation, however, has dramatically changed in the last decades, in association with the growing recognition of the important role state officials play in the determination of state outputs. Because state officials are the main protagonists in the day-to-day implementation of state policies, they have long periods of time to establish close connections with pressure-groups. In some policy areas the relations between government officials and pressure groups have reached levels of, almost, partnership; agriculture often being referred to in order to illustrate this point (Self and Storing,



1974)<sup>13</sup>. More generally Stewart warned against the danger that, because of the relations between civil servants and pressure-groups

*central departments may become mere pressure groups within the government*

(Stewart, 1974, p 293)

Taking this argument a step further Habermas argued that the mode of operation of the state in late capitalism makes this danger unavoidable

*the various (state) bureaucracies are incompletely co-ordinated and because of their deficient capacity for perceiving and planning, dependent on the influence of their clients. It is precisely this deficient rationality of governmental administration that guarantees the success of organised special interests*

(Habermas 1976, p 60)

The third question which needs to be considered in relation to the action of pressure groups, is the relation between the methods pressure groups use in their action and their rates of success and failure (effectiveness). The methods which pressure groups use for exerting pressure are largely determined by what Ingles (1971) called the group's 'historical-structural syndrome'. This includes factors such as: the access the group has to the locus where decisions are taken; the representativeness of its leadership; whether, or not, the pressure groups can reach decisions in negotiations with government (elected members or state officials) which the organisation will be able to sustain; whether, or not, the groups has something positive to offer to government; whether, or not, the government (relevant elected members and/or state officials) respects the group etc.

The factors in the above list relate to two major aspects. First, to what were referred earlier as the basis of power of pressure-groups (expertise, organisational cohesion of the pressure-groups, etc.). Second, to factors peculiar to the structure of the state apparatus Fujisham (1975), for example noted that the fact that pressure groups activity in the U.S.A. is much more visible than in Britain can be, largely, explained by reference to the structural and procedural dissimilarities of the state apparatus in the two countries. For

this author for example, the strong party discipline, and cabinet dominated Parliament in Britain, insulates the legislative process more from pressure groups influence than the structure of American government, which concentrates political party activity at the state level. Further, in Britain, unlike in the USA, it is a common procedure for government to consult pressure groups on issues that concerns them, avoiding, therefore, the need for them to take the initiative in lobbying. Only those groups whose 'basis of power' do not grant them automatic access to loci of power have to rely on methods of 'grass roots lobby'.

The problem with this situation, as various authors have noted, (e.g. Dearlove, 1974; Kimber and Richardson 1974; Saunders, 1979), is that there is a close interrelationship between the type of demands a group formulates, the methods it uses to express those demands and the success it achieves. Using the terminology employed by Dearlove (1974) 'helpful groups', that is groups with an adequate basis of power tend to put forward 'acceptable demands' and express these in a 'proper communication style'; their access to loci of power is good and so are their rates of success. On the contrary, as Saunders noted, groups with poor basis of power can take little advantage of the less formal and less public channels for exerting pressure, which are, exactly, those considered proper by the relevant elements in the state apparatus. Insofar as they resort to 'grass roots lobby' tactics their demands can more easily be dismissed as 'irresponsible' or 'utopian' and these groups tend to be considered as 'unhelpful'. Their effectiveness will, ceteris paribus, be lower than that of groups who can use for their own advantage the 'rules of access' to policy makers (Saunders, 1979).

It is important to note that what has been said does not amount to the proposition of a 'conspiracy theory', of elected members and state officials, against certain groups; nor it postulates a deterministic and absolute split between successful and unsuccessful groups. In relation to the first issue the problem is that all social actors are influenced in their behaviour by the

perception they have of the situations confronted and this perception is, in turn, shaped by the 'appreciative system' which is used by the actors concerned. The consideration of a group as helpful, or unhelpful, may, in these circumstances, be totally involuntary.

As far as the second problem is concerned it is important to remember that the bases of power of pressure groups are manyfold and that the lack of a specific resource (e.g. technical expertise) can be compensated by the abundance of another (e.g. size or degree of activism of membership). Whether one, or the other, factor will prove more important can only be decided in relation to specific processes.

Finally, it is important to say a few words about the question of 'in relation to what situations pressure groups decide to exert pressure'. In broad terms the answer to this question is that the pattern of activity of a pressure group depends on the perception the group (leaders of the group) have of the nature of the situation it confronts, in relation to their own aims and the group's basis of power. This answer has, obviously, two dimensions. The first dimension is that the activities of a group are dependant on its basis of power, both qualitatively and quantitatively. If a group totally lacks technical expertise in relation to a problem, the solution of which depends, heavily, on technical arguments, there is not much point for the group to commit itself to that question. Further, pressure groups because of the limitation of their basis of power have to be selective on the identification of the outputs they are going to press for. This may involve the definition of a strategy, in which certain issues are purely abandoned, in order for the group to concentrate its attention on other issues. It goes without saying it, the eventual definition of such a strategy will be influenced by the aims of the group.<sup>14</sup>

This brings the argument 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 their aims. This depends on an assessment not only of the nature of the power relations involved in

specific situations but, also, of the likely impact of the outputs of those relations on the achievement of the aims of the group. This distinction is important to be made in regard to power relations in the regional planning activity. This activity might have, potentially, fundamental importance in the evolution of regional socio-economic features. In England, however, central government was never fully committed to regional planning findings and recommendations and, as Watson (1975) noted, this resulted in a failure of regional planning to attract the cooperation of other bodies. The overall importance of the activity was, accordingly, diminished and in these circumstances it would not be surprising to verify that pressure groups gave only sporadic attention to the activity.

#### Unorganised Individuals and Groups

In this section attention will concentrate on the role of public participation and regionalism in regional planning.

#### Public Participation

As far as the author is aware the only occasion in which an attempt was made to involve the public in the formulation of a regional strategy was during the preparation of the Strategic Choices for East Anglia (EAJT, 1975). In that occasion, and with the help of external consultants, a number of techniques were used to obtain public participation, including the use of questionnaires, in-depth interviews and discussion groups (Hoinville Spence and Shaheen, 1974). The results of the experience were disappointing but, as Hart Skelcher and Wedgwood-Oppenheim (1978) noted this can be attributed, partly at least to errors in the way the exercise was conducted. People were asked to choose between very general strategic alternative (e.g. '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'),

these alternatives were put out of context (e.g. it was not indicated what was to be provided: roads, schools, etc.). Further, the public consulted was neither given an indication of the means that would be necessary to realize the competing alternatives, nor they were informed of the relative costs and benefits which would accrue to them from their realisation.

What has just been said should not be interpreted as meaning that public participation in regional planning can be easily achieved, if at all. On the one hand the complexity of the regional planning process acts as an obstacle to this. The same can be said in relation to the lack of information of the public in the technical matters involved, and the difficulty to interest a representative proportion of the public in the regional planning process. On the other hand, it is important to stress that all these problems can be minimized, if not avoided, altogether, by the use of a number of a number of techniques. The use of sampling methods can be resort to in order to reduce the problem of low numerical participation. The combined use of techniques such as AIDA, differential semantics, elasticity of preferences, etc., can, significantly, improve the chance of people to rationally choose between competing alternatives. Finally, as Allison stressed

*the ability to make valid political judgements is, by its very nature, more widespread than the ability to make correct technical calculations*

(Allison, 1975, p 105)

To a large extent, as the author has stressed elsewhere, the so called unfeasibility of public participation reflects more the prejudices of state officials and elected members alike, than the intrinsic difficulties of the process (Cardoso e Martins, 1978)

One of the consequences of the lack of public participation in the regional planning process is that, the already inadequate statutory public participation in local planning, is further impoverished. In the examination in public of Structure Plans, for example, an important element in the discussions is the extent to which the proposals of the Structure Plan conform with the

recommendations, and overall content of the existing regional strategy. Thus, public participation in structure planning is constrained by a planning system in which the public play no significant role, and in relation to which there is no form of democratic control at the regional level.

### Regionalism

The expression regionalism has been used in anglo-saxon literature with different meanings. Keating (1982), for example, distinguishes between regionalism as referring to institutions of intermediate government, located territorially between central and local government; and regionalism as referring to specific types of area over which certain functions of government should be performed, irrespective of the level of government which is performing them. Massey (1978) in turn, refers to regionalism as the analysis of intranational spatial disparities. Finally Schattschneider defined regionalism as:

*a system of politics in which all classes within a region collaborate in order to advance the interests of one region as a whole as opposed to the interests of other regions*

(Schattschneider, 1959, p 111)

In this thesis following Mazères (1978) the expression regionalism is used with a meaning close to that suggested by Schattschneider. It is used to refer not to any particular form of state action, but rather in relation to certain concepts, aspirations and power struggles originated in the civil society, which overlap with various social institutions but without being contained in any of these. More specifically, it refers to a project and system of practices which overflow the limits of a mere movement of opinion, or process of institutional pressure, to become, in all its dimensions, a social movement orientated to the achievement of socio-economic and political goals.

What are then the goals of these regionalist movements and which types of reivindications do they present?<sup>15</sup> Regionalist movements seem to have two major types of goals: a) the redistribution of state functions and responsibilities in favour of a regional level of political administration; and,

b) the affirmation, or recovering, of a regional collective identity (ethnic, linguistic, etc.). It is important to say a few words about each of these types of reivindications.

The regionalist aspiration based on the principle of redistribution of state functions and responsibilities, is centered around two main themes: regional development and institutional decentralisation (regionalisation). The first theme encompasses, at least, two different types of political discourse. On the one hand it may be associated with claims that economic policies, as pursued by central government, are biased against the region, and/or do not reveal enough adequacy and sensitivity to the economic problems faced by the region. On the other hand, it may relate to a wider claim that regional economic problems derive from the 'exploitation' of some regions by others, and that the only way to achieve economic development in the former type of regions is to adopt an approach of 'self-reliant' and 'closed' economic development. Both types of discourse share the assumption that the objective of economic development will be more easily achieved if the region gains a substantial degree of regional autarcy.

This is, of course, associated with the theme, and reivindicacion of, of institutional decentralisation, that is devolution of state functions and responsibilities to regional institutions. This is seen as necessary to counter: the negative effects of centralised bureaucratic dysfunctions; to increase the degree of adequacy of state policies to regional problems; to create an institutional basis of support to 'self reliant' development; to create a new dynamics of development through the identification, and mobilisation, of regional energies and assets etc.

The second major type of regionalist aspirations, although it may have some points of contact with the previous two themes, is based on a specific issue. This is the defense and/or promotion of traditional languages, cultures, etc., threatened with disintegration, and disappearance by the process of social and cultural massification associated with political integration within Nations-

States and, more generally, with the development of uniformised life-styles and patterns of consumption. These are, of course, the traditional points of reference of nationalist movements and, as Mazères (1978, a) justly remarks, the differences between nationalist and regionalist movements in this respect is very much a question of quantity, rather than quality. This is the more so if to the traditional concept of primary nation as a stable historical community sharing a common language culture, civilization and selfconsciousness, one adds Laffont (1968) concept of secondary nation, non-ethnic and mere product of history.

It is now important to consider what are the political bases, and effects, of regionalist claims and movements. In broad terms the political-ideological basis of regionalism consists of two interrelated assumptions: the existence of a regional consciousness associated with a perceived community of interests at the regional level (regional consciousness) and the idea that the 'region' (regional population) should take in hands the defence of the regional interest against any external intervention.

The development of a regional consciousness within a region derives from the comparison of the region with other regions in the same State, or with its political-administrative centre, and the perception of a situation of differentiation (superiority-inferiority). This superiority (inferiority) might be linguistic, cultural, socio-economic or political. The existence of a regional consciousness implies: a feeling of regional identity involving both a sense of identification with the region and of solidarity with the other inhabitants, the perception and understanding of the regional differentiation factor (language, culture, underdevelopment, etc.); the attribution of this differential factor to an external cause; and, finally, the formulation of a 'regional interest' which acts as a basis for regionalism both as an ideology and a social movement.

The second basic assumption of regionalism derives from the idea that regional conflicts arise from the existence of social actors with interests antagonic to the 'regional interests' and from the perception of that 'common enemy' as external to the region (e.g. central bureaucracy, transnational



companies, etc.). In these circumstances the 'regionalist consciousness' acts as an 'ideological cement' (Dulong, 1975) unifying the social actors in the region for the defence of the 'regional interest'.

The effect of these elements, in a hypothetical situation of hegemony of regionalist ideologies within a region, is that power conflicts are fetichised. They are treated not as social, political or economic conflicts but, rather, as 'regional conflicts'. They are seen not as conflicts of interests between social actors but, rather, as the antagonic confrontation of a fetichised regional interest with another, similarly defined, interest.

To understand the political effects of regionalism as an ideology of a social movement what needs to be answered is how this 'regional interest' comes to be defined, and by whom. Insofar as it is the result of a process of homogeneisation of social actors within a region by a particular actor, or group of actors, 'regionalism' is a process with an initiating subject. Whether this subject is a political elite (Rowntree Research Unity, 1974), the result of the alliance of intellectual middle-class groups (Quéré, 1978) or, more generally, a class alliance of 'non-monopolistic classes and class-fractions' (Soboul, 1975) can only be defined in relation to concrete situations. The net effect in all situations, however, is that for all social groups involved in a regionalist movement the 'regional interest', no matter how defined, overrides their specific interests in all power relations defined as 'regional conflicts'.

The regional planning process is, exactly, one of those situations in which social conflicts can more easily be portrayed as 'regional conflicts'. The perception of a region as a territory to develop favours the development of a metapolitical debate, about the economic or social development of a region, in which the various social groups translate their interests, or those they represent, into spatial designs which confront other spatial designs. Conflicts of interests, are by this process, transformed into conflicts of spatial designs and, as such, loose a direct social point of reference. This does not mean, of course, that regional planning processes are free of social conflicts, a

situation that would make this argument irrelevant. It means, however, that in a situation in which a regionalist perspective on the problems affecting a region is adopted, then the most likely output would be either determined by the so-called 'regional interest' or by its antagonistic external enemy. All other power conflicts would be overridden by this one.

NOTES

- 1 According to Gallie (1955) these concepts have five major characteristics: 1) they serve for evaluation purposes; 2) they are constituted by elements the relative importance of which varies from one type of approach to another; 3) they are complex; 4) the elements referred to by the concept vary according to the circumstances; and 5) each of the parties in the debate is aware that the meaning of the concept is contested and, because of this, acts both in an aggressive and defensive way depending on the situations.
- 2 Appropriately he labelled his approach 'A field theoretical conception of power'.
- 3 See Lukes, 1974, pp 26-33.
- 4 Cf. with Salencik (1979) idea of the 'latency' characteristics of dependency relation.
- 5 Quoted by Saunders, 1979, p 33.
- 6 See discussion on environmental determinism in ch. IV. 5 of the main body of the thesis.
- 7 See Saunders, 1979, p 46.
- 8 Quoted by Allison, 1975, p 88.
- 9 Quoted by McKenzie, 1974, p 278.
- 10 Interview with Mr. Walter Burley, 3th February 1981.
- 11 Of course election manifestos are also influenced by the pursuit of power aspect.
- 12 This thesis avoids entering in the debate about whether the designation 'pressure-group' is the most appropriate to designate this whole class of political organisations. Alternative expressions have been suggested (e.g. 'interest-group', 'sectional-group', etc.) and a good deal of terminological discussion has prefaced group literature. See, inter alios Wooton (1970) ch. 1 and Kimber and Richardson (1974). Introduction.
- 13 Another example concerns the influence of the 'roads lobby' on transport policy throughout the 1960s. See Hamer (1974) and Hudson (1981).
- 14 See the discussion on political inactivity in Saunders (1979) ch. 1.
- 15 For an overall perspective of the reivindications of regionalist movements see Lagarde (1977). For concrete examples see, inter alios, Blanco et al. (1977), Laffont (1976), Quéré (1978), Rowntree Research Unit (1974).

# APPENDIX E

## LIST OF INDIVIDUALS INTERVIEWD

BORG, Prof. Neville - Birmingham City Engineer and Planning Officer  
1963 - 1974; Honorary Professor Birmingham University Department of  
Transportation and Environmental Planning 1975 onwards.

BURLEY, Walter - Assistant regional organiser-West Midlands Labour Party  
and Secretary to the West Midlands County Labour Party.

DAVIES, Colin - Deputy County Planner of the County Council of Hereford and  
Worcester.

EDGE, Geoffrey - M.P. Aldridge - Brownhills 1974 - 79; Chairman of the  
Economic Development Committee - West Midlands County Council 1981 -.

GIBSON, Dr. Ian - Member of West Midlands Economic Planning Council 1967 - 79;  
Member of the Telford New Town Development Corporation 1968 -.

GRAVES, Francis Charles - Member West Midlands Economic Planning Council  
1975 - 79; Project Controller of the National Exhibition Centre 1972 -;  
Member Birmingham Chamber of Industry and Commerce 1961 -; Chairman West  
Midlands Housing Society 1966 - 76; Chairman of Building Industry Group  
West Midlands 1975 -.

HIGGS, Sir Michael - Member of West Midlands Economic Planning Council 1965 -  
- 79; Chairman of Hereford and Worcester County Council 1973 - 77;  
Chairman of West Midlands Planning Authority Conference 1969 - 73 .

LEDBETTER, John Charles - Member of Solihull County Borough Council 1959 - 74;  
Member of West Midlands County Council 1973 -, Chairman 1979 - 80; Mem-  
ber of Heart of England Tourist Board

MALCOLM, Peter - Assistant Director - West Midland Confederation of British  
Industry

MASON, James - Regional Secretary Birmingham and West Midlands National Union General and Municipal Workers 1965 - 79; Member West Midlands Economic Planning Council 1972 - 79

MILLER, David - Principal Planner West Midlands Regional Study

MORETON, John - Director West Midlands Regional Study

MURRAY, Adrian - Deputy County Planner County Council of Staffordshire

OGDEN, William - Principal Planner Ministry of Housing and Local Government West Midlands Regional Office 1965 - 1969; Regional Controller (Plans and Planning) Department of the Environment Regional Office 1970 - 1973

PERRIS, Sir David - Secretary Birmingham Trades Council 1966 -; Secretary T.U.C. Regional Advisory Committee 1966-74; Secretary West Midlands T.U.C. Regional Council 1974 - 82; Chairman West Midlands Regional Health Authority 1974 -; Member West Midlands Economic Planning Council 1968 - 70.

SAUNDERS, David - Regional Controller (Plans and Planning) - West Midlands<sup>s</sup> Department of Environment Regional Office

SMITH, Robert - Principal Planner - West Midlands Department of Environment Regional Office

STRANZ, Walter - Member Redditch New Town Development Corporation 1963 -; Member and Secretary of Midlands New Towns Society; Member Redditch District Council; Member Hereford and Worcester County Council.

WHITTINGHAM, Eric - Chairman Salop County Council 1973 -; Chairman of West Midlands Planning Authority Conference 1979 - 81

WOOD, Alfred - County Planning Officer Worcester County Council 1971 - 73 and West Midlands County Council 1973 -.

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