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COLLABORATIVE PLANNING IN
 PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract This article presents a personal review by the author of *Collaborative Planning: Shaping Places in Fragmented Societies*, published in 1997. It explains how the book came to be written and makes some comments on the various criticisms it has attracted. The first section introduces key experiences that fed into the book followed by a brief summary of the key ideas that underpin its arguments. In reviewing the critiques, the article focuses in particular on the treatment of ‘context’, the emphasis on ‘process’, the use of ‘social theory’, and ‘power’, and the development of ‘institutionalist’ analysis. This is followed by a comment on the normative biases in the work. In conclusion, the author makes a plea for continuing attention to the complexity and diversity of urban governance contexts and the importance for practical action of grasping the particularities of situated governance dynamics.

Keywords collaborative planning, communicative planning theory, institutionalist analysis, spatial planning, urban governance

This article presents a personal review of how I came to write the book *Collaborative Planning: Shaping Places in Fragmented Societies* (Healey, 1997a), and my thoughts on some of the criticism it has attracted. In the first section, I introduce the experiences that fed into the book followed by a brief summary of the key ideas that underpin my thinking as developed in the book. I then review some of the main criticisms that have been made of the book and my reflections on these. I focus in particular on the treatment of 'context', the emphasis on 'process', my approach to 'social theory', my treatment of 'power', and my development of 'institutionalist' analysis, with a final comment on the normative biases in my work. In conclusion, I make a plea for continuing attention to the complexity and diversity of urban governance contexts and the importance for practical action of grasping the particularities of situated dynamics. The article assumes that readers have some knowledge of the book, and of the critical debates surrounding the ideas of 'collaborative planning' and 'communicative planning theory'.

The context

The initial idea for the book that became *Collaborative Planning* was formulated in the mid-1980s. At that time, I was deeply involved in empirical work on the role of planning policies and development plans in guiding development processes in England.¹ I had been part of a team commissioned by central government to examine 'How far development plans were being implemented', an issue that arose in the political climate of 'high Thatcherism' (neo-liberalism), which was inherently hostile to the idea of planning and of 'managing' land and property markets to achieve wider economic, social and environmental goals (Thornley, 1991). This challenge not only led the team to redefine the government's research question, to reflect the nature of a 'development plan' as it had evolved in the UK context. We also found ourselves exploring the complex relations between planning interventions, land and property development processes and distributive outcomes, so that any arguments we made for a strategic spatial planning approach were robustly grounded (see Healey, 1991).

The idea that development plans as such could be directly 'implemented' reflected a very traditional conception of a plan as a spatial blueprint, which would steadily be translated into built form on the ground. This conception had been appropriate for the construction of the British New Town Programme in the 1950s, and for much of the public sector-led redevelopment work in city centres and run-down housing areas in the 1950s and 1960s. But since the 1960s, a new sort of 'policy planning' had emerged in the UK. Development plans, and especially the strategic 'structure' plans introduced in 1968, were no longer spatial blueprints. Instead, they had become statements of policy principles and regulatory norms to guide land and property development processes. These principles and norms might

require spatial specification (for example, delineating 'greenbelt' boundaries or allocating development sites for new housing or industrial areas). 'Comprehensive' spatial visions for an area were largely displaced by broad and general statements of 'goals', following the influence of US ideas about the so-called 'rational policy process'.

To study the 'implementation' of 'plans' therefore meant exploring how the various principles and norms were taken up and used in the multiple interactions that took place in the ongoing flow of project development and implementation. It involved examining what the role of having policies expressed in a plan actually was. 'Implementation' was already being described as a negotiative process, involving exchange and bargaining among a range of actors (Barrett and Fudge, 1981; Community Development Project Benwell [CDP], 1979; see Healey, 1997a: Chapter 7). In our work, it was clear that there were different kinds of interaction going on, between different sets of actors. Attempts by national elites to 'structure' what happened in specific instances were continually frustrated by local interpretations and interactions. In the jargon of the time, 'bottom-up' forces kept resisting and reworking 'top-down' policies. These local interactions were not merely adapting national and regional policy to their own purposes. They were at the same time affected by other 'driving forces' – other government policies, the impact of global conditions on local business interests, the local manifestation of wider social and environmental movements, etc. It was clear that land and property development processes were shaped by several structuring dimensions, not just the lever of planning processes contained in 'development plans'. To understand this situated interaction between structural driving forces and local governance capacity, we began to develop an 'institutional account' of planning and practices, focusing on development interests and institutional practices (Healey et al., 1988). We described the English planning system, as it then existed, as a mechanism for mediating among conflicting interests at various scales (see also Brindley et al., 1989). These days, we might say it had become an arena for multi-scalar interactions and struggles (Brenner, 1999).

As colleagues and I demonstrated in a more recent account of English strategic planning practice (Vigar et al., 2000), public policy in the UK has a very weak tradition of a territorial or spatial focus.² This was combined in the 1980s and 1990s with a continual critical attack from government politicians and business lobby groups on the capacity and competence of local government. Strategic spatial planning, which might have provided robust strategic frameworks within which specific interventions could be located, was dismissed as a time-wasting constraint on innovation and market efficiency. In our research, we were interested in whether this mattered. Some government ministers clearly thought that it did not. However, our research found that many participants in development processes were concerned about the lack of coherent and integrated strategies with a spatial dimension. These were particularly from the utilities sector, business lobbies

and some land and property interests. The reasons for this were clearly articulated in the welfare economics literature on market failure in land and property development markets. This literature emphasized the role of spatial strategies in stabilizing market conditions and hence reducing risk. The environmental lobbies were also demanding more robust strategies.

But it was also clear that the interaction of planning interventions and development processes produced distributive injustices as well. Many planning policies and norms were designed to protect environmental qualities and local amenities. Paradoxically, our research showed that these policies worked most effectively to shape development activity where private investment projects were concerned, as the regulatory power could be used to safeguard valued environmental qualities. In areas dependent on public sector investment, not only were resources in decline, but programmes pursued through one branch of government were not linked to other branches. So 'urban policy', which provided the investment for 'urban regeneration', proceeded much of the time with little attention to the policies and norms contained in development plans. The consequence was that 'place quality' was more neglected in areas dependent on public resources, which were typically poorer neighbourhoods, than in areas dependent on private resources. This issue was taken up in the 1990s, and particularly by the 1997 British Labour government's search for 'joined-up government' (Social Exclusion Unit [SEU], 2000). But it raised for us the question of the nature of the forces promoting and inhibiting strategic approaches to territorial development and place quality. Were the neoliberals right to assume that strategic spatial planning had become redundant in the new globalizing economy? Were the postmodernists right to ignore cumulative impacts through time and to stress instead individual creative interventions? Or were there dimensions of driving forces that created opportunities and even strong demands for more attention to strategic and spatially-integrated approaches to territorial development?

The project that became *Collaborative Planning* was thus inspired first by the perception of planning as an interactive process. Second, I understood planning as a governance activity occurring in complex and dynamic institutional environments, shaped by wider economic, social and environmental forces that structure, but do not determine, specific interactions. By governance, I meant the processes by which societies, and social groups, manage their collective affairs. There are, of course, many modes in which such governance can occur (for an expanded discussion on this point, see Cars et al., 2002). Third, my focus was on planning and policy initiatives concerned with maintaining and enhancing the qualities of places and territories. Finally, my project was also motivated by a moral commitment to social justice, especially as realized in the fine grain of daily life experiences in the context of culturally diverse values about local environments and ways of life. This meant a concern not merely with the justness of material outcomes, but also with the processes through which policies about resource

allocation and regulation are articulated and implemented. As David Harvey states in *Social Justice and the City* (Harvey, 1973), social justice has a dimension of both outcome and process, a just outcome justly arrived at.

While 20th-century physical development planning and rational policy analysis and planning (see Healey, 1997a: Chapter 1) had been very influential in structuring planning discourses and practices, the debates among British planning theorists in the 1980s seemed long on critique, short on suggestions for action and surprised by the neo-liberal onslaught. In the 1970s, there had been a vigorous engagement with the critique of the 'rational model' (Healey et al., 1982; Paris, 1982). My reading of cultural anthropology and phenomenology in the 1970s had made me aware of the socially-constructed and embedded nature of concepts and 'rationalities' and the multiple forms these might take. This made me both welcome the rediscovery of Marxist analysis in Europe in the late 1960s and critical of its broad generalizations and 'grand theories'. The planning field in the UK benefited from the rich seam of work in urban political economy that developed from the Marxist rediscovery, which provided a devastating critique of planning practice as supporting the status quo, business interests and the forces of capital, etc. Urban political economy was extremely important in highlighting the structural driving forces shaping instances of practice. But its generalizations did not ring true when tested against episodes of practice. Rather than being the product of a dominant driving force, such episodes were commonly shaped by complex struggles between multiple driving forces, interacting with the creative power of local agency. Instances of practice were often systematically unjust, privileging a narrow interest group, as many case studies have shown, before and since;³ but this outcome was not inevitable. Because people are inventive and creative, and because structuring forces cannot precisely determine events, there is always some scope for innovation. The diversity of forms of planning practice had become evident to me in my own work in Latin America on the introduction of ideas about planning and their impact on urban development processes (Healey, 1973), and in work in the 1970s on planners' ideas and their relation to their practices in the London Boroughs (Healey and Underwood, 1979). This recognition of the 'power of agency' was the focus of the work on 'implementation' in local planning and development processes in the USA and UK in the late 1970s and early 1980s that has been referred to. It has since become a key perception in the search in the social sciences generally for more subtle and interactive ways of grasping the relations between structuring forces and human agency.

Informing ideas and aims

Although many commentators identify Habermas as the primary influence on *Collaborative Planning*, the foundation of my own thinking is more

fundamentally the structuration theory of Anthony Giddens (1984). Giddens' conception of the continual interaction between, and mutual constitution of, 'structure and agency' reflected my own sense of what I had been observing and experiencing in research on planning practice. His understanding of the dimensions of linkage (authoritative systems, allocative systems and frames of reference) through which structures are generated and maintained in the flow of practices has proved a rich framework for subsequent 'institutionalist' research on planning practices and land and property development processes. It has provided me with a window on the social embeddedness of power relations that others have found through reference to Foucault or Bourdieu. Giddens drew on Marxism, phenomenology and cultural anthropology, a mix that had also stimulated my own thinking. What Giddens provided was a way of situating the active work of participants in governance processes within these structuration processes. His structuration theory focused attention on the qualities of interaction relations. With this relational perspective, I could then link to various contributions of US planning theorists who had also been exploring the experience of 'practising planning', 'doing planning work'. Much of this work focused on the fine grain of interaction. This stream of research, associated with Forester, Innes, Hoch and Baum, has come to be called communicative planning theory (Innes, 1995; see Healey, 1997a: Chapters 1, 8). It drew on Habermas' discourse ethics and the concept of communicative rationality as a normative principle with which to evaluate and challenge the qualities of interactive practices (Habermas, 1984). For me, this provided intellectual resources with which to develop a critical evaluation framework for assessing the qualities of interactive processes. These process qualities mattered if, following Giddens and others, the way authoritative and allocative 'systems' operated depended not merely on the interplay of actors with specific interests, but on the way routine social relations and practices were structured by institutional designs and deeper values and conceptions. As Foucault argues, power is embodied not just in the energy and position of individuals with command over specific rules and resources but is instantiated in the way people embody assumptions about appropriate ways of thinking and acting in their daily discourses and practices and how these in turn may become embedded in institutionalized practices.

The need for a critical evaluative framework for assessing the interactive qualities of processes became increasingly urgent as governments across Europe came under pressure to restructure their systems and practices. My window of observation on these transformations was urban governance. The experience of attempts to break out of traditional hierarchical and 'bureaucratic' processes to involve new groupings and networks, new 'partnerships', including sometimes business or NGOs or community representatives or all of these at once, focused increasing attention on both the nature of the processes that developed in these interactions and the biases that built up within them. From work with colleagues at Newcastle University on a

number of these partnerships, the complexity of the encounters between people with different values, different frames of reference and different ways of organizing collective action practices emerged clearly (Davoudi and Healey, 1995; Healey, 1997b, 2002b; Healey et al., 2003; Wood et al., 1995). These encounters also highlighted both the existence of reservoirs of goodwill and commitment to meet new challenges and the capacity to learn new ideas and ways of doing things. They also showed how this positive spirit was continually undermined by participants' failure to grasp the situated specificity of their own concepts and practices. Strikingly, those with most power tended to have the most unreflexive notions of the situatedness of their own experience and were most astonished by the complexity and difficulty of what those with least power had to do to get by.⁴ If often unrecognized as such, urban partnership experiences were in effect arenas of struggle between the many social worlds of urban life. How these struggles played out, and what they left behind in the store of experience in urban governance cultures, made a difference not merely to the outcome of such partnership efforts themselves, but to what kinds of processes would evolve in the future.⁵

Collaborative Planning, which took 10 years to grow if only 2 years to write, thus develops an approach to understanding and evaluating governance processes, and especially those that focus on developing qualities of place and territory. The argument of the book is that all planning activity involves some interactive relation, and some kind of governance process. In our work on policy implementation in the 1980s, we identified a variety of such 'process forms' (Healey, 1990). The aim of the book was to ground the discussion of process forms in the context of economic, social and environmental dynamics and their translation into institutionalized governance processes. I sought to suggest an approach to evaluating process forms, in terms of their potential material consequences and effects on people's sense of themselves (their identity). I hoped to expand the critical imaginative range of those designing new process forms beyond the well-known possibilities of manipulative politics, the rational-technical process, top-down command-and-control practices and bureaucratic rule-governed behaviour. Conceptually, the book offers a social-constructivist and relational approach to urban and regional dynamics and governance processes. This was informed by a recognition of the multiplicity of social worlds, 'rationalities' and practices that coexist in urban contexts and the complexity of the power relations within and between them, resulting in typically dispersed or diffused power contexts. Yet despite the diversity, governance capacity could emerge through these struggles and interactions with sufficient power to challenge structural driving forces and to sustain them. Normatively, the book explores the conditions under which particular forms of collaborative process may have the potential to be transformative, to change the practices, cultures and outcomes of 'place governance', and, in particular, to explore how, through attention to

process design, such processes could be made more socially just, and, in the context of the multiplicity of urban social worlds, more socially inclusive (see Part III of *Collaborative Planning*).

A critical commentary

Six years after completing *Collaborative Planning*, I have been surprised, pleased and also a little alarmed by its reception. The metaphor 'collaborative planning' became used and misused by politicians and policy-makers in the UK from the mid-1990s onwards to describe their ambitions for a new form of governance,⁶ borrowing heavily from business management literature (for example Huxham, 1996). Several groups promoting inclusive participative processes in project design and development were also using the collaborative label. By the late 1990s also, US concepts of consensus-building were beginning to become known in Britain (see Susskind et al., 1999). The discourse of 'collaborative governance' seemed to be spreading across UK public policy circles (see for example, Wilkinson and Appelbee, 1999; Worpole and Greenhaugh, 1999). At the same time, new forms of partnership were appearing elsewhere in Europe, with new partners and new practices. These experiences raised questions about their 'collaborative qualities'. What had seemed a distant prospect in the late 1980s was beginning to look like a dominant rhetoric 10 years later. The practice, though, was often far from reflecting the inclusionary qualities of a potential collaborative process (see Healey, 1997a: Chapter 8). This fuelled a critical commentary from planning theorists on the conceptualization and practical relevance of the collaborative planning idea, and communicative planning theory generally.⁷ As with many critiques, some of the comments on *Collaborative Planning* reflected a very partial reading of the book, or were based on earlier papers that had introduced only a small part of the agenda developed in the book. Too often in our academic work, we caricature authors, using them to express positions rather than engaging in depth with their actual arguments. I am grateful to those who have followed the latter course. But out of this critique have emerged some important issues, which I summarize briefly below, suggesting what I now think about my own treatment of them in the book.

The first two criticisms echo those made of the rational planning process itself.⁸ These claim that both my treatment of 'collaborative planning' and the diverse enterprise of communicative planning theory more generally neglect 'context' and focus too much on process, divorced from 'substantive content'. The third takes a broader aim and claims that both collaborative planning and communicative planning theory lack an adequate base in social theory. The fourth also echoes a criticism of the rational model and centres on the neglect of 'power' in the approach. I then make a criticism of my own with respect to the social theory I use, namely 'institutionalism',

as my treatment of it in the book is partial. Finally, I turn to two strong and deliberate biases in my work, the search for more inclusionary governance processes in a 'multicultural' context and the emphasis on place quality as a policy focus. In this discussion, I link together my development of the idea of collaborative planning with the wider discussion of 'communicative planning theory', since this link is commonly made in the critical literature.

The treatment of 'context'

There are two lines of critique here. First, some argue that communicative planning theory and my approach to collaborative planning activity focus too much on agency and too little on the broader structuring forces that shape both the windows of opportunity through which active agents can innovate and the power relations that influence the initiatives that agents seek to develop (Fainstein, 2000; Huxley and Yiftachel, 2000; Lauria and Whelan, 1995). The second looks at actual episodes of planning practice, or collaborative policy development, finds these do not meet the critical criteria put forward in Chapter 8 of *Collaborative Planning* and argues that a collaborative planning process as an ideal form cannot be realized in the contexts in which these episodes are found, for example, British planning practice.

There is some merit in both of these criticisms, reinforced by my own research preference for fine-grained and often ethnographic accounts of planning and urban partnership practices. However, as I have outlined above and develop in the 'institutionalist' frame of reference in the social theory I use (Healey, 1997a: Chapter 2), I am deeply interested in the interaction, in the fine grain of the daily routines, discourses and practices of governance, between structuring driving forces and what people do in specific episodes of governance. I just do not think that the significant qualities of these interactions can be 'read off' from theories about structuring processes, because agents are subject to conflicting structuring forces and are inherently creative and inventive in their responses. As a result, innovations are occurring all the time in the fine grain. In certain circumstances, these have the potential to challenge the driving forces to which local initiatives find themselves subject. My endeavour is to find ways to understand the dimensions of these interactions, so important for any attempt to challenge and change 'the way things go on'. I am also interested in what the analysis of episodes of planning practice reveals about the impact of planning policies and regulatory norms as structuring devices and what difference it might make if their content, procedures and way of operating were changed.

The increasing number of case studies of planning practice that explore the 'communicative qualities' of their interactive dimensions provides a rich resource for developing such an analysis.⁹ It is of course no surprise that

many instances of practice are nowhere near the Habermasian criteria for an 'ideal speech situation' (Habermas, 1984; see Healey, 1997a: Chapter 8). Habermas did not put these forward as an actuality, but as critical questions with which to evaluate instances of governance interaction (that is, interactions in the public sphere). But increasingly, researchers on communicative processes in the planning field are exploring the conditions in which processes with the qualities of comprehensibility, sincerity, legitimacy and truth,¹⁰ as well other qualities, such as openness, inclusivity, reflexivity and creativity, seem likely to arise. This revives the old idea of a repertoire of process forms from which process designers can choose (Hudson, 1979). Some people have attempted to produce typologies of contexts to relate to typologies of process (Woltjer, 2000). However, before long, such attempts become mired in the enormous diversity of governance contexts and actual process forms. Others use the simple device of a matrix to capture the variation in relationships between process mode and governance context, using dimensions such as the degree of concentration of power, qualities of knowledge, of stability, and of value range (Healey, 2002a; Innes and Booher, 2000; Malbert, 1998). However, the idea that planners should become skilled in advising governance communities on appropriate process forms to 'fit' their particular circumstances misses the dynamic nature of governance situations and the power of a process mode to change the way things go on, in all kinds of unexpected and unintended ways. These matrix devices have their value primarily in helping people develop a critical insight into the situatedness of other people's experiences and to ask critical questions about their own situation. As I argue in Chapter 8 of *Collaborative Planning*, governance processes are not recipes. They are unique constructions in specific situations. My own work since *Collaborative Planning* has focused on the extent to which innovations in process forms build capacities that may change a wider governance culture (Cars et al., 2002; Coaffee and Healey, 2003; Healey, 1998; Healey et al., 2003).

The emphasis on 'process'

I have explained above how I came to the view that 'process matters', a position that would be unsurprising to any policy analyst or political scientist. The criticism made against collaborative planning, and communicative planning theory generally, is that the focus on interaction directs attention away from the justice and sustainability of the material outcomes of planning interventions. Instead, Fainstein argues that planners should give more emphasis to normative concepts of the Just City, and use these as principles for evaluating planning practices. As I developed the project that became *Collaborative Planning*, I too set out in this direction. But increasingly, as I recognized the significance of the social situatedness of planning endeavours, it became clear to me that concepts of the 'good' and the 'just' were themselves constructed through relations of knowledge and power.

Beyond a certain level of specificity, the meaning of these concepts was both contingent and contested. This meant that the processes of articulating values and the manner in which these might become embedded in established discourses and practices were important. In other words, substance and process are co-constituted, not separate spheres (Gualini, 2001). In addition, process should not be understood merely as a means to a substantive end. Processes have process outcomes. Engagement in governance processes shapes participants' sense of themselves. It generates ways of thinking and acting that may be carried forward into subsequent episodes of governance.¹¹ For the actors involved, it means that they are faced with decisions (explicit or implicit) about an ethics of conduct as well as an ethics of material outcome (Howe, 1990). The challenge for researchers and practitioners is to keep the interplay between both dimensions in mind as instances of practice unfold. Some of the recent work in policy discourse analysis develops this approach in revealing ways (Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003).

The lack of a 'social theory'

Linked to the criticisms of the treatment of context, some have argued that communicative planning theory lacks an adequate underpinning social theory (Lauria and Whelan, 1995), or an 'explanatory' theory (Yiftachel and Huxley, 2000). Analytically, the critics ask what kind of assumptions about how social order is produced and transformed underpin communicative planning theory. Some fear that it merely reflects a liberal pluralist position. This may be true for some of those for whom critical pragmatics is the underpinning epistemology of their search for richer and more democratic communicative practices. But Habermas has a social theory, linked to his notions of the inter-subjective constitution of identity and the continual interplay of the 'system world' and the 'life world'. In my own work, as outlined, I draw on Giddens' structuration theory and its development into a social-constructivist view of institutional dynamics (Healey, 1999, 2003). In this conception, social 'order' is continually emergent, and the product of dialectical tensions between a range of structuring 'forces' interacting with the active creative force of human agency. This implies that the explanation for specific outcomes cannot be simply 'read off' from the interplay of forces analysed at the structural level. Explanations have to be grounded in rich analysis of specific institutional contingencies and specificities. This 'social-theoretic' position has directly informed my own empirical research, which has increasingly taken the form of ethnographies of governance processes in different arenas.

The real bite of the criticism of my treatment of social theory is that, in contrast to urban political economy, communicative planning theory and ideas about collaborative planning give insufficient emphasis to the driving forces of the globalizing capitalist economy and its consequences for

particular people in specific places. However, as noted earlier, both my research experience and my reading of phenomenology and cultural anthropology lead me to reject the idea that all significant social relations are driven by a single structuring force. There is more to the construction of social worlds than just economic forces, as the debates in feminist studies, postcolonial studies, cultural geography, and the recent interest in 'social capital' serve to highlight. Thus, while I find very helpful the discussion of structural moments and structuring influences, such as the 'fiscal crisis of the state' in the 1970s, and the crisis-driven conception of the transition from 'Fordism' to 'post-Fordism' in regulation theory's periodization of the late 20th century's political economy, I find such theorizations less helpful in 'reading' the dynamic realities that unfold in specific contexts. Too many assumptions about structural dynamics may blind researchers to what is being actively invented before them. 'Structuration theory', with its emphasis on examining the interplay of allocative dynamics (resource flows), authoritative dynamics (rule structures) and ideas/discourses, is more 'open' in this respect, even if many conclusions may support aspects of regulationist theses. Methodologically, structuration theory directs attention to how power relations are manifest and 'structured in' ('embedded') to daily life discourses and practices, and in this sense reflects a more Foucauldian sensibility, reinforced for me by my own reading in social anthropology, as well as Schon's injunction to develop the capacity for critical reflexivity on the deeper premises of one's own assumptions and practices (Schon, 1983).

There is also a normative dimension to the critique of a lack of social theory in communicative planning theory and collaborative planning. Many critics assume that proponents of this approach believe that encouraging more communicative and collaborative practices is desirable in itself, judged by values of inclusivity in democratic practices. This connects back to the widespread 'wave' of intellectual and policy interest in reconfiguring governance and democratic praxis in the present period. But a relational view of how social life is constituted emphasizes the importance of an analytic focus on the quality of relational interactions. These are the threads through which power relations are made manifest, in different ways and through different levels of consciousness. Normatively, then, the issue is to find ways to evaluate the quality of the communicative and collaborative dynamics through which social relations are maintained and changed. If normatively we are concerned as analysts and as planners with the inclusivity and creativity of urban governance processes in specific situations, then we need to develop the analytical skills to reveal when communicative and collaborative processes are likely to encourage these qualities and improve life conditions for the diverse groups and communities of interest in cities and regions, and when they are likely to be merely mechanisms to sustain old and well-established power relations.

The treatment of 'power'

Collaborative planning and communicative planning theory are often treated as if the aim is to 'neutralize' power. This criticism derives from a critique of Habermas' work that asserts that he gives too little attention to power relations (for example Flyvbjerg, 1998a). As many have noted (for example Fischler, 2000; Harris, 2002) and given the discussion on 'social theory' in this article, this is an odd claim to make, since both in my own work, and in that of, for example, Forester, a concern with power relations is a pervasive influence. The criticism derives in part from an association with Habermas' own idealism, and his hope that it could be possible that his ideal speech situation could become a dominant mode of governance discourse in developed democratic societies, reflecting a levelling of power relations, in contrast to the typically unequal power distributions of most governance contexts today. I find it hard to imagine that such situations would exist or exist for long, so the struggle to challenge the inequality of power relations is likely to be a continuous one. Habermas' evaluative concept of the qualities of 'speech situations' is a valuable tool of critique in such struggles. However, following the position outlined, I find simple dualistic oppositions of 'Rationality' (technical, expert, scientific, power-neutral) versus 'Power' (strategic action by knowledgeable, self-centred, goal-seeking, power-accumulating actors) (see Flyvbjerg, 1998a, 1998b) unhelpful in exploring these relations.

In my understanding, power is a relation not a 'thing'. All social relations have a power dimension. Just as social relations operate on several levels at once, so power relations are expressed in the dynamics of interaction between specific actors, in the deliberative processes through which some actors seek to dominate the way others work (as in the deliberate structuring of governance processes, economic markets, cultural practices, etc.), and finally in the deeper level of cultural assumptions and practices.¹² The pervasive and multi-level power dimension of all relations is, as Giddens (1984) argues, both authoritative and generative. It involves the exercise of 'power over' others as well as the 'power to' make things happen. I have tried in recent work to develop analyses that explore these dynamics in specific episodes (Coaffee and Healey, 2003; Healey et al., 2003). But I also believe, and my research and practice experience seems to confirm this, that these relations are continually in a dialectic and 'restless' flux, due to struggles in various arenas at various levels at once. In this context, the capacity for critical reflexivity and for argument, as advocated by Habermas, has the potential to have considerable effects.

Critical reflexivity, as understood by both Habermas and Schon (1983), involves the capacity to penetrate below direct interpersonal and deliberate strategic manipulation, to access an awareness of deeper cultural concepts and practices, and the relations of power that they embody. It requires an 'archaeological effort' of Foucauldian dimensions, so that

people can become aware that what they do in routine ways is not inherently 'natural', but has become 'natural' through a social history of acceptance and embedding. If so, it can also be disembedded, though this may involve a long process of cultural readjustment, as those involved in governance in Eastern Europe have discovered as they switch not just to a market economy, but to a different kind of governance organization. Argument is of course the classic tool of intellectual challenge to power relations, and its force in challenging the credibility and legitimacy of political regimes is well established. Habermas' project is to extend the range of argument, beyond the important but limited sphere of philosophical logic and scientific demonstration, to encompass moral argument and aesthetic appreciation. I would extend this further to encompass the different forms for establishing the legitimacy of points of view developed in different cultural contexts and the struggles between these forms, as well as between specific arguments. In other words, argumentation carries power and produces effects in all kinds of ways. Those analysing governance processes need to look carefully at the power relations of argumentative processes as well as the consequences of the outcomes of these processes. Understood in this way, what may emerge as, and be presented as, a 'consensus', itself needs careful critical scrutiny, and is best understood as a fragile, incomplete and contestable outcome, which may or may not have enduring effects in structuring subsequent relations. These effects may be liberating and creative, but they may also be oppressive (see Healey, 1997a: Chapter 8, 1999: 118). Here I agree with Hillier's discussion of the importance of 'agonistic' strategies of direct resistance in situations where joining consensus-building processes is likely to lead to 'co-option' into the discourses and practices of already dominant participants (Hillier, 2002).

The treatment of institutionalism

The institutionalist approach to theorizing the relation between structure and agency, to power relations and to the social construction of discourse and practices was hardly noticed in the initial reception of *Collaborative Planning*. I have sought to develop it further in later work (Healey, 1999, 2003) and apply it in recent work on urban governance capacity building (Coaffee and Healey, 2003; Healey et al., 2003). But as I have developed my own understanding and awareness of the breadth of what is often called these days the 'new institutionalism', I have to acknowledge that my treatment of the approach in 1997 was partial. In the book (Chapter 2), I draw on a mixture of Giddensian sociology and my reading of the evolutionary economics, or socio-economics, developing in the analysis of industrial districts and other regional economic complexes, particularly in Europe (see Healey, 1997a: Chapter 5). This was linked to the development of interpretive policy analysis emerging in the work of Fischer (1980, 1995, 2000), Fischer and Forester (1993), Hajer (1995) and Yanow (1996). Subsequently,

I have made more links to the burgeoning interest in the 'institutionalist turn' in political science (see Hall and Taylor, 1996; Jessop, 2002; Peters, 1999). But I neglected attention to the contributions developing within the more mainstream branches of economics, particularly in rational public choice and transaction cost theory. This is best represented in the planning field in the work of Alexander (1995), Sager (1994, 2001), Pennington (2000) and Webster (Webster and Wu, 2001). Since completing *Collaborative Planning*, accounts of the 'institutionalist turn' in political science and policy analysis have emerged that set a more appropriate 'span' to the range of this 'new institutionalist' work (Bogason, 2000; Jessop, 2002; Peters, 1999). All this institutionalist work seeks ways of addressing the interrelation between 'episodes' of governance and the broader socio-economic and political context. There remains, however, a fundamental difference between the public choice and transaction cost theorists and the sociological version of institutionalism that I work with. The former could be described as still operating within a positivist frame of reference, in which individuals have their own preferences but are engaging in social situations where costs and benefits are collectively calculated. In contrast, I understand both ways of being (ontologies) and ways of thinking (epistemologies) as actively constructed in social interaction. Context and episode are thus co-constituted and co-generative.

The biases in my work

The intellectual bias of my work derives from the social theory I draw on, as discussed. But I have been criticized for having an idealistic and utopian commitment to inclusionary collaborative processes as the way forward in planning, for an unsubstantiated belief that a place focus in public policy is a good thing, and for 'believing in planning'.

As regards the first, as I have indicated earlier, I do not mean to claim that inclusionary collaborative processes are inherently 'the best', or even, as Harper and Stein (2000) argue, that they are the most appropriate for 'our society' at the present time. Instead, I suggest critical questions that those designing and evaluating policy processes should be encouraged to ask, from the perspective of a multicultural view of the process dimension of distributive justice. I am more clear now than I was when I was developing Chapter 8 of *Collaborative Planning* that an inclusionary collaborative process does not necessarily guarantee the justice of either process of material outcomes. But I still think it is ethically proper for any planner or policy analyst trained to assess the impacts of interventions on people and places through time to take as inclusionary a view as possible of the range and distribution of impacts.¹³ I also stand by the argument that, in a multicultural context, this will mean paying attention to the multiple ways in which impacts are experienced, in terms of processes and identities, as well as the experience of material 'costs' and 'benefits'.

As regards the focus on 'place quality' and 'territorial development', I deliberately challenge the well-established 'sectoral' way of organizing the articulation and delivery of government policies through functions, such as health, education, employment, housing, crime management, etc. While this produced enormous benefits in improving the quality of people's lives in many respects, it led to an organization of government that was often ignorant of the way different policies interacted as experienced by specific people and firms in specific places. In the UK, our hyper-centralism exacerbated this 'split-up' approach to people's daily life experience. For me, the place-focus of planning finds its legitimacy and logic in its role as a countervailing force to functional service delivery logics for organizing government. As I outlined at the start of this introduction, my work in the 1980s had sought robust arguments for a policy focus on place quality. If these were not easy to find and articulate at the time, there has now been an explosion of research, theorization and policy concern that has brought the issue of place quality and territorial development nearer the foreground of intellectual and policy development. I feel I hardly need to justify this 'bias' now. Even economists are being encouraged to take account of the spatiality of economic phenomena. However, the debates have moved a long way beyond merely arguing that 'place matters', into a deeper discussion of the diversity of place qualities, the spatial vocabularies mobilized in instances of spatial and territorial development, the consequences of articulating place-focused strategies and the dangers of an over-localist approach to place quality articulation (see Liggett and Perry, 1995; Madanipour et al., 2001).

Thus, the 'planning' that I portray in *Collaborative Planning* is clearly something broader than the practices of regulatory land-use planning that is all that seems to be left of some planning systems in Europe. It is about strategic approaches to the 'governance of place'. It involves attention to both the qualities of place and of process, the 'good city' and its 'good governance' (Healey, 2001), understood in a social constructivist and relational way. Everywhere has some kind of approach to the governance of place, just as every society has an approach to education, to health care, the treatment of the elderly, etc. The task of the planning enterprise is to critically interrogate the governance practices that currently exist and to help governance communities concerned with place qualities to develop different approaches where these are seen to be failing. This involves attention to both discourses and practices; to what already exists, what is emerging and what might possibly emerge in a specific context. In this way, combining analysis with critical evaluation and creative invention, normative precepts should not float away into abstract generalizations, but be grounded in the particularities of specific times and places.

Concluding note

The ideas put forward in *Collaborative Planning*, situated as I have described in a particular North-west European experience, are now circulating in the 'global' planning community. As these ideas 'travel', as with all 'travelling ideas', they are filled with different meanings, which I did not necessarily intend or expect. Hopefully, the critical assessment of their situated meanings, robustness and relevance will continue, from the perspectives of very different governance contexts and cultures. Such critical encounter should lead to a much greater understanding of the diversity of the manifestations of the 'planning enterprise' and of governance cultures in different parts of the world. It should also contribute to our knowledge about governance transformation processes, and what it takes to shift governance discourses and practices in ways that have the potential to enhance social justice as inclusively understood and achieved in the dimension of place quality. Many accounts will continue to be 'stories of failure' – of planning exercises, participation initiatives, community mobilization, partnership working – which, despite enormous effort, were unable to shift dominant ways of thinking and acting. But failure is not always negative, and small achievements may not necessarily be lost in the flow of history. Even the most stable of governance regimes is always changing in some way, and, through astute mobilization, 'windows of opportunity' and 'cracks in the structure' can be opened up through which other ways can get leverage (see Healey, 1997a: Chapter 7). In complex urban governance contexts, with multiple actors, arenas, and struggles over discourses and practices, strategic actors who can make a difference will be those who focus on real opportunities for innovation and who work with the 'grain' of the emergent properties of specific situations. Planning theorists and analysts of planning practices need to maintain their efforts at critical analysis of how these struggles work and how they work out. *Collaborative Planning* is a plea for the importance of understanding complexity and diversity, in a way that does not collapse into atomistic analyses of specific episodes and individual achievements, or avoid recognizing the way power consolidates into driving forces that shape situational specificities. This is of course important for critical analysts. But for planners and policy analysts, playing roles in urban governance contexts, and involved in the discussion, design and management of specific actions, grasping the fine grain of the interactive dynamics between situational specificities and broader dynamics is critically important.

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Notes

1. This work was the basis for Healey et al. (1988).
2. The contrast is with planning cultures in the Netherlands, France and Germany.
3. See for example Meyerson and Banfield (1955), Castells (1977), Cockburn (1977), Saunders (1979), Ambrose (1986), Healey et al. (1988), Flyvbjerg (1998b).
4. This illustrates Scott's argument that the powerful always seek to simplify reality in order to mould it to their purposes (Scott, 1998).
5. These processes have been the focus of my most recent work on 'institutional capacity' and urban governance transformation processes, see Healey (1998, 2002b, 2003), Cars et al. (2002), Coaffee and Healey (2003), Healey et al. (2003).
6. It took me a long time to settle on the title because of the negative connotations of the term 'collaborative' during the Second World War in Europe.
7. The following have engaged in critical commentary on communicative planning theory and collaborative planning: Lauria and Whelan (1995), Flyvbjerg (1998a), Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger (1998), Yiftachel (1999), Fainstein (2000), Fischler (2000), Harper and Stein (2000), Huxley (2000), Huxley and Yiftachel (2000), Woltjer (2000), Yiftachel and Huxley (2000), Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones (2002), Harris (2002).
8. A point also noted by Harris (2002).
9. See for example Innes (1992), Innes et al. (1994), Malbert (1998), Tewdwr-Jones and Thomas (1998), Innes and Booher (2000), Innes and Gruber (2001), McGuirk (2001), Woltjer (2000), Van Driesche and Lane (2002).
10. Habermas' qualities of an ideal speech situation.
11. See Friedmann's discussion of the role of learning in social transformation (Friedmann, 1987). See also the role of learning in the discussion of capacity-building and empowerment in community development.
12. This notion of a three-tiered way of understanding the multiple layers of relations of power derives from Lukes (1974), Giddens (1984) and Dyrberg (1997); see Healey (forthcoming). Bryson and Crosby also make use of it, deriving it from Giddens (Bryson and Crosby, 1992).
13. Of course, an objectively complete definition of a 'full' range is an impossibility. As I argue in Chapter 8 of *Collaborative Planning*, the challenge is to widen imaginative horizons to incorporate what a particular governance community should be expected to know.

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