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'Pre-Plan Mapping', Networks, Capital Resources and Community Strategies in England.

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Abstract

In this working paper[2] we discuss current attempts to engage communities in planning policy formulation in the UK. In particular we focus on the preparation of Community Strategies (CS) in England to inform local public policy and the wider proposals recently published by the UK government to move towards enhanced community engagement in planning (DTLR, 2001). We discuss how such strategies could be operationalised with a conceptual framework developed following ideas derived from ANT (cf. Murdoch, 1997, 1998; Selman, 2000; Parker & Wragg, 1999; Callon, 1986, 1998) and the 'capitals' literature (Lin, 2002; Fine, 2001; Selman, 2000; Putnam, 1993). We see this as an expression of neo-pragmatic planning theory, (Hoch, 1996; Stein & Harper, 2000) to develop a form of 'pre-plan mapping'.

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Introduction

Planning is messy, it is imprecise, it is political and it is about the exercise and contestation of power and influence. These are not new sentiments, quite the reverse: they are as old as planning itself and have been iterated in recent years by numerous planning theorists (for example; Innes, 1994; Harper & Stein, 1995; Healey, 1998; Stein & Harper, 2000; Flyvberg, 1996; Forester, 1998; and Allmendinger, 2000). These views form part of older debates about the purpose and influence of planning as well as newer debates about the process and role that planners should play in (social and physical) development processes (Davidoff, 1965; Forester, 1999). One of the concerns and sustained critiques of planning and planners has been that they have become instruments of domination and oppression as much as structures and agents that deliver community goals and inclusive environments. It is apparent that powerful interests have 'captured' planning so that it serves (or has minimal impact) on those interests. How can planning processes better involve communities of interest and tackle inequalities of power and influence.

In this paper we discuss how some newer ideas and older approaches to process, to the epistemological appreciation of place, connection and resource, might be drawn together synergistically to better inform actors/planners[3]. This is done in order to create (and conceptually underpin) techniques for planning that enable better, more deliberative and inclusionary processes (DIPs) that also attempt to serve the range of interests and groups holding / using different magnitudes and types of power. We take as our cue the development and maintenance of Community Strategies (CS) in England where guidance (DETR, 2000) on their preparation urges network-building, capacity building and continuous review but, which lacks a conceptual frame or explanation for actors to colonise.

We argue that an early step in bringing about meaningful Community Strategies must be to provide rich and engageable information for the community and at the very least force power to be stripped naked for scrutiny when particular options or trajectories are followed at the expense of others. Our argument is that better equipping communities and planners as advocates in this way can create a more transparent 'network topology' (Mol & Law, 1994; Murdoch, 1998; and uncover the extant 'power geometry', Massey, 1993) on which to base

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[3] As discussed later we wish to problematise the duality of 'the planner' and 'the planned'; poststructuralist theory argues that a wide variety of actors are implicated in planning than are commonly acknowledged and ANT exposes the hybridity and linkages between actants.

strategy making decisions. In doing so it should reveal the rationalities and vision that drive particular actors, and by inference open up for scrutiny the rationale of the CS.

In this discussion of CS development we involve communicative planning theory and pragmatist critiques based on Foucaultian theories of power and domination while also bringing together aspects of network theory and theories of capital[4] to propose measures that we label 'preplan mapping'. We place these critiques and ideas in the context of present planning policy in the UK, in particular the requirement that each area produce Community Strategies (DTLR, 1999; 2001) designed to inform development plans and other policy instruments.

Background – theory, practice and collaboration/communication

After the 'wilderness years' of Thatcherism for planning practice in the UK, the 1990s was witness to attempts by planning theorists to find a new purpose and ideology for planning – perhaps more importantly a better democratic basis for intervention. This gave rise to what is now labelled 'the communicative turn' and was led by Healey (1998) and informed by US authors such as Forester (1989). Communicative or 'collaborative' planning is, however, derived from a longer term effort stretching back into the 1960s that aimed to democratise planning and develop 'less oppressive planning mechanisms' (Harris, 2001:p22). This approach has centrally included the development of discursive practices which improve the processes of decision making. This has led *inter alia* to the development of what have more recently been termed deliberative and inclusionary processes (DIPS), that aims to deepen as well as widen community engagement (see; Bloomfield et al, 2001; Healey, 1998). Such planning is purposely designed to allow 'political communities [to] organize to improve the quality of their places' (Harris, 2001: p24). In essence this involves partnership working and the development of methods where consensus building and high quality decision making, based on good information and flattened power relations takes place. In particular the approach seeks to identify the diversity of interests and uncover oppressive relations of power, it then attempts to ensure that the revelation of different, perhaps minority interest views can be incorporated into policy. Ideally this process, its most optimistic proponents say, would lead to consensual political and social arrangements to be implemented.

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[4] For us the capital forms that are most useful are in examining the needs of communities in terms of environmental capital, human capital, social capital and economic capital. (see; Fine, 2001; Selman 2000; Levett, 2000; Woolcock 1998; Healey et al 1998; Putnam 1993; Coleman, 1988).

Communicative planning theory is underpinned by Habermasian theory (Habermas 1984; 1987); for an overview see; Allmendinger, 2002; Harris 2001; also Stein & Harper, 2000). The appraisal of communicative planning as an activity that 'disguises repression in the language of liberal hope' (Hoch 1996, p32) has dented the otherwise beguiling appeal of the approach, as have allegations that the collaborative approach conceals power relations that will still subsume consensus-building or discursive rationality. In essence then, such approaches are liable to abuse and at worst can be used as placatory dead ends or watered down (possibly resource intensive) consultations. This view has been one that has tended to undermine aspects of the collaborative planning model. This quasi-Foucaultian critique is part of a general (perhaps well-founded) cynicism about planning in general. This view, in caricature, asserts that all attempts at institutionalised planning are an example of modern frameworks of power and repression, where attempts to redistribute power are frustrated by certain powerful groups exerting influence to the detriment of others. Certainly theorists such as Stein and Harper have made several critiques of the collaborative approach and developed a neo-pragmatist model where they acknowledge the Foucaultian position and attempt to indicate how planning might steer a course between the Scylla and Charybdis of postmodern despondency and liberal planning efforts, and some of the perhaps naïve or simplistic consensus-building models that have been promulgated in the 1990s (cf. Acland, 1992; Environment Agency, 1999; Selman & Wragg, 1999).

The pragmatists argue that the concerns of Foucault, while weighty and important, cannot be allowed to give leave to abandon planning and attempts to democratize planning. Instead they argue that communicative planning can be rescued, and point out that there are important, even necessary exercises of power and that some planning structures 'may be less oppressive than others' (Stein & Harper, 2000:p7, after Foucault). In part this project has been taken forward since the 1960s when authors such as Davidoff (1965) argued for planning as advocacy and for planners to act on behalf of those needing representation and explanation so that their interests could be incorporated into policy and action. In reality this implicit and obvious skewing of resources is less than likely to survive the real politics of policy making and local political machinations. Indeed attempts at widened participation in the UK planning system in the past have been variable, if not downright subverted by many local authorities – in particular the local politicians, but also by senior planners (Blowers, 1986).

It is noticeable in the literature that many theorists have stopped short of making cross-overs into practice, in particular to outline designs for community planning tools in any detail. This is a criticism aired recently by Allmendinger (2002: p17); 'planning theorists have sought to embrace the communicative perspective as both a justification and prescription for planning. Yet despite the rich theoretical origins little has been written on the translation into practical approaches and advice'. This is a gap that we, in a small way, seek to fill and as such the paper is an attempt to bridge the theory-practice divide. Means of exposing the workings of places should be done *a priori*; or at least in such a way as to bear witness to power relations as well as more substantive or factual, resource-based (or, as below, capital-based) identifications. Our take on the 'middle way' or neo-pragmatic approach suggests informed methods of tapping into and enabling deliberative and inclusionary tools, while attempting to expose power and its motives and effects. In this sense we think that there are prerequisite elements that DIPS (and as we will argue Community Strategies and the like) need in order for them to work effectively.

Neopragmatism and planning tools

The pragmatist position in terms of theory development has been simply stated by Charles Hoch as the assessment of ideas, 'based on their usefulness for guiding purposeful conduct in diverse contexts' (Hoch, 1996, p31). It is a position that discounts utopian solutions while ensuring that participants are enabled and appreciative of the issues and contexts that they are engaging with. In the words of Stein and Harper (2000: p2) a pragmatic approach is 'a process that will help us to: i. understand, critique, develop and reform public institutions, processes and agencies, ii. make decisions, and resolve conflicts, within these frameworks.'

These authors have also developed a way of thinking about the theory and practice of pragmatic, collaborative planning that has been labelled neo-pragmatist; wherewith; 'neo-pragmatism rejects the idea of absolute dualism…the importance of theory is de-emphasized – theory and practice are seen as a continuous process…the importance of community is recognized…' (Harper & Stein 1995:p240). Thus the neo-pragmatist line of thought emphasises the practical application of ideas to enable communities to resolve conflicts and reach better decisions. However, such ideas need careful testing in practice; what theorists feel is pragmatic may in practice be unworkable or simply disappointing in participatory / quality of outcome terms.

In the first instance it is often the case that planners and the planned are faced with less than ideal circumstances and need, initially at least, to 'occupy' and improve the systems and structures that exist in any given situation or structure of governance. This is necessary to begin to build collaborative efforts and networks that can accept and sustain new models of governance, particularly those that aim to confront/expose/tackle power differentials. For us, stage one is information. Indeed if we look at the base level of participation promulgated by participation commentators since Arnstein (1969) 'information' has been seen as a first step or level of participation and more widely of empowerment. This element requires further attention and unpacking – information is crucial and the generation of knowledge and debate through the dissemination of such information is important when engaging in participatory governance. This is particularly important to assist capacity-building and effective communication. It is also a worry due to the ease with which information can be obscured, spun or dressed.

We take a more sceptical stance than some pragmatist positions and some proponents of the communicative turn, who maintain that conflict can be resolved through open debate and reflection. Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones (1998) in our view, rightly underline that this has not been the experience of those who have engaged with powerful groups, such as large corporations or developers. Rather, many attempt to persuade, cajole, bribe, bully or side-step opposition (Doak and Martin, 2000) in order to gain the most advantageous position.

So can we develop techniques to empower and inform to equip all parties better? Do planners have a role as information provider and enabler as much as decision-taker? Certainly suspect uses of power and non-community regarding arguments (Sagoff, 1989) need to be exposed; 'planners need to be open about their gatekeeping power roles, reflect upon bias and prejudices and be inventive about new processes and aims to stimulate possible new directions for local practice' (Allmendinger 2001:p15). As part of this opening and uncovering, our stance and instinct is to decentre the 'planner' and the 'planned'; to undermine this dualism and decide how those who 'plan' (i.e. the 'planning network') can be better informed and appraised of the challenges, opportunities and resources that exist in any given locality. Further, that the range of people involved in the process should be as wide as possible to reflect the diversity of community and viewpoints that will be impacted by (local) decisions and can be drawn upon to develop policy initiatives and implement those strategies.

Therefore our stance can be read as neo-pragmatic; fusing disparate elements of theory as an aid to practical yet aware efforts and engagement by as wide an array of those affected as possible; aware of power and unequal relations and cautious about the ability of communities to go it alone in terms of strategy building. Our focus then could be seen as a tool in a pragmatic (or even a Third Way) approach to policy – a label that might find favour with the 'New Labour' Blair government in the UK, but then perhaps not as it necessitates quite a radical rethink about how power is confronted and stripped bare in local politics. We deliberately emphasise and prioritise planning and access to information and empowerment repertoires in this paper, arguing that one important flaw and undermining element to both process and outcome is the lack of new thinking and developed techniques for understanding community or 'network topology' and 'power geometries'.

Power / knowledge and community engagement in planning

'Time spent on reconnaissance is time rarely wasted' - Robert E. Lee

For us, one of the main obstacles facing communities in terms of land use, economic and community planning is that of knowledge, information and access to information – often groups lack a combination of social and human capital (see below)[5]. It is becoming established that engagement in process, *if opportunity for 'real' participation is designed in*, assists in developing these communicative (and networking) resources. 'Real' participation requires, or pre-requires, quality, wide-ranging information. Our paper then is also about engagement as self-development (the intra-subjective dimension) and mapping of capital and network (as extra-subjective dimension). Both with a view to providing a conceptual map of a given locality - what we have termed the planning network topology - to guide decision-making.

Figure 1 illustrates our perspective on these inter-relationships between capitals and networks. It shows the resources of capital that are either held or needed for a network to realise objectives and the way in which a network draws on these resources to build, consolidate or transcend these network resources. The important thing is for communities

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[5] This does not ignore or reduce the importance of economic capital in the planning of local, regional or global environments, but seeks to emphasise that all capital forms are relevant to both understanding and practice. Indeed the interactions and consolidations of these capital forms underpin our analysis.

themselves to identify and coalesce in order to agree and move towards that objective; in short to 'problematise, interesse, enrol and mobilise' as outlined in the sociology of translation (see Parker & Wragg, 1999; Callon 1986, 1998).

Figure 1 – Capital / network framework (appended)

The diagram figuratively shows how some actors can easily tap into or already hold resources while others are capital poor and lack network connection - in this sense at least they are low on social capital. As the diagram suggests, there may be barriers and chasms that frustrate potential access to capital resources or other actors, but equally there could be pleats and folds which link actors and capitals across space and time.

Much has been written about planners as advocates and to some extent the LA21 process has trail-blazed approaches towards creative place-visioning involving *animateurs* in stimulating discussion and identifying issues and priorities (often aided with SWOT analysis). A similar situation has existed with 'planning for real' exercises (Shipley, 2002). What we propose is to develop a more systematic and conceptually advanced approach to assembling a resource[6] and resource deficiency map for a particular area or community; in this context the 'network topology' (see Mol & Law, 1994; Murdoch 1997, 1998; Bridge, 1997) for a particular locality /economy.

Improving accessible tools in strategy building (a form of visioning) such as this may in some measure, assist in procedural terms and perhaps in terms of social capital / capacity support. This represents a practical, neopragmatic attempt to bridge the conceptual chasm that has existed between practice (or perhaps disillusionment and abandonment) of advocacy or collaborative planning informed by Foucault and Habermas, and also to set down a working application of network theory that communities themselves can share as a basis for collective action and as a mutually understood framework for policy. In this latter sense to provide a shared language and platform for different parts of the 'planning network'.

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[6] Where 'resource' and resource map is taken to involve all forms of capital (and also attempts to account for power relations).

Mapping, information and 're or deframing' the plan

We feel that this exacting and innovative method of 'preplan mapping' is, in itself, an important prerequisite for a more transparent, deliberative and democratic planning. It is also an approach that factors into local planning different types of considerations based on capital assessment and network analysis. In making this our focus we contextualise the approach and the theoretical underpinnings to current policy in the UK. We see this mapping tool/process as a step forward in empowering and engaging a wider community of interest in planning, regeneration and wider public policy decisions. The approach also decentres the planner and exposes the plan or strategy as being both arbitrary and in flux. Both the actors and the text are multiple and contingent in this account. We draw on a range of theory – with both ontological and epistemological implication – to inform the design, process and function of this version of pre-plan mapping.

Here we are proposing a tool to assist communities to review and plan for themselves (with some assistance and support) as well as simultaneously attacking the dualism of the 'planner and the planned' and reappraising the way that communities/planners think about their 'space' in terms of (i) resources, and (ii) 'network topology' (or extent/shape/quality). This should include the ability of that community to recognize and incorporate needs (and resources) that may traditionally be considered regional or national in nature. In this sense the approach also implies, and demands, a degree of 'good citizenship' (i.e. action that is sensitive to the needs and aspirations of others and at different scales and magnitudes, cf. Parker, 2002).

Attempts to engage communities more proactively have been ongoing in the UK for several decades, although this has been rather piecemeal, uneven in its success and often lacked a critical level of political will/enforcement. It is also the case that planners have often attempted to orchestrate planning and economic development activities without having a robust conceptual framework with which to underpin such inevitably complex undertakings. The need for an epistemological and ontological basis is as important as the need for good information, communication skills or regulatory powers. However all of these will not be enough without (localized) political will to ensure that participation and plan-making are equitable, rounded and implemented.

Callon (1998, 1999) and latterly Murdoch & Abram (2002) have indicated how plans and strategies are attempts to frame issues and arguments; they are 'punctuations' of the flow of political debate about future trajectories of development. In this sense plans and the attempts to develop the texts often overflow initial frames (Callon, 1998). It needs to be made explicit to actors that this is the case. Indeed most development plans and strategies are either unimplementable, or require continual 'Ministry of Truth-like' post hoc alteration. This rather gloomy view is intentionally critical. Indeed it could be argued that the proposed Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) in the English Planning Green Paper (DTLR, 2001) are a reflection of the desire to abolish current plan-making approaches, in part because of the failure of traditional development plans[7]. As such opportunities present themselves to use new policy frameworks, coalitions, vehicles and strategies that have been recently introduced and to attempt to provide new ways of conceptualizing and legitimating such efforts. Before outlining CS as our example, we review the 'network' and 'capital' influences on our thinking.

Actant-networks and planning

Planning is inextricably about politics and power although of course there are other levels of engagement with planning such as the impact and use of various *agents* and *resources*. We bring these elements together in developing a tool to help flatten power relations and make politics more transparent. While we regard the politics of planning as crucial we do not believe that earlier dominant frameworks which have emphasized network relations, such as systems theory (McLoughlin, 1966) or Friend and Jessop's inter-organisational work (Friend and Jessop, 1969; Friend and Hickling, 1987), have allowed planners and others in the realms of resource planning, community planning and environmental planning to widen the scope of enquiry and acknowledge the complexity, subtlety or pervasiveness of power relations.

There has been a growing realization that a wider complexity and a parallel, enlarged appreciation of *agency* has meant that a new conceptualisation of resources and actors has become necessary. As a result several authors active in planning theory/practice have seen that elements of Actor Network Theory (ANT) offer an approach for analyzing planning policy, natural *and* human resources and agency (see Callon, 1998; Law & Hassard, 1999; Selman & Wragg, 1999; Parker & Wragg, 1999; Tait, 2002) and which went beyond the

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[7] LDFs were confirmed as replacements for development plans (ODPM, 2002) and planning legislation to effect this was announced in November 2002.

reaches of, for example, systems theory with its interest in promoting the influence of agency interactions and their effects, and which complemented the structural and institutional elements of policy analysis and planning[8].

ANT looks at relations in terms of their hybridity and heterogeneity; seeking to emphasise that people and their social relations are important, but also that other intermediaries are instrumentally mixed up in networks - and in capital forms. No assumptions are made about which materials/resources are part of the network (see Murdoch, 1998). Ideas developed under the label of ANT provide concepts that allow a broader, deeper view of relations and power implicated in achieving particular ends. It has been used in planning to review and analyse process over time, we argue that elements of this can be made to do service for forward-looking strategy. It helps us to uncover power and bear witness to the Foucaultian vision of repressive structures faced by liberal interventionism. ANT also enables those who, in the communicative mode, are attempting to involve people in determining their own environments and build their own human/social capital. The agency of individuals and other entities has important bearing on outcomes, alliances and strategies.

A key aspect of ANT thinking is that it assists in breaking down commonly accepted dualisms or binaries - one we have mentioned already is the somewhat artificial division between the planner and the planned. There are of course other important dualisms that persist such as the social/natural (see Bijker & Law, 1989, 1992; Murdoch, 1998) and the external/internal, endogenous/exogenous distinction made in terms of economic development. ANT has gone further than this making particular mention of a further aspect of division and circumscription; the human/nonhuman duality. This blurring of constructed boundaries leads to the study and recognition of hybridity and the 'impurity' of structures and action (cf. Haraway, 1991). The agency and impact of resources as non-human actants should be better understood and incorporated into planning processes. In this way a wide range of artefacts and natural resources, animals and others can be assessed in terms of their relevance in planning for places, people and the wider ecology.

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[8] Systems theory was seen as 'a way of conceptualizing what are often complex political phenomena' (Ham & Hill, 1993:p15) but focused on the intentional process of key actors only.

> *Some key ANT features;*
> - Seeks to break down binaries/dualisms (e.g. nature/society),
> - Provides a different account of space and redefines proximity – 'network topology', allowing for 'action at a distance' - breaks down exogenous/endogenous dualism,
> - Allows for the agency (and intermediary role) of non-humans,
> - Identifies walls or gateways – sometimes useful, other times necessary,
> - Demands a reflexive approach – the authors/actants own role is considered.

This evolving set of concepts and analytical ideas allows for, 'heterogeneous engineering', as (Murdoch, 1997, after Star, 1991) phrases it, to allow for a range of agency and other intermediaries[9] to be incorporated into accounts and estimations of planning and to discard notions of proximity that depend on normative (Euclidean) accounts of space. This also allows for a practical application of the theory of time-space compression (Harvey, 1989; Murdoch, 1999). As a consequence area-based geography is demoted from its position as primary frame for policy. Instead what both Serres (1995) and Law (1998) have termed 'network topologies'; where 'rifts and folds' that distanciate as well as bring people and resources 'closer' together are identified. In this sense any given 'place' is stretched and crumpled by the effects of communications and other material and economic exchanges and the network approach provides recognition of locality and its range and richness of ties (and barriers). In essence this allows for a better understanding of the way that disparate actants / resources are involved in or affect (policy) networks. It sets up a frame of reference to account for the consequences of planning decisions.

Networks are also an important element of capacity building in terms of social / human capital, a point clearly reinforced by social capital researchers from Putnam (1993) to Coleman (1988) and Woolcock (1998). They are crucial as an element of mapping; allowing for a place topology to be constructed that illustrates the strengths / weaknesses of a locality and the aspects of capital 'stocks' that exist or that will be required to achieve the realization of a strategy. Healey has written about 'institutional capital' as a form of social and human capital, as: 'social resources which are mobilised in different institutional configurations and

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[9] In simple terms , ANT outlines two main network components; i. *Actors* - defined as 'any entity able to associate texts, humans, non-humans and money' (Callon, 1991:p140). This implies that some actors may at other times be viewed as the second element of an actor-network; ii. *Intermediaries* – this is 'anything passing between actors that defines the relationship between them' (ibid: p134). Intermediaries are disparate in nature, for example; texts, money, machines, and humans, as intimated, may all act as intermediaries.

evolutions' (Healey et al, 1998:p6) and thus has partly coined a new term for what we propose (see also; Khakee, 2002). However we prefer to leave the various labels for types of capital separate(d) as this allows greater transparency and clarity for those seeking to use or assess the different capitals in any given context. We also think that not all resources should be labelled as being 'social' quite so readily[10]. There is a much more diffuse and complex situation existing where different interests and communities exercise power and draw-in, or are unaware of, the resources that *either are in play or should be in play to enable a particular strategy to come together.*

Capitals and networks

The work of Murdoch (1997, 1998) and Selman (2000, 2001) has already begun to set out the usefulness of ANT perspectives for planning. Although Murdoch's work has tended to pitch towards geography and theories of space-time, it also provides an important angle on power and policy formulation (see also; Murdoch & Abram, 2002). Using ANT we can begin to expand and make 'capital' observations more sophisticated and perhaps useful to planners (the planning network) for the purposes of economic, social and community development. There is a need to know what resources can no longer be 'enrolled' and what others may be approached, 'interested' in the current situation and/or future vision. A strong theme that emerges from the ANT literature is that bringing a more refined assessment of the role of the non-human world is useful. This, for us, ties-in the implication of various forms of capital into network analysis (and vice versa; see; Selman, 2001, Trigilia, 2001).

If actor-networks are characterised by actors with common or interconnecting interest coming together, there are clear links to capital theory and perhaps the method of defining 'community' boundaries can help network studies in outlining the contours of a network - network theory tells us that communities may include distant actors and non-human members. If networks are mechanisms for moving forward aspirations, they also; 'represent symbiotic alliances between people, organizations *and the non-human realm*, in which resources, arguments and knowledge flow between nodes' (Selman, 2000:p119, our emphasis).

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[10] Although if the cultural capital work of Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990) and latterly scholars such as Harvey Molotch are to be accepted then perhaps all capital forms should be regarded as 'cultural'.

We see that one useful step is to recognize and interpret, into the plan process, the different capital forms available or deficient in any particular area, or that concern a particular issue or need. Then, to work towards tackling or deliberating on the effect that these extant conditions impose on a particular locality. This is useful in assessing the current conditions of a particular locality and setting out a way of bringing appropriate network components together in attempting to tackle particular (economic) issues. In essence then to assemble a conceptual map for strategy-building and participation. This should assist in various other stages of strategy building, as well as the mapping element (i.e. funding, policy support, monitoring).

Some key capital forms - built and/or depleted or restructured through networking, and which need to be sustained and renewed;

- Social – the quality and form of social relations between people, groups or organizations,
- Human – skills and abilities of individuals,
- Environmental – natural, built or other non-human assets,
- Economic – wealth, property and technology,
- Institutional – the collective total of the above types of capital (see Khakee, 2002).

One way of conceptualizing the process and informing 'planners and the planned' – in the 'planning network' is to unwrap the way which networks are constituted and their intentions translated. Translation theory illuminates how associations *can* be formed, as well as the way that actors *are* joined, or aligned in achieving a common purpose (Callon, 1986: p196). This involves how actors or 'network-builders' (Akrich, 1992; Selman & Wragg, 1999; Parker & Wragg, 1999) manipulate people and other agents and artefacts (*qua* intermediaries) to realise a particular goal; how, for example, plans and strategies are finalized and 'agreed' upon. This may, for example, involve getting others to accept a draft document, or to sign up to a particular strategy. This aspect of ANT is useful then in understanding how a strategy has been influenced by exercises of power as it allows all actors and potential network participants (those who are both pro and anti putative proposals) to see who and what is being drawn into the network (and what by inference is omitted or otherwise missing).

In linking the disparate (but linked) forms of capital to the use of ANT as an epistemological approach, and without wishing to appear too grand, we think that a widened and consequently useful range of vision can be developed to identify strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats from a wider range of sources than has been the case in the past (under

conventional SWOT-analysis). As we discuss below, the manageability and criteria for exclusion/selection (i.e. framing) are important , perhaps problematic, but should be determined locally.

The approach gets us closer to identifying *who, why, when and how economic and social activity takes place and how it is bounded by a complex range of factors*. The approach can be both a backward and forward looking tool – charting past and present features while indicating and providing intelligence for future strategy making. It may help understand and provide better transparency for decisions about economic support, or more opaque impacts that are inadequately understood, assessed or otherwise measured. On the down side it may present a rather dispiriting picture for local actors attempting to address economic and social problems – the problem with uncovering complexity is that it can undermine determination to act or participate (Gittell & Vidal, 1998). There is hope though that the approach could uncover unrecognized potentials and resources in a locale. If nothing else it can at least provide a relatively clear picture of the constraints and opportunities impinging on the development of local scenarios and strategies.

If such a strategy is not broadly supported, or opposed by one or two powerful interests then at very least it will be more transparent why and when a decision has been made. It is also an approach that draws from recent theory regarding time-space compression and a different take on capitals as resources and barriers. Therefore our purpose here is to propose an approach to policy whereby frameworks are underpinned and are enabled by a wider appreciation of capital and of actor-networks. Our likely next stage will be to test our mapping approach using an action research method, discussed below.

We relate such theoretical ideas to recent attempts by UK policymakers and in particular the UK government to reorganise planning processes and instigate Community Strategies as key sources of planning legitimacy, and opportunities for communities to engage in determining priorities. Below we outline how the approach appears to mesh with current attempts to alter local government organization and the planning system in particular. We consider how the Labour government in the UK (our focus is in terms of England) has attempted to modernise local government and the planning process through *inter alia* the implementation of

Community Strategies[11]. In this way we illustrate where and how our model for pre-plan mapping could be used to improve the quality and legitimacy of such Strategies and the guidance given by government about their formulation and purpose.

Community Strategies in England

When the Labour government took office in May 1997 it did not waste much time in proposing a modernising agenda for local government (DETR, 1999). The programme, taken forward in two Local Government Acts in 1999 and 2000, has been aimed at 'democratic renewal', the emphasis has been on organisational efficiency and continuous improvement through a 'Best Value' performance management regime and related political restructuring. This has aimed at enhancing accountability and community involvement (primarily through Best Value indicators and the introduction of Community Strategies).

The foundations for CS were arguably, laid by earlier work in the arena of Local Agenda 21, with the link being clearly made in Government guidance, and by the wide (socio-economic) interpretation of sustainable development contained in the document *'A Better Quality of Life: A Strategy for Sustainable Development for the UK'* (DETR, 1999). Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2000, which came into force in October 2000, included a duty on local authorities to prepare 'community strategies' for, 'promoting or improving the economic, social and environmental well-being of their areas, and contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in the UK' (Section 4.1). This has been followed-up by further detailed guidance issued by the Government (DETR, 2000) and by the Local Government Association and others on the preparation of the Strategies (Local Government Association, 2000; Community Development Foundation, 2000).

In addition to the new CS there are numerous other planning tools that are being put into practice; notably in countryside planning in England through community plans, 'health-checks' and also wider notions of 'proofing', which involve external audit on impacts (on rural areas) and imply a form of resource mapping and increased awareness of networks. The 'health-check' approach being used in the Market Towns Initiative in England (Countryside

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[11] This modernization effort includes Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs), Community Plans and a set of proposals to radically overhaul the planning system (DTLR, 2001), which is being formalized gradually into government policy (see ODPM, 2002).

Agency, 2002) is an example, which involves communities in examining their own situation and identifying issues with a view to taking remedial action. These techniques, as the Government recognises in their guidance, provide a foundation upon which CS might usefully build and from which lessons can be learned.

The objectives of CS are outlined in the Government guidance (DETR, 2000). They are to:

- allow local communities to *articulate* their aspirations;

- *co-ordinate* the actions of local authorities and other organisations and agencies;

- *focus and shape* existing and future activity to meet community needs and aspirations; and

- *contribute to* achievement of *sustainable development*, both locally and more widely.

They are intended to comprise a long-term *vision* (focusing on outcomes); an *action plan* (of shorter term priorities); a *shared commitment* towards implementation; and arrangements for *monitoring, review and progress-reporting*. Government guidance outlines four underlying principles that are supposed to shape the process:

- engage and involve *local communities* (citizens, community groups, voluntary sector, businesses, and other public sector agencies);

- active input from *local government politicians*;

- use of '*Local Strategic Partnerships'* to prepare and implement Strategies; and

- proper assessment of *needs and resource-availability.*

The process of preparing these strategies is seen to be *as important as the outputs* (strategies) produced. It should ensure wide local ownership and be predominantly *bottom-up*; seek co-ordination through *partnership* working; and should build on *existing good practice* (including LA21). The guidance states that it may require a significant amount of *time* to be effective (there are no national 'deadlines' for their production, as opposed to LA21) but realistic and agreed targets should be set. Finally, the Government stresses that the process should be *on-going* and CS, once prepared, should be consistently refined and improved.

We feel that these community strategy requirements need substantial reinforcement and careful handling unless it is to become mere window dressing. One aspect that requires attention is the basis for strategies and how their recommendations are grounded. In particular, to have a more deliberative regard for resources and resource deficiencies though the 'networks and capital' approach. There are a number of particular aspects of CS which are implied in the guidance and that lend themselves to our approach, but are not necessarily spelled out.

Firstly, there is the importance placed upon a wide-ranging participative input and the call that, 'special efforts should be made to involve representatives from *under-represented groups* such as ethic minorities, women, faith communities, older people, young people and children, and disabled people' (DETR 2000, para. 48). There are opportunities here for these, often excluded, interests to draw-on the capital forms and networks that in the past contributed to that exclusion. Although the Guidance on LSPs (DETR, 2001, para. 1.25 and Annex D) emphasizes the supportive role of the new Community Empowerment Fund in building the capacity of these groups to engage with the new arrangements, it tends to be rather power-blind in its exhortations. We feel that the mapping-out of barriers and conduits in the flows and stocks of influence and resources may allow for the inclusion of these groups to be built with a clearer understanding of the contours of power (i.e. the 'power geometry' of the planned area).

A second theme alluded to in the Guidance is the necessity for a *continuous process* of network and capability building. In this regard the Government stresses that, "the process by which CS are produced is as important as the strategy itself" (DETR 2000, para. 16), and "the processes and relationships through which the strategies are produced and implemented should continue to evolve and be refined" (ibid, para. 21). Given this invitation the capitals-network mapping work could also provide a template for facilitating, establishing and monitoring this process; checking on the dynamic web of network relationships and capital resources as they evolve in response to (and perhaps in alignment with) the visions, strategies, and actions developed under the auspices of the CS.

Thirdly, the guidance places stress on integrating a range of different policy issues:

> Only by promoting and improving the economic, social and environmental well-
> being of their communities will community strategies contribute to the
> achievement of sustainable development in the UK. A community strategy that
> covers only one of those elements will not suffice, nor will the duty be met by
> producing three separate strands dealing with economic, social or environmental
> issues in isolation
> (DETR, 2000, para.14).

This in turn encourages local Community Strategies to enrol different 'policy and issue networks' (Marsh & Rhodes, 1994; Selman, 2000) and relevant aspects of their capital forms (e.g. knowledge, budgets, network relations, etc.) into the process and extend the range and impact of the community planning network. However this may also open-up the planning network to possible 'capture' as it extends actor/resource inter-relationships as well as overburdening participants with a seemingly intractable set of issues, obstacles and interrelationships.

Fourthly, there is a commitment on the part of government to link locally-generated Community Strategies with *other levels* of decision-making (either by involvement of national or regional 'partners' or, more likely, by taking account of relevant strategies and frameworks). The guidance states: 'The Government expects the frameworks and other strategies to develop in an iterative and compatible way in the future' (DETR, 2000, para. 44). Although this is under-specified, there are interesting potentials to (re)construct policy networks to reflect (ANT) ideas of (time-)space compression in that process. Thus, the analysis of economic, social, environmental and cultural embeddedness increasingly becomes repeated in the realms of policy as regional, national and, possibly, international policy networks are enrolled by local planning networks.

Fifthly, the guidance acknowledges that *conflicts of interest* between stakeholders can exist. It states that local communities need to consider, 'how differences of view are to be aired and resolved within the local strategic partnership [LSP]', (DETR, 2000, para. 55). This provides an opportunity to address conflict (as well as consensus) and allows the issue of power relations and differentials in resources to be inserted into the debates at the local level.

Finally, and significantly, the Government Guidance (DETR, 2001, p.49) explicitly advises that LSP's should, "map out the existing network of organizations and identify the different interests the partnership wishes to involve". Other advice in the same 'good practice' annex

provides a model of partnership working that could be read as ANT's classic process of translation (Callon, 1986; 1999; Parker & Wragg, 1999), involving:

> • being clear about what the partnership hopes to achieve, and what realistically it can achieve (*problematisation* – network builder promotes issue);
>
> • discuss with key people and organizations the intended course of action and if possible reach some consensus on the way forward (*interessement* – negotiation / discussion);
>
> • enlist internal support, as wholehearted support is required from within all the partner organizations if the partnership is to be effective (*enrolment* – actors sign up);
>
> • Prepare the partnership's strategy and action plan and secure both internal and external agreement to pursue the strategy (*mobilisation* – network moves to fulfil aim).

These similarities between the 'policy-making' model for CS and the stages proposed by the theory of translation provides a final conceptual correlation between the two, and adds further weight to the suggestion that value and political impetus could be derived from using a capitals-network approach to planning processes and network understanding / network-building – or as we propose pre-plan mapping.

We argue that socio-economic development that deploys key aspects of ANT thinking, with the range of capitals acknowledged, enables more rounded, holistic, perhaps sustainable strategizing. What we propose is no less than a conceptual framework for CS informed by past experience of vehicles such as LA21 and the application of theory as outlined above. Further, we feel that participation that aims at capacity-building requires the extension of shared conceptual frames such that actors have a more panoramic view of the process and network in which they are implicated. That all actors develop (or are empowered to develop) a shared understanding and reflexive position within the network.

The 'mapping' approach

We are intimating then, that planners need to allow themselves to be seen more explicitly as part of a network, where the distinction between the planner and the planned blurs such that

participants and those implicated are all understood as planning actants or intermediaries. In our view this does not mean that local authority planners do not have an important part to play as facilitators and co-coordinators of this process; they are indeed a key source of human capital and may even take on the role of network builders themselves - as is already often the case with current LSP / CS development and in the past with LA21.

If we accept that better and more sophisticated conceptualizations of information and system of information can help localities to develop their own potentials for local social and economic development, the question remains; how can we map networks or potential networks and work out their feasibility in terms of local capacities and potentials? And further, how can this be done manageably? We outline the approach as a means of bringing together interests and overcoming criticisms that collaborative planning is power blind.

We feel that power can begin to be tackled through improved transparency and pre-planning in terms of information and 'resource mapping'. Indeed Healey (1998) has indicated that mapping is a key element in strategy building not least because those involved in building a network or strategy; 'require an ability to reflect on the membership of consensus-building activities and on who is involved, who should be involved and who may be left out' (Healey, 1998; p244). Our approach is slightly wider and urges planners to take one step back and ensure that a thorough appreciation of the network topology and power relations present is recognised before decisions are taken and texts are drafted or reviewed.

In this sense we are interested largely in illuminating and challenging the process through which plans and strategies are formed and the degree to which such strategies are developed; i. within the offices of professional planners and, ii. as a corporatist extension of market demand. Both of these contexts can be rather anti-democratic and tend not to instigate capacity-building or even adequately reflect views and aspirations of the 'planned'. Instead we should be looking to creatively illuminate the contours of power - the power geometry - and the strengths/weaknesses of localities in the light of network topology and the subsequent and prevailing dimensions of capital.

Some difficulties of the approach and future research plan

There are numerous issues to be addressed in attempting to apply potentially complex theory to practical applications. An essential aspect is to retain the important conceptual components

that help planning actants on the ground. There are other potential problems / pitfalls with the approach, which we list here, and there may be others which need to be addressed if the approach is to be deployed successfully in practice;

- Complexity – too much to 'include in', can lead to overload and network inertia (Bijker & Law, 1992),

- Scale – at what level can the approach be most useful, or perhaps different versions can be developed to suit.

- Network instability / change – circumstances change and plans and strategies either need to be shockproof or be capable of reorientation regularly and perhaps in reaction to changes (for example the withdrawal of a major employer),

- The hermeneutic or 'tropic trap' of language and inherent subjectivity that can dog attempts to build inclusive plans (see Throgmorton, 1996),

- Lack of political will / capital and determination to carry through the process envisaged in a meaningful fashion (Khakee, 2002),

- Failure of actants to grasp the nuances of the approach and possible breakdowns of continuity or communication,

- Cost (and opportunity cost) or lack of resources in orchestrating and running the process,

- Time and delay in 'getting things done'.

A general issue that relates to most of above points is that ANT has been criticised as a totalising discourse or theory (see Law, 1999) in that everything can be implied as being part of a network. How can capitals be weighed-up in a way that allows for resource decisions to be taken more equitably and sustainably. Thus, how does the network prioritise? And therefore how to legitimately exclude issues or ensure that actants behave transparently or consistently? Communities self limit and the extent to which complexity or interconnectivity and subsequent demoralisation may impact of such processes of strategy building is a concern. One consequence we think is the need to develop an approach to rationalise, even prioritise relations, actors and intermediaries. This is perhaps best done by identifying the key interrelations in policy requirements that frame local action. In planning terms what is *necessary* to achieve a particular end or the key factors and relations that influence and perhaps block a particular strategy. We would also expect local network-builders (and government guidance) to recognize issues of power relations and to ensure that at the very

least such relations be made transparent. In extension to this these should be communicated to the public (and network) clearly and effectively.

Further action research is clearly needed to see how the approach we are suggesting will open out in practice. The lack of empirical investigation is a deficiency that many studies or suggestions with a basis in ANT / sociology of translation exhibit and one that, we concur, needs redressing. It is through proposed future empirical study in West Berkshire and Reading, England that we hope to test the approach outlined through action research pilots**.** These local areas are attempting to develop CS and interpret the government guidance, discussed above, in a thoughtful way (West Berkshire Partnership, 2002; Reading BC, 2002). We hope to introduce the approach we have outlined to local communities through the area meetings that are designed into the LSP / CS process which is ongoing in these areas.

Figure 2 – Capital/network preplan mapping and strategy building (appended)

Figure 2 outlines graphically the kind of system that is implied by the approach. It utilizes the capitals-network framework to structure a broad process of network mapping and building. The stages would involve (as part of an ongoing, iterative process);

- develop shared information about the planned approach and make available in multi-media forms,
- officers, politicians, (existing) forums and facilitators brain-storming (in a critical way) the communities of interest with a stake in the local area,
- a collective mapping of the actant-network and capital forms, identifying actors/actants, capital forms and intermediaries,
- engage and enrol key actors into the process (selection based on mapping, and criteria),
- agree 'participation strategies', using a range of techniques to 'expand' and consolidate the network,
- agree a strategy-making arrangement, possibly based on fora or working groups, with a 'Summit' meeting to debate and agree the draft strategy, with members selected on a range of criteria (e.g. social inclusion/equality, network builders, representativeness).

In order to assist in doing this, the approach is best used, in methodological terms, reflexively and transparently; by explaining and assessing the relations and usages in a 'retroductive'

shuttling (Ford, 1975) between theoretical concerns of ANT and capital theory and the 'common-sense' understanding of communities as they define, map, link and combine needs, opportunities and resources in their day to day lves. In this sense the plan itself is revealed as an ongoing process rather than a framed object or black-box. ANT, capital theory and related concepts can help to frame policy analysis more widely and flexibly, leading to a more holistic view of the obstacles to achieving strategy defined (partly) through that ANT analysis. As part of this we can begin devising and testing practical tools to be added to the planners' repertoire and make best use of theory in the true spirit of praxis.

Perhaps the biggest issue then is how to persuade local (and central) government that this type of system transparency is manageable and necessary. We feel that it is conceptually robust and a potentially useful innovation, our main concern is that it should be practicable for as wide a range of people as possible to engage with and understand. In developing this approach then, care will need to taken that it is not stripped of its strengths in terms of breadth of vision and the emphasis on the perhaps uncomfortable need to pinpoint power relations in the process of (inevitable) simplification and evolution on the ground.

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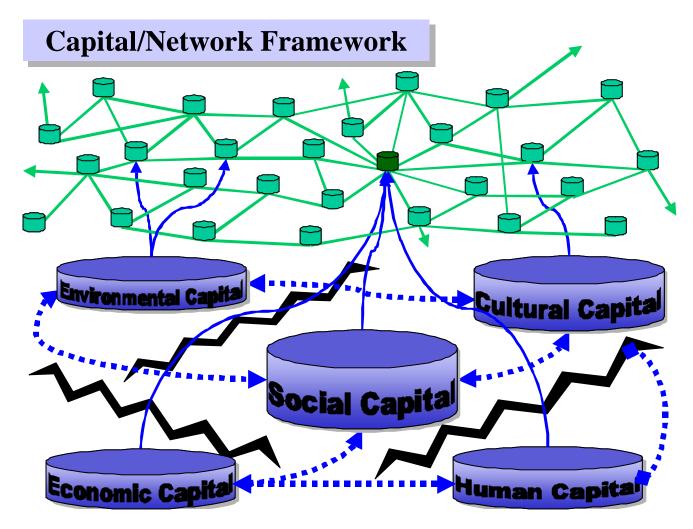
Figure 1

Capital/Network Framework

Figure 2

Figure 2: Capital/Network Pre-Plan Mapping and Strategy Building