CHAPTER 8

ASYMMETRIC DEVELOPMENT IN SPATIAL PLANNING: POSITIVIST CONTENT AND POSTMODERNIST PROCESSES?

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As a form of applied geography, planning plays an important role in formulating ideas about space. Moreover, as a part of the state, planning has the opportunity to put these ideas into practice. It thus comprises a key means by which spatial imaginaries are ‘performed’ or ‘enacted’ (Murdoch 2006, 156, drawing on Law and Urry 2004).

THE SPATIAL TURN IN PLANNING AND THE MEANING OF SPATIALITY

One of the consequences of the remarkable social, environmental and institutional changes which have taken place in the latter part of the twentieth century has been an increasing recognition that territory matters! Indeed, we have witnessed a rediscovery of space and place in policy making. At the European level the significance of spatial policies and the need for territorial coordination of sector policies has been substantially elevated after publication of the ESDP and the subsequent dissection and examination of its spatial development principles through the ESPON research programme (Davoudi 2005b). An outcome of this upsurge has been a growing
emphasis on the need for planning to become more spatial and to move away from a narrow regulatory system. While the debate on the meaning and interpretation of this ‘spatial turn’ in planning is still ongoing and the gap between rhetoric and reality remains wide, the energetic attempts by planners to implement it in their practice of strategy making is undisputed. It is this enthusiasm that inspired us to embark on this book project. The case studies examined in this volume confirm this view and clearly show that the final decade of the last millennium has witnessed a new generation of spatial strategies which exhibit many characteristics of a turn to spatiality. However, for the authors of this book the question was not whether planning has or has not become spatial but rather: what type of spatiality is conveyed by it; what conceptions of space and place have underpinned planning in the last half a century; and, how these have changed in the spatial strategies which were emerging in the early 2000s.

To explore these, we developed a conceptual framework as part of the work undertaken for Chapter One. This was to help us analyze the ways in which space and place are articulated, presented and visualised in our selected spatial strategies in the UK and Ireland. Central to this framework is the notion of space, and more importantly the distinction between absolute and relational views of space. The former is rooted in Euclidean geometry and perceives space as a neutral container, while the latter is rooted in Leibnizian philosophy which considers space as dependent on the processes and substances that make it up. As mentioned in Chapter One, the absolute view of space belongs to the naturalist tradition of inquiry, while the relational approach is embraced by the interpretive tradition. Since the middle of the twentieth century these traditions have manifested themselves in social sciences in three distinct ways: positivism, structuralism and post-structuralism (or
postmodernism). We have used these three ‘isms’ as the broad contour of our conceptual framework and as a guide to structure the empirical findings from the case studies. They helped us make sense of different ways of knowing and practicing spatial planning. Our aim has been to explore how these different world-views have informed and influenced spatial thinking and spatial practices both historically and as they were unfolding in the case study areas. In the following account, we will once again draw on the conceptual framework developed in Chapter One to structure our analyses of the planning contents and processes in the case study areas. Before that, we situate these analyses in the underlying contexts within which the six spatial strategies were emerging and to which they were responding.

**THE CONTEXT: PLANNING AS IDENTITY BUILDING**

The context within which the spatial strategies were formulated is defined by five interrelated themes. These, listed below, not only contextualised the processes and contents of spatial strategies, but also shaped the conceptions of spatiality conveyed by them.

- Continuing socio-economic transformations
- Changing political and administrative landscapes
- Spatial diversity versus spatial unity
- Emerging spatial planning concepts
- Legacy of past practices and processes

**Continuing Socio-Economic Transformations**
The case study strategies were formulated against a background of a continuing social and economic transformation characterised predominantly by the decline of the traditional manufacturing industries (such as coal and steel in Wales and Yorkshire and Humber, engineering and textile in Scotland) and the gradual rise of the new service economy. London and Ireland were witnessing economic and demographic resurgence of a magnitude that provided London with a world city status and Ireland with a top position on the European league table. Yet, in all cases these transformations were creating differentiated and often highly polarised patterns of spatial economies. In some places economic restructuring was reinforcing spatial disparities (as in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland) while in others it was also creating new patterns of spatial justice (as in Yorkshire and Humber and Ireland). Across the case studies, periods of industrialisation and urbanisation had led to variable socio-economic geographies which in turn were fuelling deep-seated and place-related competitions at multiple spatial scales. Over time, these rivalries have created imaginary demarcation lines and manifested in spatial dualities such as: Cardiff versus Valleys in Wales; rural Highlands versus urban Central Belt in Scotland; rural north versus urban industrial south in Yorkshire and Humber; Dublin versus the rest in Ireland; and, west and centre versus east and south of the city in London. In Northern Ireland such dividing lines have been further sharpened by long standing ethno-religious geographies, leading to a perceived dichotomy between a largely nationalist, catholic, and west of the River Bann rural periphery on the one hand, and a largely unionist, protestant, and east of the Bann urban core, on the other.

**Changing Political and Administrative Landscapes**
Another contextual factor which provided the impetus for embarking on a new round of strategy making was the significant changes in the political landscapes. The most striking of these was the constitutional reform in the UK and the peace process in Northern Ireland, with the latter launching a new chapter in the multi-dimensional relationships between Northern Ireland, the island of Ireland and Great Britain. The constitutional change led to the devolution of power, albeit to different degrees, to Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Greater London. It also raised the expectations for the prospect of devolved regional powers in the form of elected regional government in England. While the latter did not materialize, it did lead to what is called a ‘quiet regionalism’. It also enhanced spatial planning powers in the English regions. In the devolved administrations entirely new political institutions were created all of which intent on making a difference and putting their marks on policies and practices. However, while in London and Yorkshire and Humber the desire to do things differently was conditioned by statutory requirements for conformity to national policy frameworks, in the devolved administrations of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland such constraints, if they existed, were of little significance when compared with the drive to exhibit a territorial identity, uniqueness and difference.

Across the Irish Sea, the peace process meant that such distinctiveness could indeed be applied to the island of Ireland as a whole, to help bring the close ties between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland to centre stage.

Furthermore, the changing political landscape has been paramount in maintaining the pace and profile of strategy making processes. This is because firstly, in all case study areas the spatial strategy making has been part of a wider process of governmental commitment to produce a series of new policies, strategies and programmes. In some
cases such as Ireland, the spatial strategy was considered as a direct response to the National Development Plan. In Scotland, too, the NPF was seen as complementing the economic agenda of the Framework for Economic Development in Scotland. Secondly, initiating the process, sustaining its momentum and ensuring delivery became a priority for the new administrations and key individuals within them. In Wales, the personal and political commitment of the Assembly’s First Minister for planning - a former planning academic who had been inspired by new European approaches to spatial planning - was seen as crucial in Assembly’s embrace of strategic spatial planning. Similarly, the commitment of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland - who initiated the task of strategy preparation following the Parliamentary ceasefire in 1994 - was considered essential in elevating the significance of the emerging strategy in the context of a ‘new start’ for Northern Ireland. In Ireland, the making of the NSS was not only recommended by the National Economic and Social Council, chaired by the highest ranking civil servant. It was also strongly advocated by the Minister for planning who was considered as one of the ‘champions’ of the NSS proposal. The London Plan, too, is seen as representing the Mayer’s vision and has had his continuing support. Similarly, in Scotland the formation of the NPF had the strong backing of the Scottish Executive which considered the reform of land use planning essential in the delivery of its pro-growth agenda.

Spatial Juxtaposition: Diversity and Unity

A key component of the context within which the strategies were produced was the tension between the internal place-related competitions and rivalries manifested in the
spatial dualities mentioned above, and the pressure and desire to work across such divides to construct a conception of spatial unity with coherent and distinctive identity for the whole of the planned territories. In the devolved administrations of Wales and Scotland, in particular, transcending internal divisions and presenting a united front was seen as paramount for the ongoing project of nation building. In this project spatial plans and their demarcation of territory were to perform a significant part. More importantly, the terms in which such a role was played out both revealed and sustained the importance of positivist legacies and their efficacy in helping plans serve their often unspoken or intangible purposes. We will return to these subtle yet important differences when discussing planning contents. In all cases, however, making of the spatial strategies became an integral and indeed critical part of building distinct, and even unique, identities for the planned territories. Hence, the resulting identities which emerged should be understood as ‘a changeable product of collective action’ (Calhoun 1991:59), ‘not as its stable underlying cause’ (Brubaker 2003:235). In other words, plan's stories and imageries were not simply representing a shared identity of the entire planned territories. They were actively constructing that identity by re-scaling the imaginary demarcation lines up from the perceived territorial subdivisions to the larger scale of planned territory and hence bringing to the foreground the conceived space of: an ‘island’, a ‘nation’, a ‘region’, or a ‘world city’.

**Emerging Spatial Planning Concepts**

In all case studies the political projects of constructing distinct identities became contingent on articulating different-ness. Hence, a sense of relentless search for distinctiveness runs through the narrative of all strategy making processes. This is
manifested in statements such as: ‘devising responses to distinctively Scottish issues’; ‘a new start has warranted a new plan’ based on ‘celebrating distinctiveness’ in Northern Ireland; ‘becoming international yet distinctively Welsh’; ‘positioning Republic of Ireland as a single region’; ‘London’s economy has always been distinct’; and ‘doing something different’ in Yorkshire and Humber. Indeed, it was this desire for distinctiveness coupled with the turn to spatiality that motivated planners to search for originality and innovation in planning concepts and methodologies. One of the sources feeding the much needed inspiration was the gathering pace of spatial thinking at the European level and particularly the making of the ESDP. Case study strategies were prepared at a time when the ESDP process was in full swing, provoking new ways of doing spatial planning. While all cases examined in this volume were clearly informed by it, it was the Irish National Spatial Strategy (NSS) which was most influenced. This is partly because, unlike other regions, those engaged in the preparation of the Strategy were directly involved in the ESDP and its follow up ESPON research processes. An example of such an influence is the strong emphasis on developing a scientific evidence base for the Irish NSS. As is the case in the ESPON programme (Davoudi 2007), this was understood largely by undertaking quantitative analysis of spatial trends. We will return to this when discussing the processes of strategy making.

Legacy of Past Practices and Processes

As shown in Table 8.1, devolution induced a degree of temporal overlap in the process of strategy making and led to the emergence of a new generation of strategic spatial plans in the early 2000s.
While their parallel timing and the coincidence with the ESDP preparation created a
degree of commonality among them in terms of concepts and vocabularies used and
processes followed, there remained intriguing differences between them. To some
extent, such variations reflect the path-dependent and place-related traditions of:
strategy making, planning concepts and methods in the case study areas. Hence,
another contextual factor which shaped the processes and contents of spatial strategies
was the terms in which the tensions between innovation and continuity were played
out. As we will see in the discussion of the process, often attempts to do things
differently had to be compromised by procedural routines. New spatial thinking had
to be situated in the inherited practices and their resistance to change. The sense of
continuity is most apparent in the narrative of Scotland and London case studies.
Here, the making of the new spatial strategies was seen as part of a chain of
experimentations with a long established tradition of strategic planning. Therefore,
London can boast that its boundaries have only changed twice in over 100 years.
Indeed, many of the concepts introduced by the 1945 Greater London Plan, notably
the Green Belt, have continued to shape a bounded conception of spatiality for
London which sits uncomfortably with its complex web of relations that stretch not
just beyond the Green Belt but also globally. Furthermore, much of the thinking about
planning in London was sustained through the work of a London-wide planning
committee (LPAC) despite a major institutional interruption in the 1980s. Similarly,
Scotland’s National Planning Framework (NPF) is considered as the reassertion of the
strategic tradition in Scottish planning practices and the enduring insight from: the
regional reports of the 1970s, the metropolitan planning for Glasgow City-region, and the joint structure planning for Glasgow and Clyde Valley. On the contrary, in Ireland - where the bitter taste of the past failure to adopt the 1968 Buchanan Strategy had spoiled the appetite for embarking on any new spatial plans - strategy making had to break with the legacy of past practices in order to gain legitimacy. There are also more subtle experiences of the past which found their ways into the new plan making processes. One such legacy is the lingering memories of spatial injustices perceived as being represented and reinforced by successive plans. This has been particularly acute in Northern Ireland. The new Strategy has had to deal with the legacy of Robert Matthew’s 1963 Plan which focused on the Belfast region, largely neglected the rest of the territory and led to an enduring sense of spatial injustice, depicted in ‘the West of the Bann’ slogan.

Together these interrelated themes defined the context for the spatial strategies and shaped their conceptions of space and place, as will become evident from the following analyses. These will be organized under the key aspects of planning content and processes which were presented in Chapter One, Table 1.1.

**PLANNING CONTENT: THE ENDURING LEGACY OF POSITIVISM**

The dawn of the new millennium witnessed the emergence of a generation of spatial strategies which were hailed for their successful attempts to go beyond the traditional, regulatory land use planning to incorporate the ‘standard’ features associated with what had become known as *spatial* planning. Six of the strategies examined in this
volume confirm this shift of emphasis, yet at the same time show that their content remain heavily influenced by positivist traditions with respect to the:

- Interpretation of spatiality and conception of place
- Spatial organising principles and understanding of scale
- Treatment of time and future
- Visualisation and representation

In all these substantive aspects, the case study strategies provide compelling evidence for the enduring legacy of positivism. However, such a broad brush conclusion would mask the intriguing differences between them. More importantly, it would say little about the multiple ways through which positivism was re-asserted and the multiple purposes served by its deployment at different times and in different places. We will elaborate on such nuances using the key aspects of planning content as mentioned in Chapter One and outlined above.

**Constructing identity for a bounded-space: Interpretation of spatiality and conception of place**

In Chapter One, we established that a positivist perspective portrays an absolute, Euclidean conception of space. Space is seen as a neutral container that can be understood through positivist science, rather than something that is dependent on the social and cultural processes and substances that make it up. Positivism considers place as objective, bounded, self-contained and measurable. While these positivist legacies can be detected in all case studies, their prominence varies in different cases.
Furthermore, their presence often tells different stories in different plans, as discussed below.

**Space as a neutral container: depoliticising the socio-spatial tensions**

The conception of space as a neutral container was particularly pertinent in Northern Ireland. Here, strategic planning was to grapple with a highly divided society and contested territorial identities which conveyed differential, yet simultaneous belonging to both the UK and Ireland. Planning was also situated in the context of a deep resentment to what was seen by many as spatial injustices of a planning system which had focused on ‘East of the Bann’ and neglected the Catholic, predominantly rural, west. In this highly charged context, diffusing social and spatial tensions was seen as being contingent on a positivist conception of space as a container and planning as a technical process. It provided a seemingly safe ground upon which the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) could be built. Yet, while the RDS tends to shy away from the notion of space as socially and culturally produced, its representation of space is anything but neutral. ‘Words are carefully parsed and images selectively chosen’… with representation of space and place ‘powerfully loaded’ (Chapter 5). It is true that the RDS was lobbied away from the selective urban growth centre bias of the 1963 Matthew’s Plan to ascribe bland potentials to ‘rural community’ but, it remained largely a reflection of the ‘urban comfort zone of its authors’ (Chapter 5). The rural, in this perspective, was perceived as different, socially empty spatial entities with little connections to the urban. While the content of the Strategy bears a close resemblance to the positivist spatial calculus of its predecessor - the Regional Physical Development Strategy (RPDS) of 1977 - it does not carry through the explicit RPDS’s urban-rural distributional element, which was
probably inspired by the structuralist tendencies of the 1970s. Furthermore, there remains an important difference in the way different aspects of positivism were drawn upon in the two plans. In the RPDS it was the technical rationality and the perceived impartiality of Civil Service planning bureaucracy which helped legitimize the Strategy’s ignorance of the sectarian divisions in Northern Ireland. In the new RDS, it was the notion of space as a neutral container that became instrumental in diffusing the spatial tensions which by then were acknowledged as a reflection of societal divisions. Hence, while the makers of the new RDS knew that ‘differences and divisions can no longer be ignored in official planning exercises’ (Neill and Gordon 2001:34), their conception of space as a neutral container made it easier to downplay these uncomfortable differences in the spatiality of the plan. Furthermore, such articulation, even if attempted, would have been considered as working against the portrayal of a harmonious regional space; a mission in which the Strategy was committed to play an important part.

**Place as bounded and self-contained: building identities**

As mentioned earlier, constructing distinct identity for the planned territories was a recurring theme in all case study areas. Identities are not only promoted by cultural and language specificities and symbolised by flags and anthems. They are also enhanced by carving out territories and sharply defining and protecting their boundaries. So, it is not surprising to see that in all case studies the conceptualisation of places as bounded and self-contained locales becomes indispensable, playing a significant, though differential, role in constructing distinct identities for the planned territories. Nowhere was this as prominent as in Wales where the strategy making and its outcome were clearly seen as part of the project of nation building. While in Wales
the national space was defined by drawing on shared social and cultural history, in Yorkshire and Humber (YH) regional space was defined by the standard administrative definition and quasi-legal terminology. Given the imposition of these standard regions which were initially established to assist with statistical calculations, the YH Plan finds it difficult to construct a regional identity. Hence, several representations of spatiality are drawn upon to give meanings to imagined reality of an imposed spatial unit. Unlike Wales, and in the absence of a strong socio-culturally driven regional identity, the YH Plan draws largely on the Euclidean, physical attributes of an elusive place called Yorkshire to project a commonly shared spatial unit: the region. Landscape and built heritage, rather than people and their experiences, are summoned to portray a distinct and shared identity for a region which is seen as a passive container of artefacts (Chapter 6). The distinctiveness of the planned territory is therefore expressed by a recourse to people-less notions of ‘secure hilltops, fertile floodplains, mineral resources, navigable rivers, medieval castles, …’ (YHA 2005:233). Some of these physical attributes, such as the National Parks in Yorkshire, are articulated and presented as not only bounded but also legally binding places.

For the Irish NSS, applying the positivist notion of bounded national space was not so much culturally-driven as in Wales, nor physically-based as in YH. Instead it was economically-driven, associated with portraying Ireland as a single coherent economic space, eligible for European structural funds. Ever since Ireland joined the Union, the framework of the EU funding has been a defining feature of the way in which the spatiality of Ireland has been represented: a statistical spatial unit called NUTS II region qualified for Objective 1 Structural Funds. Even the more recent
delineation of regional boundaries has been carefully drawn to maximise the extent of the areas eligible for EU funding (Davoudi and Wishart 2005). This has reinforced the spatial imaginary of Ireland as a space for inward investment, which in turn has defined her engagement with globalization. Paradoxically, it has also led to the increasing awareness of relational, rather than absolute, spatial perspectives albeit with a strong emphasis on economic imperatives.

Economic imperatives play a significant role in the Scottish National Planning Framework (NPF), too. Indeed the NPF was seen as ‘an early statement of the strategic issues facing Scotland’s spatial economy’ as a whole’ (Chapter 2). The purpose was to formulate a ‘single, overarching national plan’ which assumes ‘iconic status’, in the process of devolution and modernisation of public services. Emphasis is repeatedly placed on the need for comprehensiveness, understood as a total coverage of the planned territory, and strategic thinking, understood as having a higher-tier spatial framework for land and property development and linking land use to infrastructure investment. While the NPF has all the hallmarks of the spatial turn to planning, its mission of dealing with ‘distinct Scottish issues’ revolves around land questions and extension of land use control to new areas such as off shore activities. It seems as if the devolution-induced new start has revitalized some of the old, post-war planning technologies related to land reform, wider access to rural Scotland and major new legally-binding designations such as a National Park. Like the survey reports of the 1960s and 70s, the plan is in effect: a snap shot ‘audit of where Scotland is’; an overview of its spatial economy; a collection of ‘evidence’ particularly on demography and economy; and a ‘catalogue’ of the progress made. And, as in the ‘golden age’ of planning the articulation of its spatial planning ideas are ‘put into
practical terms as a form of master-planning’ (Chapter 2) for the sub-regional areas that are under development pressures.

**Acknowledging connectivity?**

While an absolute conception of space prevails in the case studies, there are some glimpses of recognition of relational spaces. An indication of this is the introduction of the concept of functional urban regions (FUR) in the Irish NSS which moves beyond the administrative boundaries to consider the functional relationships and in particular the intricate, non-physical interactions between urban and rural areas. However, the concept of FUR and the methodology employed to define it has remained an urban-centric and economic-oriented understanding of functional spaces (Davoudi 2008). The same is true about the introduction of the city-region concept in the YH Plan which, as with the FUR, is based on a single economic indicator of travel to work journey applied only to major urban centres. Elsewhere, boundary lines form the basis for mapping of activities and policies. Furthermore, even such a reductionist approach to represent the functional space does not extend beyond the imposed administrative boundaries of the YH region; as if ‘life stops’ at the regional borders. Similar attempts to move away from the positivist static representation of space are hinted at in the narrative of the Wales Spatial Plan. Here, such occasional breaks with the Euclidean conception of space appear in the discussion of environment which identifies complex climatic relationships and consider them as linking the Welsh space ‘to other parts of the world’ (WAG 2004s: 23). Across the Irish Sea, Ireland’s attempt to look beyond the planned territory and introduce an all-island dimension, represented, for instance, in the Dublin-Belfast and Letterkenny - Derry corridors, is another example of making a relational incision in what is otherwise conceived as a
bounded, absolute space of the planned territory. Such incisions are also made, though not followed through, in the transnational positioning of Northern Ireland in the Atlantic Arc of European countries.

Among the case studies, London stands out as a place with the most widely recognised complex global relationships. Indeed, its promotion as a World City is contingent on such recognition. Yet, rather than showing signs of a relational perspective London personifies a recurring theme in all case studies: recognition of the complex web of relations that affects the planned territories on the one hand, and failure to articulate these in the conceptions of space and place that underpins the strategic thinking, on the other hand. The London Plan inherits many characteristics of its predecessors, with ‘methods of allocation, designation and control in the planners’ tool-box remaining unchanged’ (Chapter 7). However, the discourse which underpins its spatial construct has changed from considering London as a congested city with a declining economy and population to portraying it as ‘the largest regional generator of economic activities and tax revenue in the UK’ (Chapter 7). The City is seen as a money generating machine in need of increasing its capacity to ‘accommodate significant growth’ (GLA 2004:37). The Plan’s central purpose is to make this pro-growth agenda happen even if its social and environmental, and even wider regional, implications are not fully explored. Following Peter Hall’s (2007: 16) criticism of this agenda, such a pro-growth strategy evokes that, ‘London is the engine powering the UK plc, so don’t dare tinker with it’. While the conception of London as a bounded locale is accentuated with the strong physical representation of the Green Belt, the construction of its sub-divisions are more fluid with permeable boundaries and fuzzy contours. This is true of other case studies where vaguely
defined sub-areas sit alongside sharply drawn boundaries of the planned territory. Internal flexibility sits side by side with external rigidity. A bounded conception of the national / regional space as a unified whole remains in constant tension with the diversities and fluidities of the relations which cut across the imaginary border lines.

**Taming the Space: Spatial Organising Principles and Understanding of Scale**

As mentioned in Chapter One, from a positivist perspective space and place can be defined and ordered by spatial organising principles such as distance-decay effects, adjacency and proximity, while scale is understood as nested hierarchy with fixed boundaries. Within this perspective, planning is considered as a key means of not only demarcating territory, as discussed above, but also taming the space through what Foucault calls ‘planning technologies’; ‘that is, the precise means by which [government] rationalities can be implemented in practice’ (Murdoch 2006:44). Traditional positivist planning used Euclidean geometrical dimensions to bring order to the perceived disorderly state of spatial dynamics. Following the representation of space as a complex, yet control-able, system, these physical organising principles were later complemented by structuralist functional attributes. Remnants of positivism and to some extent structuralism are clearly traceable in the case studies. Physical and functional organising principles are still essential components of planners’ toolkits for ordering space. In some cases these are legitimized by positivist science of quantification and measurement (such as in Ireland), while in others they are based on softer discursive methods (such as in Wales).
While the spatial strategies have largely moved away from the people-less, design-based planning of earlier times and a concern with objects and forms; they are still spell-bound by two persistent concepts. One is the concept of well-ordered and balanced spatial development; and the other is the concept of the neatly-nested settlement hierarchies. The former is underpinned by structuralism and a social democratic policy objective of achieving social equity and territorial cohesion (Davoudi 2005a). The latter derives from positivist aspirations to create harmonious functionality across the planned territory. Both have a long and contested history in planning. Balanced development goes back to the distribution-based regional policies of the 1960s and 70s, while settlement hierarchy is the legacy of Christaller’s Central Place Theory. We will elaborate on these in turn.

**Ordering space into balanced development**

While most of the case studies exhibit an aspiration to ‘spread prosperity’ (as in Wales) or ‘spread urban-centred development opportunity’ (as in Scotland), it is in the Irish NSS where such aspiration is most explicitly and vigorously followed by adopting the concept of balanced development as the central plank of the Strategy. Here, paradoxically, a technical ‘Balanced Regional Development’ (BRD) paper was produced to clarify the concept and reduce the political tensions between economic competitiveness and social cohesion aspirations. The intent was to move away from the much discredited growth poles imperatives of the 1968 Buchanan Plan and disperse inward investments; a policy which was favoured by the strong rural electorates but not approved of by the sceptical economists. A well crafted compromise, led by experts, was devised to satisfy both groups. Balance was to be achieved through the potential-based rather than the traditional distribution-based
policies; a shift of emphasis similar to, and inspired by, what was taking place in the European regional policy and advocated by the ESDP (Davoudi 2003). In this re-orientation of policy, two tenets of positivism were carefully crafted to serve two interrelated purposes and help achieve a political compromise. On the one hand, a rational analytic perspective was used to reject the spatial equity approach (i.e. distribution-based regional policy) and hence maintain the confidence of the ‘economic stakeholders’ who believed that such an approach would weaken the economy as a whole and particularly its power house: Dublin. On the other hand, the conception of space as a territorial container in which places have locally constructed characteristics was drawn upon to present the potential-based model and hence regain the support of the strong rural lobby who for a long time had been demanding a more equitable spatial distribution of resources. Hence, ‘balance as equality’ was replaced with ‘balance as utilisation of potential’ (Chapter 4). More importantly, the outcome of this process reinforced the positivist perception of planning as being capable of forging balanced spatial order in the complex and messy world of global economic relations. The toolkit changed but the assumption about the ability of planning technologies to tame space remained intact.

The desire to achieve some forms of spatial equilibrium is present in other case studies, too, where historically plans after plans have prescribed ‘stylised spatial options along a concentration-dispersal continuum’ (Chapter 5). The most common approach for ‘spreading the wealth’ however is based on improving physical accessibility, developing complementary functions between geographically-proximate places, and privileging near, neighbouring relationship over the distant networks. The most striking remark reported in the Irish case study is that although the authors of the
BRD paper were fully aware of the complex relational geography of spaces and places in Ireland, they deliberately chose to conceptualise them in ‘the more tangible’ positivist discourses, because the ‘structuralist or postmodernist’ understanding and discourses were seen as too ‘challenging’ for planning practitioners. This confirms the point we made in the introduction to this volume that there is a yawning gap between the growing recognition of the relational view of space and its articulation in the world of planning practice.

*The nested scale of settlement hierarchies: The adjectival space*

The second persistent positivist spatial organising concept is that of a neatly-nested settlement hierarchy, advocated by Christaller’s Central Place Theory. While in some cases such settlement structures were constructed on the basis of functional spatial interactions, their predominant use in the plan ‘reverted to prescriptive and highly instrumental allocative concepts’ (Chapter 6). Assigning pre-defined functions to places underpin all forms of spatial representations articulated in the plans. In Yorkshire and Humber for example within the resulting nested conception of space, settlements were typologized into manageable sub-units of the regional spatial container, with some being given priority over others on the basis of quantitative measures. Thus, some are designated as ‘prime focus’ for houses, jobs and services; others as ‘local focus’; and the rest as their ‘hinterlands’. In London the Plan simplifies the complexities of spatial relations into ‘opportunity areas’, ‘areas of intensification’ and ‘areas of regeneration’, while in Scotland ‘economic development zones’ are designated. In Northern Ireland such allocative determinism led to explicit political contestation. Hence, firstly, Belfast functional analysis had to be scaled at six constituent local authority area levels, with clustering and networking of areas being
avoided because they were perceived as undermining the identity of local authority areas. Secondly, the remaining part of the planned territory which was initially divided into ‘high’, ‘medium’ and ‘low’ growth areas (marked on the map by the letters H, M, and L) faced fierce opposition from local politicians and had to be replaced with the seemingly more benign terminology of ‘main hubs’ and ‘local hubs’. However, even this led to major political debate as the local hubs were considered as the losers of this allocative determination. The Irish NSS also proposes a nested hierarchical approach to scale which extends from the local, to the regional, to the national, and vice versa. This results in a settlement structure based on a set of ‘national and regional gateways’, ‘hub towns, ‘other towns’ and ‘rural areas’, all encased within a single island space. In Wales, however, the notion of a hierarchy of settlements became weakened in the process of finalizing the Plan. Instead of a three-tier structure, only one settlement, Cardiff, remained distinguished as a network city region.

This shows that although the vocabulary for conveying the spatial organising ideas has changed in the case study areas (less so in the Wales SP) along with many other places in Europe, the ideas themselves have not. So, the extent to which this new vocabulary reflects a new, relational, understanding of space is questionable. In fact, as Beauregard (2005: 25) argues, such a discursive construction of ‘adjectival city’ has the potential to reduce the inherent complexity and diversity of spatial relations to a single, universal characteristic such as: ‘world city’, ‘sustainable city’, ‘polycentric city’, ‘edge city’, or ‘garden city’. The simplification makes complex spatial relations amenable to taming and ordering. This is particularly so when the adjectives are used as synecdoche (Amin and Graham 1997) rather than metaphors. While metaphors
‘assert a similarity in a difference’ (Beauregard 2005: 26), in synecdoche ‘the whole as a totality … is qualitatively identified with the parts that appear to make it up’ (White 1978:73). As a consequence, rather than considering the space in ‘its messy totality’, it curbs its complexity by distilling it into a ‘single and pivotal element…leaving aside what is (considered as) less important’ (Beauregard 2005:27). Hence the danger of adjectival city discourse is not only its portrayal of an imagined space which may not match the experienced realities, but also its amplification of one aspect of that space and marginalisation of others.

There is however an exception, that is the notion of network city, driven from Castells’ idea of the network society (Castles 1996) and some of its associated terms such as ‘hubs’, ‘nodes’ and ‘gateways’. The term network seems to have captured the relational understanding of space, conveying the decentred, fragmented and discontinuous worlds of space-time. Its growing currency in planning discourses however relates to its ability not just to portray relational complexities but also to reconfigure these complexities into a more malleable and manageable form. As Beauregard (2005, 30) put it:

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Discursively, the network city takes the disparate parts of the city or the complexity of multiple cities and brings them together in a single entity, the network. Then, by positing the network as open, fluid, and innovative, complexity is re-introduced. The city is simultaneously unpredictable and organized.
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The network metaphor allows planning to embrace a tamed complexity while at the same time avoiding its incapacitating tendencies. However, it is doubtful that its use in spatial strategies is based on a conscious recognition of its utility, as is evident in the case studies. For example, in the Wales Spatial Plan, vocabularies such as urban networks or network regions are used but the interactions conveyed by them often remain limited to quasi-physical interactions. Their complexity and density are not represented in the Plan. ‘What does not emerge is a notion that these places are constituted by the superimposition of relational webs each with its own spatiality’ (Chapter 2) and each in a constant process of becoming. Despite the use of the network vocabulary, spaces are imagined by their relations to physical infrastructure. For example, while the YH Plan portrays the Humber estuary as a ‘global gateway’, it then presents the region as a ‘strategic transport cross-roads’; the City of Leeds as a location on ‘an axis’; York as a regional ‘iconic gateway’; and, the coast and upland as ‘remote’ (Chapter 6), not being clear as to remote from where!.

Privileging physical geography of proximity over the relational geography of connectivity is most clearly reflected in the positioning of the planned territories in international relations. Overall, the strategies show little attention or interest in these wider relations. Hence, the Welsh Plan remains a Wales-focused document with no diagrammatic positioning of Wales in geographic context of the UK or Europe. Similarly, the scale at which the RDS is presented is consistently that of Northern Ireland (with no fewer than 18 maps of the region) with its careful positioning vis a vis Great Britain and island of Ireland. References to the EU and United States are made but are not central to the strategy. The Yorkshire and Humber Region is constructed predominantly in relation to the city of Leeds and the Northern Way.
Globalisation is seen as a benign force of change with the European scale being reduced to undisputed ideas such as the Tran-European Networks (TENS). The only case study which reports a plurality of conceptual approaches to scale is the Irish NSS: firstly, a strong structuralist perspective underpins the analysis of national and international relations; secondly, a hierarchical positivist approach is adopted for internal spatial relations, and thirdly, in terms of the island of Ireland scale, the narrative and visualisation falls within post-modernist tradition.

**Treatment of Time and Future**

The introduction of value rationality is thus a clear reaction against a future that extrapolates the past and maintains the status quo. It means that time flows from the ‘invented’ future, which challenges conventional wisdom, toward and into the experienced present. This means inventing a world that would not otherwise be (Albrechts 2004: 750).

One of the most profound legacies of positivism in spatial planning is the treatment of time and future. All case studies, without exception, report that plans express a linear and measurable time geography in which future is an extension of present and present is seen as a definable instant. This, in Wales, has found a clear metaphoric expression in the form of a ‘direction of travel’ (where we are, where we want to go, discovering how we get from ‘here’ to ‘there’). In Northern Ireland, it is manifested in rhetorical questions such as: ‘where will we live, where will we work, etc’? The time frame for all this is often pitched at 20-25 years. These headline dates remain fixed irrespective of the time taken to produce the plan. The present, everyday, cyclical time geography
features less in spatial strategies. Planning technologies are considered not only as key means of demarcating territory and taming the space, but also as ordering time and manipulating change. In defining what planning is, Peter Tayler (2005, 157) argues that, ‘a planning exercise can be defined as any project that attempts to control social change over a specified time horizon’. So, planners’ toolkits contain not only spatial organising principles but also temporal organising concepts such as projections and phasing. And, as in the taming of space, these are often legitimized by positivist science of quantitative forecasting of population and employment, contingent only on economic deterministic constructs. Underlying these efforts is a desire to: ‘prepare for the future’ (as in Wales), ‘shape the future’ (as in Northern Ireland), and generally be in control of not only spatial but also temporal changes. And, as in the treatment of space, the way to achieve this is often through reducing complex uncertainties and risks into predictable and measurable trends. Hence, in all case study strategies a reasonably well-understood contemporary context is uncritically projected into a future sheltered from any radical or uncomfortable shocks (Chapter 4). Emphasis is placed on scientific accuracy of forecasts in order to maintain confidence in, and credibility of, the plans. Positivism, once again, becomes indispensable irrespective of the fact that even the most carefully calculated projections, i.e. of housing need, tend to be challenged and revised several times during the preparation of the plans (as happened in Northern Ireland). However, ‘such uncertainties and approximations are never easily conceded in the perceived certainties of positivist planning’ (Chapter 5), because apparently, ‘we have to look forwards in time and outwards’ (WAG 2004a:4). Yet, despite portrayal of a forward looking prospect, the strategies heavily rely on historical data. ‘Description of the ways things are dominates over analysis of
why things are the way that they are’ and in turn the conclusion is uncritically reached that, ‘this is the way things should be in 2025’ (Chapter 5).

Following Unger’s (2007) social theory, this suggests that plans’ concept of future is devoid of recognising the ubiquity of change and opening space for novelty and surprise. Little use of foresights or scenarios is made in the plans, and when they are used (as in Wales), they often exhibit confidence in what future entails and in their ability to anticipate and respond to its challenges. Often, a known future that is ultimately guided by a quasi-linear interpolation of the conditions at the turn of the century is portrayed by fast-forwarding the selected present. The imagined future is far from a set of possible and contingent futures; futures that replete with uncertainties, capable of unfolding in multiple ways. In the words of Tayler (2005, 157), ‘all planning provides a solution to its problem as defined at a given time’. Yet given the state of flux, problems change and hence responses to problems ‘progressively get out of date…Planning is condemned to solve yesterday’s problems’.

**Visualisation and Representation**

All forms of representation are abstraction from reality which bring some aspects forward to the attention and leave some in background or eliminate them completely (Peattie 1987:112).

We use the term representation to move away from a positivist understanding of visualisation as a communication system. Furthermore, following Fischler (1995: 23),
we use the term to emphasise the interdependence between ‘the symbolic structure that frame what is being said, written and shown during planning processes; and the political structures that frame interaction during those processes’. While we acknowledge that symbolic (or cognitive) and political issues are inextricably interlinked, the case studies have not focused on teasing out such interdependencies. Instead, the emphasis has been twofold: firstly, to find out what forms of representations have been used; and secondly, what forms of spatiality have been conveyed by them. Furthermore, while we acknowledge the significance of the plan’s text, metaphors and vocabularies in spatial representations, the case studies have mainly focused on the visual aspects of representation including cartographical and pictorial images, drawings and diagrams.

It is evident from the case studies that the traditional, static, Cartesian maps (Duhr 2007) with two-dimensional co-ordinates are still the dominant form of visual representation in the plans. This is sometimes irrespective of a clear recognition of the existence of complex relationships. In Scotland, for example, while city regions are defined in terms of functional relations, their depiction on the maps is based on the Euclidean notion of contiguous built up areas around the main cities. However, what seems to have changed is the way in which space and place is represented in these two-dimensional maps. The change signals a tentative move away from the positivist portrayal of space as absolute and fixed to one that is more fluid and dynamic, albeit not necessarily representing the complex layers of spatial relations. The shift has been captured in the notion of ‘fuzzy maps’. What features less in the plans is the Euclidean focus on geometric accuracy of key maps which depict spatiality as a mosaic of land uses, criss-crossed with road and rail lines. In its place, the plans’ key
maps show the spatial relations of the planned territory as fluid, with fuzzy boundaries. However, as we will see below, the question remains as whether ‘fuzziness’ displays an intellectually-driven attempt to make two-dimensional maps more conducive to postmodern representation of relational space; or, whether it displays a politically-motivated endeavour to avoid controversies in the planning processes; or whether it serves both purposes.

It is also evident from the case studies that while mapping of the internal spatial relations is deliberately fuzzy at the edges, the external boundaries are sharply and distinctly defined. Moreover, neither the fuzziness of the internal boundaries, nor the clarity of the external borders is incidental. Both serve a purpose; both have- what Harley (1989) in his seminal paper Deconstructing the Map calls - ‘agency’ in the world. Harley, following Foucault and Derrida, argues that ‘the map works in society as a form of power-knowledge’ (Harley 1992, 243). That contrary to the ‘positivistic epistemology’ that considers map-making as ‘scientific and ‘untainted by social factors’ (Harley 1992, 234), the ‘rules of cartography’ are influenced by the rules ‘governing the cultural production of the map’ (Harley 1992, 236); that ‘all maps are rhetorical’ (Harley 1992, 242) and their agency is their exercise of power. Hence, in the case studies the clarity of external edges reinforces the project of nation building (as in Wales and Scotland) and identity building (as elsewhere) while the blurring of internal boundaries supports the quest for consensus and for transcending the internal divides. The latter is clearly reflected in the way in which the fuzzy maps of the Irish NSS help to overcome the dilemma faced by the Strategy in its depiction of the city regions. On the one hand, the Strategy aspires to map the quantitatively-identified, functional reach of the main cities; on the other hand it is expected to avoid impinging
on traditional physical and administrative boundaries. Blurring of the boundaries (both functional and administrative) appears to have offered a way out of the dilemma. By not drawing lines on the maps, the maps remain more suggestive than prescriptive and hence avoid potential political tensions.

Hence, while the ascendancy of the ‘fuzzy maps’ phenomena signals a growing awareness of the relational space (albeit limited to economic-driven functional relations), it also signals the attempt to de-politicise the planning process by blurring the political boundaries on the map. Yet, in spite of such attempts to move away from the politically problematic geometric accuracies, the case studies confirms Harley’s view that maps fuse ‘polity and territory at different scales ranging from global empire building to the preservation of the nation state, to the local assertion of individual property rights’ (Harley 1988, 281). Such fusion of polity and territory is also evident in the juxtaposition between clarity and ambiguity in other forms of visual imageries, such as those used in the Northern Ireland RDS. On the one hand the satellite photograph of Northern Ireland endorses the presence of Irish borderlands particularly to the west. On the other hand, ‘the vivid colours of the multiple mapping symbols contrast with the portrayed aridity of the Republic of Ireland’ (Chapter 5) representing the uneasy relationships of the region with the island of Ireland and the UK. Contrary to this cautious approach, the Irish NSS uses visualisation techniques, as alternative to narrative, to convey political confidence in the spatial planning endeavours in an island of Ireland context.

All case study strategies are lavishly illustrated by, among other things, photographic images. While these can be seen as articulating place identities, they are by no means
based on a random collection of bright images chosen to liven up the text. They are indeed highly selective and promotional, conveying subtle messages. In Wales they resonate very closely with the Welsh Assembly’s policy priorities and depict the loosely defined characteristics of different areas in Wales. In Northern Ireland even greater attention has been given to ‘state management of the visualisation and representation content’ throughout the lengthy process of plan preparation (Chapter 5). This extended to the representation of the changing ownership of the plan. While the 1998 draft version of the Plan is illustrated by a photograph of the then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland - a key broker of the Good Friday Agreement – in the 2001 final version her photograph and all references to the Agreement were excised and replaced with the photograph of the Assembly in operation.

**Planning Content and the Reassertion of Positivism: Summing up**

One way to understand the enduring legacy of positivism is to explore the often unspoken purpose of plans and their interrelationship with the wider socio-cultural context at a particular time and in a particular locale. The context within which spatial strategies were formulated and to which they were responding shaped the conception of spatiality which were conveyed by them. In the case studies a defining feature of the context was the tensions between two processes. On the one hand, the advent of devolution and regionalism and the emergence of new political and administrative institutions had aroused aspirations for territorial identity building and for doing things differently. On the other hand, the variable socio-economic geographies and their associated political rivalries had heightened imaginary demarcation lines and spatial dualities. Within this context an important purpose of the spatial strategies was
to convey a conception of spatiality that transcended the spatial divides and portrayed a spatial unity which could display coherence and distinctive identity. A similar ambition underlined the process of plan making and was manifested in the emphasis on working across political divides and building consensus. So, if planning content was informed and shaped by the project of territorial identity building, the planning process was underpinned by the project of institutional consensus building. While the two projects were clearly interrelated, it is intriguing that planning content drew largely on positivism for constructing spatial unity while planning processes were informed by post-structualist approaches for constructing institutional consensus.

The juxtaposition between spatial unity and spatial diversity became the hallmark of the spatiality conveyed by the plans. It informed almost all aspects of planning content. In this process two tenets of positivism were adopted to provide a seemingly safe ground and an apparently effective way of handling the tension. The first one was the positivist notion of space as a neutral container. This was drawn upon to mask spatial diversities and de-politicise socio-spatial tensions. The second one was its notion of place as bounded and self-contained. This was used to conceive a harmonious, unified territory with distinctive identity. We elaborate on these in turn. Spatial unity- i.e. portraying the planned territory as a single and unified space – was seen as a prerequisite for the project of identity building. Yet, this project itself was driven by different aspirations and was serving different purposes in different case study areas. While in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland it was the culturally-induced project of identity building upon which positivism became contingent; in Ireland it was the economically-driven motivation to position the territory as a single European region which made positivism apparently essential. In Yorkshire and
Humber, positivism proved instrumental in the building of an English region and the construction of a physically-based shared identity of ‘a place called Yorkshire’. These differences meant that in each plan some tenets of positivism became more instrumental than others. In the cultural project of identity-building, conceiving Wales as a bounded and self-contained place was elevated, while in the physically-based project of constructing shared identity, it was the Euclidean, absolute conception of space which was given priority. In the economic project of European positioning on the other hand, conceptualising space as positivist science became more pronounced.

If the portrayal of a unified, bounded place was considered as essential in defining the external relations of the planned territories, the conceptualisation of space as a neutral container was seen as central to their internal relations. The Strategies’ approach to spatial diversity within the planned territories was underpinned by a desire to downplay spatial differentiations and defuse political rivalries. Positivism with its claim to neutrality, technicality and objectivity seemed to offer a safe and convenient ground. Within this perspective, it was perceived that: the messy world of spatial relations could be neatly ordered; the complexities of scalar interactions could be hierarchically nested; and, the multidimensional nature of time could be simply phased out. Physical and sometimes functional organizing principles, legitimized by either positivist science of quantification and measurement or softer discursive methods, remained essential components of planning technologies. These were deployed to enact and perform planners’ well-ordered and neatly-nested spatial imaginaries. The perceived ability of planning to forge order in the disorderly world of relational geography was indeed boosted by the emergence of the notions of balanced urban development, territorial cohesion and adjectival cities. The first two stem from a social democratic
aspiration to redistribute wealth. Yet, its spatial manifestations in plans often display a limited understanding of the complex global economic (and other) relations. Hence, the plans’ prescriptions for achieving balanced development are often limited to improving physical accessibility between geographically proximate places and privileging adjacent relationships over distant networks. Hence, the physical geography of proximity continues to play a greater part in plans’ conception of spatiality than the relational geography of connectivity. Exceptions, however, do exist and are best presented in the case of the Republic of Ireland’s NSS which adopts a plurality of conceptual approaches ranging from functional structuralism in its national and international analyses, hierarchical positivism in its internal relations, and postmodernism in its island of Ireland scale.

The irony is that neither the positivist conception of space and place, nor the techno-physical approaches to representation of spatiality delivered the objectivity and neutrality that the spatial strategies hoped for. Instead, the outcomes were highly selective; highlighting some forms of spatiality while letting others slip away. Furthermore, the positivist approach substantially limited the ability of plans to give expression to the fluidity and multiplicity of relations between these selected forms of spatiality. While new vocabularies for conveying spatial organizing ideas have pushed their way into plans, the ideas themselves have remained stubbornly the same. Pre-defined functions are assigned to places: so, some areas are to be the prime focus, others the local hub, a third group, area of opportunities, and a fourth, remote. This is complemented by a discursive construction of adjectival spaces (Beauregard 2005) such as hub towns and gateway cities. The problem is that they not only portray what Lefebvre calls planners’ conceived spaces which may not match the perceived spaces
of every day life; they also amplify a single and neat element of the space and leave aside its messy totality. Even the concept of network city which seems to have captured the relational geography is a double-edged concept; allowing planning to embrace complexity without its debilitating tendencies; hence projecting an illusion of tamed complexity.

Nowhere is this illusion as profound as in the treatment of time and future. The linear time geography, in which future is an extension of present and present as a definable instant, is strongly articulated in the spatial strategies. Here again there is a clear link between the purpose of the plan and the enduring legacy of positivism. For contemporary planning practice- whose legitimacy lies in providing certainty and control over future changes - positivism and its promise of scientific forecasting becomes indispensable. Hence, in the spatial strategies temporal organizing principles- such as projection and phasing legitimized by positivist science of quantification and forecasting- often complement the spatial organizing principles. Together they intend to tame not only space but also time. It is evident from the case studies presented in this study that one of the most difficult concepts for spatial strategies to grapple with is the ubiquity of change and the constant process of becoming.

Even more challenging is the representation of such flows and fluidities. As our case studies have shown, spatiality is still visualised by Cartesian, two-dimensional, static maps. However, while these maps are still the most common mechanism for representing spatiality, their portrayal of space and place has changed. The change is captured in the notion of fuzzy maps which mark a departure from the Euclidean
focus on geometric accuracy towards a focus on fluid relations and fuzzy boundaries. However, in the spatial strategies the fuzzy internal boundaries stand against sharply defined external borders. This once again reflects the juxtaposition between spatial unity and diversity which has shaped the ways in which spaces and places are not only conceptualised but also represented and visualised. The agency of the maps worked in two interrelated ways. The clarity of their external edges reinforced the construction of unity, identity and different-ness, while the blurring of internal boundaries supported the quest for transcending the internal divides. It was also instrumental in downplaying place related political rivalries. The question, however, remains as why static, two-dimensional maps continue to be a major form of visual representation in plans. As the case studies have shown the answer is not simply because the alternatives are either not there or not discovered by planners; it is rather because maps continue to play a major role in constructing both personal and social ties to the territories and times represented by them. They are used to give these territories and times a realness and proximity that they otherwise lack (Edney 2007). Cartesian maps by virtue of simplification and abstraction of spaces and places continue to provoke a seductive vision of planning power and its ability to control spatial change. It is this agency coupled with positivist conception of objectivity and certainty, rather than, necessarily, the lack of alternative forms of representations, which has sustained the dominance of two-dimensional maps in spatial strategies.

PLANNING PROCESSES: THE EMERGING SWAYS OF POST-STRUCTURALISM
As we mentioned earlier, contrary to the dominance of positivism in the contents of the spatial strategies examined in this volume, their processes show signs of a shift towards postmodernist approaches, with regard to:

- Perceived role of planners and knowledge and skills employed
- Methods of engagement, governance structures and power relations
- Modes of implementation

It is evident from the case studies that some aspects of the planning processes have embraced features that are affiliated with interpretive, poststructural traditions. This is particularly true with regard to methods of engagement and perceived role of planners. However, the move towards postmodernist processes has not been unqualified or universal. The emerging picture is a mixed one in terms of both different plans and different aspects of the planning processes. We will elaborate on these developments using key aspects of planning processes as mentioned in Chapter One and outlined above. Our aim is to substantiate the move towards poststructuralism and the multiplicity of approaches adopted in the processes of strategy making. We do this by drawing on the narratives of the case study chapters.

**Planners as Mediators: Perceived Role of Planners and Knowledge and Skills Employed**

One of the areas in which a clear change has taken place is the role of planners and the type of skills they deploy in the planning processes. The scientific, technical role played by seemingly value-free, spatial scientists of rational planning era has in many
cases been either replaced by or mixed with poststructuralist approaches of consensus seeking through negotiation and deliberation, and by drawing on different forms of knowledge. While in all cases the planning process began with the commissioning of new technical research, as we will discuss below, the significance of this in assisting the plan to perform its role fluctuated during the process of plan making and differed in various case study areas. In Wales for example, while the earlier stages of the strategy were heavily dominated by quantitative scenario building and econometric modelling, in more advanced stages these positivist approaches gave way to qualitative techniques of visioning and utilisation of experiential knowledge of local communities. The change in methodology was based on the recommendations of the consultants who were commissioned by the Welsh Assembly to explore alternative approaches to plan preparation. The consultants were against a data- and modelling-driven approach and in favour of ‘a series of high-level principles with broad-scale visual representation of key themes in a mapped form’ (Chapter 2). Further work on technical spatial scenarios were commissioned but not published. By then, the Plan’s place in the wider project of nation building had been elevated to a principal strategy of the Welsh Government. It had become a corporatist policy document and a frame of reference for generating dialogue and fostering consensus around the key issues facing Wales. Hence at that stage whether its contents were scientific or whether it could predict the future and tame the space was of little significance. What mattered was the role it played in constructing a seemingly consensual conception of Wales as a unified, coherent and distinct national space. In this context, planners’ role was not to be that of a technical expert in charge of analysing and controlling spatial processes; neither was it to advocate socially motivated alternative planning. Rather, their role was to carve out consensus through dialogue about the role of particular
places in Wales. Skills of policy formation, stakeholder involvement and facilitations were privileged over technical skills, as well as over rationalisation and argumentation skills. Planners were doing more talking and less analysis in Wales.

The Northern Ireland case reveals an entirely reversed role for planners. Here, Civil Service planners did more analysis and less talking. While they played their role in data collection on population forecasts and quantification of future housing, they kept a low profile in the stakeholder consultation events and left much of the work related to tapping into experiential knowledge, visioning and mediation to externally appointed organisations with planning expertise. An interesting observation in this case is the continuing advocacy role played by planners similar to what is promoted by structuralism yet not confined to disadvantaged communities. Planners were engaged in paid advocacy for not only community activists but also powerful interest groups, predicting ‘different futures related to whose interests were being served’ (Chapter 5). The Irish case study tells yet another story. Here planners along with other experts were doing a lot of spatial analysis as well as a lot of talking. ‘Evidence-based empirical analysis with a strong emphasis on visual representation’ (Chapter 4) was deemed necessary for moving out of the long shadow cast by the failure of the Matthew’s Plan and for demonstrating the need for spatial policy initiatives. Hence, positivist spatial science, developed through a major research programme, was combined with ‘an extensive programme of active and passive consultation’ as well as ‘formal arrangements to secure buy-in across a number of governmental departments’ (Chapter 4). The emphasis on front-loading expert-led empirical research was reflected in the establishment of a high level Expert Advisory Committee which consisted also of senior academics (not necessarily from the
planning community) and representatives from neighbouring countries. The overriding challenge was the definition of the balanced regional development – the main thrust of the NSS - about which there was much confusion and uncertainty as well as political unease. A central task of planners was about ‘spatial positioning of any given places in relation to a space’ (Chapter 4); i.e. applying the concept of balanced development to the planned territory. Positivist science was deemed necessary to give what was inherently a political concept an appearance of objectivity and neutrality. An extensive research programme, with over 30 projects, provided a large amount of information on spatial patterns and development. While the new information was more descriptive than analytical, it was used extensively in the consultation workshops ‘to maintain the focus on high level national issues and to avoid the risk associated with regional or local introspection’ (Chapter 4). Hence, contrary to the approach adopted in Wales, consensus had to be achieved not just through poststructuralist discursive approaches but also through data-driven spatial analysis approaches of technical rationality. These analyses were seen particularly significant in relation to two groups: the economic stakeholders who were sceptical of the credibility of potential-based, balanced development approach, and those local politicians who saw themselves as the losers of this approach. The former had to be reassured of the scientific rigour of the process and the latter had to be convinced ‘objectively’ that the approach taken was in the long term national interest. To achieve this latter goal, however, it became evident that, as in Wales, the precision of the earlier empirical analysis had to be modified in the second phase of consultation ‘to take account of additional informal knowledge derived in a somewhat ad hoc fashion from the collective wisdom of experienced planners and other spatial development researchers’ (Chapter 4). Hence, the precise boundaries of the identified
functional areas (considered as an innovative approach) had to be depicted as overlapping and imprecise. As the strategy making moved from the technical arenas of experts into the messy world of policy making, the hard edges of evidence-based functional areas had to be softened to become ‘politically acceptable and administratively workable’; ‘the precision of positivist analysis’ had to be ‘replaced by somewhat fuzzy visualisation’ (Chapter 4).

In Yorkshire and Humber the process also began with information gathering. However, the intension was not to change the mind sets and promote new concepts such as those needed in the Irish case, but to comply with the rhetoric of government-induced, evidence-based policy making approach. The knowledge used in the process was mainly driven from population projection, econometric modelling and quantitative forecasting; i.e. planners’ familiar toolkits. This time, however, these had to be re-packaged in the language of a new policy culture of performance measurement and target setting. The data collection was to serve the plan-monitor-manage model of planning process. Hence, technical officers (some of whom were planners) in the Assembly were given primacy, and a number of technical grouping were established to provide the required technical inputs. In London, the initial draft proposal report was rejected by the Mayer’s Office on the basis of not reflecting his vision for London. Hence, preparation of the Plan was transferred to external management consultants and the technical leadership was passed to two external independent planning advisor; a major departure from the traditional in-house plan preparation. The knowledge used in the Plan justified a ‘predict and provide’ approach to employment growth but a ‘plan-monitor-manage’ approach to other parts of the Plan, as argued by those objecting to some of the Plan’s proposals.
Overall, there seems to be a recognition of the changing role of planners from a neutral spatial scientist standing outside political processes to one playing a full part as interested participants. As Hoch (1994:105) argues, ‘planners do not uncover facts like geologists do, but rather, like lawyers, they organise facts as evidence within different arguments … all engage in persuasive rational arguments … focused and attached to value objectives’. The case studies clearly show that although the emphasis on quantitative analysis versus qualitative visioning waxed and waned in different stages of strategy preparation and in different case study areas, planners, at all times, were immersed in complex political sub-fields, orchestrating political processes with multiple actors, interests and viewpoints.

**The Search for Consensus: Methods of Engagement, Governance Structures and Power Relations**

Case study chapters are united in their message that planning processes have clearly moved away from the top-down, tokenistic consultations of the past towards a much more open, inclusive and extensive engagement with stakeholders. Indeed, the processes of strategy making in all case study areas are hallmarked with the pursuit of consensus. Yet, the motivation for and the nature of consensus was not the same across case studies. Neither was the technique employed to reach compromises and agreements which ranged from technical rationality (in Ireland and Scotland), to advocacy (in Northern Ireland), to negotiation and deliberation (in Wales and Yorkshire and Humber), and to formal consultation (in London).
In Wales, the consensual approach to planning process stemmed from and reflected the relations of interdependencies, rather than hierarchical, between levels of government notably between the Welsh Assembly and local authorities. While the former plays a key role in the making of the spatial strategy, the latter is crucial in ensuring its delivery. Hence, the process stayed away from the tokenistic consultation and the confrontational methods of public inquiry, and instead engaged the stakeholders through a series of informal, yet structured, workshops, seminars and conventions across Wales, some of which facilitated and reported upon by independent consultants. In these processes, the plan itself became a ‘vehicle for engaging stakeholders’ (Chapter 2) and for getting them to sign up to the vision for these areas. However, as discussed earlier, any wider engagement became contingent on ‘the extent to which the plan itself had moved on from being a technical document … to socially-embedded emerging framework, reflecting multiple conceptions of a national space’ (Chapter 2). In Yorkshire and Humber too, the planning process ‘could not be regarded as a traditional top-down process predicated solely on the production of blueprints. Nor was it a bottom-up approach founded on … civic activism’ (Chapter 6). Instead, the Assembly went to great lengths to secure a participative approach to consultation. For example, in its self-declared voice of the region, the Assembly tried to give articulation to less powerful sector interests such as environmental and voluntary groups. Here, too, the emphasis was put on achieving consensus, yet understood as ‘a regionally constructed consensus of least resistance’, determined by a pragmatic understanding of what can be implemented. As in Wales, the search for institutional consensus was partly because of the recognition of the interdependencies between the levels of governance. As in other English regions, the Assembly was experiencing a constant reworking of powers and responsibilities
between scales and across policy sectors. Lines of power were constantly re-adjusted between tiers of government with the position of the Assembly itself being described as ‘governing without government’. This in turn necessitated ‘cooperative actions between key institutions and consultations with other stakeholders’ (Stephenson and Poxon 2001, 109).

Nowhere was the challenge of reaching consensus across a wide range of interests by applying ‘the style of planning through dialogue’ greater than in Northern Ireland given its backdrop of bitter sectarian violence and endless constitutional wrangling. Here, strategic planning was charged with playing a key part not only in a negotiated consensus on emergent spatial relationships within the territory, but also in the formation of a new consensual alliance of contested ideologies around its external geographical connections (Chapter 5). Political tensions have long existed on two axes: outwards to the Treasury in London and downwards to a mosaic of local government institutions. The latter helped moderate formal government tendencies towards command and control and create more inclusiveness. An important sign of this move was the introduction of Public Examination in the process of strategy making, an outcome of which was the formation of strategic alliances between local authorities and community organisations. Despite its inadequacies, the Public Examination was considered as a valued part of the participatory process. As in other case studies, the process of plan making was far from top-down, tokenistic consultation. The methods of engagement sought to champion inclusion and social negotiation. The activities surrounding the Public Examination process ‘allowed participants to learn from each other- on what they care about and why’ (Chapter 5).
Furthermore, an important purpose of the participation process was to gain legitimacy for the product itself; the plan.

The significance of the product is most clearly illustrated by the Irish case study. Unlike Wales, where the significance of the plan’s contents and the technical evidence gradually faded away, in Ireland technical rationality had to be skilfully blended into deliberative processes to build consensus around the product (the plan) itself. Hence, multiple modes of engagement targeted at different audiences were deployed to not only secure consensus among interest groups and stakeholders at different levels of governance, but also convince the experts, particularly the economists, about the credibility of the plan’s central concept of balanced regional development. The two phases of consultation were expert-led (albeit not always planner-led), evidence-driven, carefully orchestrated and focussed on extensive debate about a number of key concepts which underpinned the NSS. One of these concepts, the functional areas, introduced in the second phase of consultation, generated numerous responses, a third of which were not convinced that it provided a useful explanation of how the country functioned spatially. Those representing rural interest considered this approach, and hence the Strategy itself, as being urban-led. This highlights the problem arising from the methodology deployed for defining functional areas which is inherently urban-centred and economic-driven (Davoudi 2008).

While the story of Irish NSS may give the impression that the controversies were mainly related to technical rational debates on abstract concepts (such as how to define functional areas or potential-based approach to balanced regional development), it also shows that the assertion of the power of rationality has clear
material impact on space and hence is deeply politicized. This is clearly reflected in the political bargaining which engulfed the planning process and manifested in the debate on, for example, the number of designated gateways, the nature and boundaries of functional areas, the implications of the balanced regional development approach for those who may lose the flow of resources from the centre, and so on. Such controversies were given an even sharper edge in the volatile context of an ongoing national election campaign. Planners, and other experts, themselves were acutely aware of these political undercurrents and were consciously managing the consultation processes away from party political battles. A clear indication of such manoeuvring is their decisions not to assign particular roles and functions to particular places in Ireland. As Murdoch (2006, 149) suggests, ‘planning is deeply embedded in a fully politicized space… Planning must be seen not as some normative idea … but as “immanently” enmeshed … in the socio-political processes it seeks to challenge’.

In Scotland the process of plan making was an integral part of the modernisation or reform agenda which focused on ‘sound management’ of land use planning systems to secure efficiency and effectiveness as well as gaining wider public support. This two-fold objective created a tension between technocratic ambitions of simplifying and speeding up the plan processes and the democratic aspirations of creating greater opportunities for civil engagement; a tension all too familiar in the current reformed planning system in England. The technocratic ambitions were reflected in the explicit attempts to create greater integration of sector policies around spatial planning agenda and to align this agenda with strategic investment priorities. The democratic aspirations were evident in the frontloading of the consultation processes during the review of strategic planning in Scotland and the promotion of a debate about
transparency and accountability of the planning decisions. Of particular relevance was the debate about possible provision of third party rights of appeal in planning. While in the event this radical proposal did not materialize, probably because of the technocratic pull, more attention was paid to civic engagement. Hence, the conventional and technocratic approaches to solicit written feedback on the Plan’s proposals were complemented by active dialogue with politicians and stakeholders, facilitated through regional seminars across Scotland. A recurring tension in these processes stemmed from the ‘scalar sensitivities’ (Chapter 3) and the conflict between promoting national economic growth on the one hand, and addressing the variations in spatial economic performances across Scotland, on the other.

London stands out as an exception in what seems to be a move towards more collaborative, inclusive and discussion-driven processes aimed at reaching consensus across a wide range of interests. In London the plan making process was carefully managed by the Mayer and his appointed advisors. The method of engagement did not go beyond the formal statutory consultation processes which took place in a shorter period of time than in the other case studies. This to some extent reflects the differences in the institutional structures and power relations in London as compared with other case study areas. As discussed earlier, in the latter the search for consensus stemmed partly from the diffusion of powers and responsibilities between levels of governance particularly between those in charge of plan preparation and their constituent local authorities. In London, however, the Mayor was represented as the elected ‘voice for London’. His acquired civic leadership role and expanded strategic planning powers had arguably raised him above the borough-level politics. Hence, when the draft proposal report for the Plan was submitted to his office he could reject
it on the ground that ‘it was too much influenced by the boroughs and did not sufficiently reflect the new Mayor’s agenda’ (Thornley 2005, 148). Indeed, the London Plan is probably the only plan which starts with the words: ‘My vision, which guides all my strategies, is to ...’ (GLA 2004, xii, emphasis added). However, despite this grand façade the coalition of forces which influenced the narrative of London as a World City and determined how it should be governed also influenced the way it was being planned (Chapter 7). In particular, the Plan’s growth-oriented perspective reflects the influence of the business elite to the extent that the Plan was seen by many representations during the Examination in Public as being ‘a centralising strategy, focusing development to serve London’s World City role in central and eastern sub-regions, underplaying the potential of London’s other centres and leaving most of outer London to play a dormitory role’ (GLA 2003:2). While the formal processes of consultation were far from being extensive or discursive, the formative stages of the plan preparation were informed by other influential constituencies notably those that were coalescing around environmental and social issues.

To sum up, the command and control culture of the positivist and structuralist planning seems to be changing. Efforts have been made to reform the institutional arenas and structures to encourage genuine participation. Indeed, such institutional reforms have involved the making of strategies themselves. Strategies are no longer seen as detached master plans but rather as processes of interaction between participants. Strategy making itself seems to have been renewed as ‘a process of “making storylines”’ (Healey 1993, 103); a process most vividly represented by the making of the Wales Spatial Plan. Yet, whose storylines are front-staged and whose remain in the shadow is contingent on power relations. As Bent Flybjerg, using a
Foucaultian perspective, suggests, ‘rationality is context-dependent and … the context for rationality is power’ (1998, 2). Furthermore, while the planning processes have embraced wider participation and discursive methods of engagement, they seem to have offered little genuine opportunity to create arenas for the mediation of disparate and diverse notions of place and multiple imaginations of the cities and regions.

Modes of Implementation

Positivism not only sees the relationship between evidence and policy as linear and unproblematic (Davoudi 2006a). It also considers the relationship between policy and action (or plan and its implementation) as straightforward and trouble-free. Once policies and proposals are agreed upon and formally adopted, it is assumed that actions will follow. At the height of positivist planning the procedural planning theory saw implementation as synonymous to the control of urban systems with military precision. Remnants of such a simplistic view of implementation continue to haunt plans as ‘paper tigers’. This positivist perspective fails to recognise the alternative modes of implementation which can take place through fine-grain adjustments and intangible processes of change over time, where time is not seen as episodic change through event but as long term slow movement of everyday life. The positivist view also fails to consider the tools of implementation as being not only regulatory and fiscal measures, but also collaborative practices and social learning processes. In this broader view of implementation the process of plan making itself plays a part in the application of the plan, as reported in the Welsh case study. Here, the Plan itself became a ‘convenient vehicle or tangible focus for the extensive work that was taking place outside the Plan’ (Chapter 2). Implementation was seen as setting out the
‘direction of travel’ rather than specifying a set of regulatory actions, given the Assembly’s lack of statutory power to ensure policy compliance. Hence, the mode of implementation, by design or by default, became reliant on establishing collaborative practices with local authorities.

Although the Yorkshire and Humber Plan has been accorded statutory power, the Assembly itself - because of its lack of political legitimacy as an unelected body - had even less scope for implementing its Plan than the Welsh Assembly. In fact major public investment decisions were taken in fora outside the Assembly and managed by central government. Unlike Wales, however, the YH Assembly did not seem to use the full potential of the established collaborative practices for the application of the Plan. Meanwhile, the debate on the implementation of the Irish NSS focused on a mixed approach. On the one hand, emphasis was placed on building institutional capacity to pursue the Strategy’s policies through negotiated cooperation and collaboration: horizontally among various government departments and vertically among national and local governments. On the other hand, this postmodernist emphasis on shared governance was combined with positivist tradition of command and control (with regard to local compliance with the Strategy and land use regulation). Yet, despite the careful crafting and institution building some of the governmental actions that followed did not comply with the NSS’s proposals. A particularly revealing example is the decentralisation of the Irish public administration which rather than targeting the NSS’s growth areas (i.e. gateways and hubs), focused on the traditional county towns in an attempt to compensate them for not being designated as growth areas (Davoudi and Wishardt 2005). Although this action may be interpreted as an example of political expediency, it does point to a broader issue
of the difficulty of dealing with uncertainty and the constant state of flux. As Murdoch (2006:155) puts it,

> Working with uncertainty … flows inexorably from engagement with heterogeneous materialities and all their complex and unpredictable interrelations. Thus, plans need to be recast in order to foresee perhaps multiple trajectories of change with the proviso that even this more complicated form of foresight is hedged with ambiguity and doubt’.

The RDS for Northern Ireland devotes an entire chapter to implementation and as in the Irish case, combines postmodernist methods of consensus building and ongoing cooperation and social learning with positivist tradition of command and control through land use regulation and adjustment of primary legislation to ensure the conformity of statutory development plans with the Strategy. The positivist tradition is also reflected in the regime of indicator-based monitoring and review of the Strategy. It seems that positivism ‘in the final analysis has recaptured the postmodernist emphasis of the process of spatial strategy making’ (Chapter 5).

**Planning Processes and the Emergence of Post-structuralism: Summing up**

Contrary to a continuing dominance of positivism in substantive planning, planning processes show signs of a gradual shift towards poststructuralism. However, as mentioned above, this is not an unqualified and universal process. While some aspects of plan making have embraced postmodern approaches, others have remained traditional. The areas in which the shift has been particularly pronounced are the
changing role of planners and the ways in which they are engaging with other stakeholders. Planners are seen less as value-free, spatial scientists of the rational planning era and more as negotiators, facilitators and mediators of a process of planning which is often heavily charged with building consensus. Yet, as this study has shown, within this broad trend there are a variety of practices not just between different localities but also between different stages of the planning process. Hence, while in Wales planners were doing more talking and less spatial analysis, in the Northern Ireland their role was the reverse. In the Republic of Ireland, meanwhile, they were doing both. More importantly, there seems to be a close relationship between the purpose of plan and the nature and role of its evidential basis. In Wales, for example, as the status of the Plan in the project of nation building was elevated to that of a frame of reference for fostering consensus, the emphasis on its scientific basis faded away. What mattered most was the extent to which the Plan (and planners) could convey a consensual conception of Wales as a unified, distinct national space. In the Republic of Ireland, however, positivist spatial science was deemed crucial in not only changing the mind set of the economic stakeholders but also in re-gaining the credibility of spatial planning itself. Such credibility was tested more explicitly in relation to the concept of balanced regional development. To give an appearance of neutrality and objectivity to this inherently political concept, the planning process drew heavily on the perceived rigour and objectivity of scientific analyses. Yet, as the planning process moved from the technical arenas of experts towards the messy world of policy making, it became evident that the precision of positivist analysis had to be mixed with, or even replaced by, a degree of fuzzy representation in order to diffuse the political and social tensions. Overall, while negotiation and mediation skills are increasingly added to the planners’ traditional
stock in trade, the upsurge in evidence-based policy has brought positivist spatial analysis back on the agenda. While in some places, such as Yorkshire and Humber, this has led to a mere repackaging of planners’ familiar tool kits of projection and forecasting into the language of performance measurement, indicators and targets; in others, such as the Republic of Ireland, it has enhanced planners’ ability to orchestrate and manipulate complex political sub-fields in the process of plan making. In this process, as Davoudi (2006a) argues, evidence is drawn upon not so much to bring some scientific inevitability to rational outcomes but as one input, amongst many others, for better management of the decision-making processes; processes where political and technical are blended together in new forms of social engagement.

It is this social engagement in which planning has shown the sharpest turn towards post-structural approaches. It is evident from this study that the idea of giving voice to all stakeholders in planning processes have been taken on board rigorously by practicing planners. While case studies are a testimony to planners’ attempts to engage in collaborative planning by opening up space for multiplicity in decision making processes, they also show that such efforts routinely encounter strategies of manipulation and exclusion. Although the shift towards collaborative planning has led to ‘socialization of planning’s technologies’ (Murdoch 2006, 145) with more deliberative processes of engagements, such a socially reflexive form of planning is far from being able to exceed the powers that produce planning decisions (Flyjberg and Richardson 2002). The case studies confirm Flybjerg’s (1998) view that planning processes are saturated with power relations that include not only conventional political powers but also the power of technical rationalities. The latter was used to its full potential in the strategy making process in the Republic of Ireland. However,
what is also evident is that technical rationality often has to be combined with discursive processes if consensus is to be achieved and conflicts are to be managed. In the spatial planning processes rational technical arguments frequently intermingle with anecdotal observation, emotional responses and moral advocacy, in both formal and informal arenas (Healey 1997). The case studies show that in the making of the strategies, technical and social, subjective and objective, and facts and values are intricately interlocked. They confirm that even those planning technologies that were promoted as being purely technical often had an embedded tendencies to support particular outcomes (Owens et al 2004). And, ‘often implicit political choices were wrapped up in technical judgements to achieve particular ends’ (Davoudi 2006b); whether the ends was: the wider project of identity building (as in Wales), the re-assertion of strategic spatial planning at the national level (as in the Republic of Ireland), the reinstating of London as a World City, the modernisation of land use planning to become more receptive to economic development (as in Scotland), the nurturing of regional solidarity towards a future devoid of violence (as in Northern Ireland), or the governing of a region without government (as in Yorkshire and Humber). Furthermore, what is often advocated as consensus building is more about institutional agreement rather than recognition of ‘various ways of knowing space’ (Sandercock 2003:76) and imagining places.

CONCLUSION

The first conclusion emerging from this study is the confirmation of our initial speculation that development in spatial thoughts and practices have seldom been unified or linear; that approaches to space and place have remained concurrent rather
than consecutive. It is evident from both the historical analyses in Chapter One and the detailed examination of contemporary spatial strategies in the case study Chapters that new ideas about relational geography have rarely erased the previous paradigms. Instead, they have remained in competition with them for shaping contemporary thinking about space and place. Indeed, this study has revealed the enduring legacy and resilience of positivism in spatial planning. It has also shown the failure of structural Marxism, even at its height in the 1960s and 70s, to make a noteworthy difference to the content of plans. Furthermore, the case studies have illustrated the difficulties of translating post-structuralism, with its emphasis on relational, fluid and non-bounded understanding of space, into the realm of the contemporary planning practices whose spatial imagery is best characterised by fixities, certainties and bounded-space.

The second and more remarkable conclusion is that although the planning content has remained a predominantly positivist construct, planning processes have shown a gradual and tentative shift towards post-structuralism. This in the last half a century has led to an asymmetric development in spatial planning thoughts and practices. It seems that while the debate on the significance of relational geography has influenced how planners plan, it has failed to change, in a meaningful way, what planners plan. This seems to confirm Murdoch’s (2006:150) observation that, ‘while planning incorporates spatial imaginaries (as governmentality) it fails to incorporate space itself (as a complex set of interacting entities)’. However, within this overarching conclusion, what emerges is a more complex and diverse picture of the conceptualisation of space and place in contemporary spatial planning, manifested in a number of ways. Firstly, within the predominantly positivist construct of planning
content there are pockets of postmodernism as well as glimpses of structuralism. A clear example of relational incisions in what is otherwise an Euclidean conception of space is the introduction of the notion of functional urban region (or city region) in the plans and the discussions around environmental and climatic relationships. However, the former has remained limited to a narrow, economic and urban driven definition of functional relations while the latter is often detached from the economic and social relationships. Secondly, the move towards post-structuralism in planning processes has not been unqualified; nor has it spread to all aspects of planning processes. Thirdly, positivism re-asserts itself in multiple ways and depending on what purposes it is expected to serve, some of its tenets become more pertinent than others, as the case studies have clearly shown.

Despite these qualifications, our findings point out to a growing disjunction in the development of planning thoughts and practices, in which a predominantly positivist planning content stands alongside an emerging poststructuralist planning process. An important factor contributing to this asymmetry is that in the last four decades planning thoughts and education have focused largely on planning processes and procedures and paid little attention to the substantive aspects of planning. While new ideas about how to do planning have benefitted from and updated by the emerging social and political theories, similar developments have not taken place with regard to planning content. This is at the time when there has been a major conceptual shift in spatial thinking based on a wider conviction that science and social science can not produce predictable models of the world based upon a closed-system understanding of space and time. Yet, the interpretive approach to intellectual inquiry which has fundamentally reconceived ideas of spatiality and of socio-spatial processes has not
influenced spatial planning practices in any meaningful way. The relational conception of spatiality, developed in other disciplines, has been rarely discussed in planning arenas and seldom influenced planning content. Hence, planners’ conceptual interpretations of the socio-spatial processes have remained surprisingly similar to the ones formed in the mid-twentieth century by a positivist view of the world. While planners are no longer seen as technocratic experts acting in the public interest in value-hidden ways, the plans that they produce still represent an attempt to impose spatial order on complex social processes. It is true that plans have embraced the turn to spatiality, but it is also true that the conception of space and place conveyed by them has remained that of an absolute, bounded and measurable space, represented by static, two-dimensional maps. Even when complexity and multi-dimensional nature of spatial relationships are recognised, they are not articulated, captured or visualized in the plan. Although plans acknowledge and try to communicate the sense of place and identity, they have difficulty grappling with the notion of change and becoming. Emphasis has remained on retaining characteristics, conserving heritage, halting change and defending space of places against space of flows. In the formulaic world of the contemporary planning, there seems to be little room for novelty and surprise.

There is, therefore, broad concerns that those engaged in place-making, including the planning profession, have not sufficiently engaged with the conceptual shift in spatial thinking. This has led to a lack of faith in planning in many quarters and the frequent accusation that the planning profession is outdated. If planning is to remain useful, it needs substantial strengthening of the theoretical and empirical foundations which underpin its conceptions of spatiality as well as its intervention and action. Nothing less than a paradigmatic leap is needed for translating new relational, fluid and non-
bounded understanding of space into the realm of planning practice. Despite the challenge, the transformation is vital for the planning profession, of all professions, which is solely focused upon the production of space and place as its raison d’être and acts upon it more directly perhaps than any other discipline. Such a ‘paradigm shift’ has implications more far-reaching than the 1960s’ introduction of systems theory which changed planning from a design-based to a social science-based profession. What those implications are for planning theory, education and practice, and how such a shift can be forged are questions for future research.