Collaborative planning in a stakeholder society

This paper explores emerging forms for the system and practice of British planning, set in the context of managing conflicts over the use and development of land, and promoting particular qualities of places. In some periods, these two purposes came together, at other times, they drifted apart. Economic, environmental, social and political pressures in the 1990s encourage reintegration. This presents a demanding challenge requiring both the invention of new ways of working and changes in the formal arrangements of the planning system. It promises a more sustainable approach to addressing contemporary concerns with qualities of place in a 'stakeholder society'.

Making places or regulating sites: choices for spatial planning systems

The activity and philosophy of spatial planning asserts the ideal of improving quality of life through promoting, managing and regulating 'place making'. The qualities of places and the qualities of place-making processes are long-established preoccupations in planning thought. There has also been an enduring emphasis on the role of organising frameworks, the 'plan', to manage spatial change, at the region, settlement and neighbourhood level. Such frameworks articulate views about how places may change over the long term. They aim to address the quality of life in places in an integrated way, attempting to weave together economic, social, environmental and physical dimensions of what makes up a place. They present images of what places in their 'settings' could be like, both in their spatial and institutional dimensions.

But spatial planning practices have often found themselves sitting uncomfortably in governance environments and policy cultures. The late twentieth century, in Britain at least, has been such a period. It has been dominated by the concerns of policy 'sectors' constructed from economic and social policy

Patsy Healey is Professor of Town and Country Planning and Director of the Centre for Research in European Urban Environments in the Department of Town and Country Planning, Claremont Tower, University of Newcastle, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 7RU.

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objectives. Functions have been privileged over the interconnection of activities in territories. Public policy is typically framed as if place and space were irrelevant. There are many arguments in the contemporary period to support the neglect of place and space. The dynamics of our economies these days seem to have floated free of locations and borders. Strategies to deregulate markets pay little attention to spatial consequences. New forms of regulation, even of environmental externalities, focus on the site or the firm, not the site and firm in their local settings. In social life, it is often argued that it is people who have problems, not places (Petersen, 1985). Policy should be targeted at them directly, not at where they live. Planners are criticised for reifying place and for attempting to acquire too much control over place-making activities.

In Britain, the development of spatial planning systems and practices has been constrained by such arguments (Thornley, 1991). Yet the continuing support for the planning system reflects a politics which embraces a vigorous defence of place. On the one hand, care for the quality of the environment, and especially for the 'countryside', is deeply embedded in British culture and politically well-defended (Williams, 1975; Lowe and Goyder, 1983; Marsden et al., 1993). On the other hand, spatial planning has had great difficulty flourishing as a practice in a centralist state with a highly sectoralised approach to public policy (Healey, 1988). The policy response to this contradictory situation has been a progressive narrowing down of the remit of the planning system from a major role in building the 'New Jerusalem' of the immediate post-war era to a regulatory function focusing on 'land use change'. Though often escaping from this definition, spatial planning, as a system and in its practices, has tended to become just another functional sector of government, with its 'industry' to regulate and its client groups to work with. In the 1980s, the shape of this regulatory form was difficult to discern (Healey et al., 1988; Brindley et al., 1989; Thornley, 1991). By the 1990s, its outline has become clearer. It depends on the translation of nationally-articulated policy criteria into norms and tests to be applied to specific projects as they are 'fitted onto' their sites. Any wider concerns about places and their qualities have then to be translated into equivalent and compatible performance criteria.

Much contemporary policy discourse and academic critique of planning as an idea and a practice supports such a development. Neo-liberal political philosophy and rational choice theory dismiss a concern with place making as largely irrelevant to current preoccupations with economic competitiveness and environmental sustainability. The post-modern turn in urban and regional analysis at one time also suggested that, in the flexible and dynamic relations of contemporary societies, spatial planning served as a bureaucratic remnant of the modernising urge, seeking to impose a regulatory order on creative processes of innovatory adjustment to new conditions (Dear, 1995).

Yet in Britain in the 1990s, we have seen the reassertion of 'plan-led planning' by central government (Rydin, 1993; Purdue, 1994). Is this a sign of the reassertion of place-focused concerns, signalling the renewal of a strategic place-focused approach? Or is it a consolidation of the performance-criteria approach, with the development plan as merely a convenient way to assemble
the norms and criteria, grouped together so that they can be legitimated in a big-bang conflict-mediation process, rather than through case-by-case mediation?

This paper argues that there is strong evidence of a reassertion of place-focused concerns in public policy. This can be found in interpretations of what makes for the competitiveness of companies, in debates on the local role in realising environmental sustainability, and in the role of place in defining people’s sense of identity and belonging, with its wider implications of human flourishing. If the qualities of places are important, and if public policy has to acknowledge that ‘geography matters’, then the challenge for public policy, and specifically for the planning system, is to develop the institutional capability to respond to concerns about place making in the contemporary period. For spatial planning as we enter the next century, this means developing practices which break out of a sectoralised and centralised approach, to enable connections to be made to other areas of policy activity. In these other policy areas, such as transport, education and health, similar attempts are being made to build new, cross-sectoral links. New forms of horizontal articulation are evolving around spatial alliances to complement or replace vertical, sectoral linkages to the central state. This is leading to all kinds of efforts in place making and in building the institutions for place making, as is evident in, for example, regional business alliances, Local Agenda 21 initiatives, local health alliances, partnerships in area regeneration, and approaches to catchment area managements by the new Environment Agency (Davoudi et al., 1997; Freeman et al., 1996; Bailey et al., 1995; Slater, 1996).

A key characteristic of many of these initiatives in horizontal linkages is their interactive quality. People and agencies are being drawn into new activities in new ways. Place-making work involves a wide universe of those with a ‘stake’ in a place. Some such ‘stakeholders’ may have well-defined interests and strategies with respect to how they seek to assert their stake. Their concerns and ways of operating may make the practices of the planning system seem like a battleground of struggles between competing interests. But others may have only vaguely defined or fluid ideas about their stake in a place and about how they would like to see a place evolve. Their strategies and interests may well be shaped by learning processes as stakeholders encounter each other in planning processes. The term ‘stakeholder’ seeks to capture an inclusive definition of those with a legitimate concern about a place and to avoid assumptions about how they might assert their concerns (Bryson and Crosby, 1992). Reflecting the multiplicity of stakeholders, collaborative ways of developing and implementing policy are appearing around the procedures and practices of the planning system. These focus on building new relationships through which to manage and mobilise for change (Freeman et al., 1996; Davoudi et al., 1997; Hull and Vigar, 1996). This echoes broad movements in British governance which seek to break out of hierarchical centralism and to widen the involvement and influence of citizens and business in public policy and its implementation. In a society of multiple stakeholders, with diverse concerns, hierarchical forms of articulating public policies and firm boundaries between public and private action are being
displaced by more fluid and horizontal relationships (Amin and Thrift, 1994; Healey, 1997). In this context, the development plan-making provisions of the planning system potentially provide an already-existing arena where people can come together to work out strategic ideas and build sufficient consensus to pursue new initiatives in place making and place maintaining.

But this new, collaborative, multi-party form of 'regulating' the relations between stakeholders in place making sits uncomfortably with the regulatory form driven by performance criteria advocated by neo-liberal principles. The practice of the planning system, still in the grip of a performance criteria approach despite the reassertion of the importance of plans, tends to collide with these new dynamics of place making, rather than becoming an active force and a core arena within which these new collaborative forms can develop. The reassertion of plan-led planning thus has the potential to lead in two quite different directions. It could go down the narrow path of the regulation of particular sorts of externality, and jostle for power with the new Environmental Agency over who has the duty to regulate which bit of an externality effect. Or it could evolve into an active role in place making in an intractive and facilitative way, involving many stakeholders, in processes of 'collaborative planning'.

Why the qualities of places are important

The assertion of the importance of place is widespread in European debates on regional economic development, on achieving environmental sustainability objectives, and on social change and social exclusion (Commission for the European Community, 1994). There is a frequent regression in these debates to traditional notions of place as a set of integrated socio-economic and ecological relationships where propinquity implies a relationship. This is encapsulated in the *gemeinschaft* notion of community and the image of *Isardian* space in regional economics. However, the arguments for the importance of the qualities of places in the contemporary period are not grounded in a nostalgic memory of such conditions. They arise from the experience of the disembedding from established places of many economic and social relationships, the recognition of the openness of regional and national economies and the realisation that local actions have global effects on the sustainability of the biosphere (Lipietz, 1992; Storper and Scott, 1992; Amin and Thrift, 1994; Amin and Hausner, 1996; Healey et al., 1995).

It is just because of this disembedding, which fragments many established relationships, and the way in which the networks of people and firms cut across particular spaces seemingly disconnected from each other though adjacent, that questions are being raised about the qualities of places. People want to know whether they will be comfortable with their neighbours, whether their living environments will make it possible to accomplish the complex challenges of daily life, and what kinds of social worlds their children will encounter. As lifestyles differentiate, people seek out places which provide supports for particular lifestyles and come to symbolise particular qualities. In social terms, the place of urban regions seems increasingly differentiated into distinctive locales and
niches (Healey, 1997, ch. 4). These then become the basis for a politics of the promotion and defence of place which expresses itself through and around the practices of spatial planning systems.

Firms, too, are place conscious, though the dimensions of place which concern them vary. Large inward investing firms, of such symbolic concern for regional development in Britain, will look to the quality of regional labour markets, transport services, subcontracting networks and local institutional capacity to deliver a supportive governance context. Small- and medium-sized enterprises are likely to draw upon the particular qualities of the local business 'culture' for knowledge about market opportunities and regulatory constraints. Some places have specific assets, institutional capacity and business cultures which support the economic health of companies, and help also to build links to benefits from economic activity to people who live there and to the local environment. Others are unable to achieve this virtuous circle, or only at the expense of social and environmental considerations (Amin and Thrift, 1995; Asheim, 1996; Belussi, 1996; Healey, 1997). Just as with economic relations and social life, environmental relationships are diverse and operate at disparate scales. Any place is an intricate composite of many habitats, coexisting in a geological, hydrological and climatological framework. The significance of the relationships within the composite, and the impacts of human action upon it, encourage a place-based focus. Through this observation point, the threats to the sustainability of natural environments become visible, and the relations between local action and global consequences take on concrete meaning (Blowers, 1993).

All these tendencies mean that the qualities of place are asserted with increasing strength in politics and policy making these days. But the meaning of 'place' is not straightforward. It varies according to the relationships within which it has significance. Conceptions of 'place' are social constructs, interweaving the social experience of being in a place, the symbolic meaning of qualities of a place and the physicalness of the forms and flows which go on in it. In an open society, with multiple relationships criss-crossing geographical space, any location is likely to carry significance for a wide variety of people, the different 'stakeholders', in what happens there. The stakeholders will give a particular meaning to a location, each in their own social context. Any location may thus have multiple meanings of place layered over it. It is a complex task of collective social construction, often over a long time period, to create an enduring and widely-shared meaning of place. Yet, in the context of the long durée of European cultures and histories, such meanings have often developed, to be reinterpreted with new significances in different epochs. It is these meanings which are being reworked in the new policy focus on the qualities of place.

But the reassertion of concern for the qualities of places raises difficult challenges for governance processes. Conflicts may arise not only between what one person wants to do and how this impacts on neighbours. They may arise over the meaning of place which one person wants to express and the different meanings which other stakeholders seek to maintain, promote or develop. In this context, spatial planning systems are being drawn into more than just conflict...
management and place promotion. They have a role in place making, in
generating enduring meanings for places which can help to focus and coordinate
the activities of different stakeholders and reduce levels of conflict. This is a
well-established role for planning systems. The challenge in the present period
is to develop the capability for place making in full recognition of the complexity
and openness of the relationships which flow across any particular area, and the
consequent diversity and multiplicity of stakeholders who actively do, or
potentially could, assert a concern about a place. This requires planning systems
and practices to reorient their conceptions of place and to redesign the processes
through which stakeholders’ concerns are taken into account.

Planning in a stakeholder society

As a social phenomenon, planning presents itself in several forms. Foley (1960),
in his observations on British planning nearly 40 years ago, identified three
forms in which spatial planning was expressed: as a government activity, that is,
a policy system and its practices; as a profession or occupational group; and as a
social movement, or set of beliefs and theories around which people mobilised
and campaigned. There were tensions between them then, and tensions are
clearly evident today (for example in environmentalist claims and actual
practices). Planning systems and practices are a major institutional manifestation
of spatial planning ideas, as reworked in the context of particular governance
environments and policy cultures. Observing their evolution provides a
revealing window on the regulatory relationships surrounding the physical/
spatial dimensions of place making.

There are many arguments which explain why complex urbanised societies
generate policy systems to manage land use and development (Sutcliffe, 1981;
Healey, 1983; Klosterman, 1985). Despite occasional outbursts from extreme
free-market theorists, debates about the purposes of planning systems tend to
emphasise one or another of these arguments, rather than seeking to remove
spatial planning as an activity altogether from the policy lexicon. As Brindley et
al. (1989) and Thornley (1991) chart so well, the 1980s in Britain was a period
of confused debates about the evolution of the system and the emergence of
multiple practices, as different ways of addressing spatial and land use issues
were explored. They affirm the continuation and elaboration of the multiple
purposes identified by Foley in the 1950s. But tensions between the purposes of
spatial planning systems are to be found quite generally in Europe. These
tensions can be seen as pivoting around two purposes:

1. regulating private land use rights in the ‘public interest’ and managing
   conflicts over the use and development of land;
2. promoting and producing particular qualities of places, with the aim of
   promoting broader social, economic and environmental objectives.

These two purposes are potentially interrelated. But a continual theme in the
analysis of planning systems and practices as they evolve is their separation. The
first purpose gets taken over by legal and administrative practices focused
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Fig. 1 Separation and coalescence in the purposes of planning

around disputes about the legitimacy of state restriction of property rights. The second takes place within professional and pressure group debate about place-making ideas. The first centres on maintaining established parameters; the second centres on the transformation of policies and practices. The real advances in the development of practice and in the real effects of spatial planning occur when the two are linked together. Figure 1 shows the two purposes and their contemporary evolutions. So what do the two involve?

MANAGING CONFLICTS

This function has traditionally centred around that between the individual property owner with a development project and the 'wider public interest'. This public interest was defined as the state's interest, and embraced the concern to safeguard state policies for infrastructure investment and to address adverse externality effects on other property owners and stakeholders. Affected property interests (in the British case, only aggrieved applicants) were granted redress through appeal to semi-judicial and legal arenas where state decisions could be challenged. Development plans and zoning ordinances provided a 'store' of legitimised warrants for these decisions, to be activated in a process of project-by-project regulation. This function, often lost sight of in British professional discourse of the 1950s and 1960s, became the dominant purpose of the planning system in the 1980s. This recognised that the development process was no longer driven by public sector investment designed to promote and produce new and 'transformed places', but by a myriad of private land owners and developers.

But the practices of the system were clearly more than this, as development interests and pressure groups struggled over policy directions and spatial organisation principles. By the 1980s, the purpose of the planning system was commonly described as a mechanism for mediating among competing interests. This recognised the increasing complexity of the mix of parties involved. More and more people, firms, pressure groups and agencies were coming to realise that they had a 'stake' in a place and were seeking a way to demand recognition of
their stake (Grove-White, 1991). The ‘externality effects’ came alive and sought to manifest their concerns themselves, rather than through some administrative or professional calculus or principle. In this context, plan-making processes were used as arenas within which such mediation could be played out, supplementing the conflict around individual projects. They could also take on a role as a form of ‘contract’, recording agreements reached. If their content was still acknowledged, plan policies acted as a baseline framing the negotiations over specific projects (Healey, 1986; Healey et al., 1988). But this evolution, which to a large extent underpins the re-emphasis on the importance of the development plan in British spatial planning from the late 1980s, connects the debates about legitimate state restraint on property rights back to conceptions of the qualities of places.

**PROMOTING QUALITIES OF PLACES**

The planning system and ideas about planning settlements emerged in Britain in the nineteenth century out of concerns about public health, social order and housing questions raised by rapid urban growth in a highly unequal society. The constraint of property rights in the public interest was interlinked with ideas about new communities among many nineteenth-century thinkers and promoters of new settlement forms. Throughout the twentieth century in Britain, the two strands have repeatedly drawn apart and reconnected. Figure 2 seeks to capture this evolution in a simplified, schematic way. Until the final third of the twentieth century, debates about the qualities of places in Britain were dominated by the discourses of architects and engineers, informed by modernist arguments for building new cities and settlements for industrial, car-based societies. Their master plans and comprehensive urban plans articulated principles of traffic organisation, neighbourhood quality, central places and the separation of polluting industry from residential areas. In retrospect, contemporary planners criticise our predecessors for their conceptions of social life around the male-centred family and the homogeneous society, their ideas of building form and its significance, their lack of understanding of economic dynamics, and their conceptions of environment as a landscape backcloth and amenity for the working man and his family (Ravetz, 1980; Hall, 1995; Healey and Shaw, 1994). Yet there was considerable attention at this time to the quality of everyday life and how the design of living places could promote improved quality of life.

Such ideas were translated across Europe into master plans and comprehensive urban plans which provided well-specified images of what places could be like, in literally concrete terms. They gave precise blueprints for how to build new bits of the city. In many instances, these principles were translated into public-sector investment projects and into the zoning ordinances (and, in Britain, the development control principles), which were used to regulate private development. But this approach headed into the same problem as the administrative approach to managing conflicts. The professional conception of places and their qualities was not widely shared by an increasingly vociferous polity of active stakeholders, who challenged plans politically and in the arenas
of plan preparation. Furthermore, the assumption that the state had the power and resources to build the planners' imagined places proved increasingly unrealistic.

This 'command and control' conception of how urban planning should be done was fundamentally challenged in the later part of this century in Britain by the general critique of the power of experts and technicians, by the shortages of funds for continued building, by the change in the policy emphasis from new building to reorganising and improving the existing built fabric, and by the political power of particular sectoral interests. Development plans, apart from a few generalised assertions about district strategy, have typically become collections of policy statements for different sectors, sometimes supplemented by statements for different parts of a district (Healey, 1993). The processes of their preparation have become bogged down in a mountain of objections, as the potential conflicts generated by multiple stakeholders are focused on the arbitration end of the process, rather than the initial framing of ideas. This leads people to question the possibility of a collective project of place making in a situation where there are multiple stakeholders, all with different conceptions of place and different things they want from it and in it, and many who are prepared to assert their stake in plan-making arenas and around specific project proposals. Is the solution to draw back from planning as promoting and producing particular qualities of places and accept the limitation to managing conflicts? Should place making be left to the individual stakeholders to work out for themselves?

**Regulating development in a stakeholder society**

To summarise the argument so far, the conflict-management purpose of planning in Britain has moved from a zoning form to an interactive, mediatory
form, to reflect the multiplicity of stakeholders and the potential for conflict among them. Both forms are grounded in an administrative/legal discourse, which has developed uneasily to accommodate negotiation and agreements over conflict resolution ‘deals’ (McAuslan, 1980). In parallel, the technical discourse of place making realised through master planning which developed in the 1950s and 1960s has been dislodged. This was first undermined by the traditions of rational-technical policy analysis which distracted attention from the cultural understanding of the qualities of place, and from policy processes as efforts in collective social construction of frames of reference. It was further undermined by the differences in views about place which emerged as different stakeholders began to get a voice in planning processes. As a result, the purpose of planning as promoting qualities of places has tended to decay into the conflict mediation approach. It is in this context that both a more systematic form of the performance criteria approach and more collaborative approaches to strategic, multi-party place making are emerging (Healey, 1994).

Both approaches assume that planning processes should be interactive and that they will involve many of those with a stake in changes in locations. Where they differ is in the nature of the regulatory relationship. Surprisingly, given the considerable debate about forms of regulation in many fields of activity in British society in the 1980s and 1990s, there has been little consideration of the regulatory relationships, as such, surrounding land and property development and place making. This is partly because of the lack of attention to place and space in public policy. But it is also because of the enormous complexity of the relationship. On the one hand, the ‘industry’ to be regulated is extremely diverse, encompassing all those who seek to change what is happening ‘in, on, over or under’ their property. The property rights involved are highly variable. On the other hand, the purposes of regulation range from making the land and property development process in itself more efficient and effective, to safeguarding valued environments and sites from land and property development operations and promoting particular qualities of places.

THE PERFORMANCE CRITERIA FORM

Figure 3 summarises the regulatory relationship of the two approaches to the planning system which are emerging at the present time. The performance criteria approach takes as its regulatory object the property relationship with respect to a development site and the project proposed for it. The implicit purpose of regulation is to require those with property rights to observe certain constraints imposed to safeguard public interest objectives. These have been primarily environmental in Britain in recent years, though social objectives are creeping back in (quality of shopping provision, social housing and so on). It assumes that land and property development markets work reasonably well over time, and that the regulatory process should aim to be clear and quick, delivering certainty about regulatory requirements to the ‘industry’. This is to be achieved by having well-specified statements of norms and criteria, which could include targets and levels, as well as areas and sites.

The Planning Policy Guidance Notes which flow out of the central
government show many signs of an evolution to this form. Such statements express the various public-interest constraints. These norms and criteria could emanate from any level of government, from the European Union (EU) to the locality. To increase certainty and the efficiency of the regulatory process, the norms and criteria are expressed in policy statements, and sometimes in maps indicating specific sites. (The proposals maps in District and Unitary Development Plans largely act as an index to the text of the plan, as ‘read’ from a site.) It is such policy statements and maps which together may become grouped into the vehicle of a development plan. The development plan is both a product and a process. As a product, it brings together the statements about regulatory constraints into a single place. As a process, it provides a vehicle to legitimate the exercise of each constraint. It is rather as if some local Office of Development Regulation (OFDEV) produced the plans to define the rules of the regulatory game. But because the ‘industry’ distrusts the regulators (and central government distrusts local interpretations of the regulations), there are special mechanisms (appeals, discretionary negotiation, inquiry processes) to ensure the rights of property owners to object to over-regulation. There are much more elaborate mechanisms for objections and public consultation surrounding the planning system than in most other areas of regulation, where it is left to the ‘industry’ itself to build up its relations with its ‘consumers’. This recognises the diversity of stakeholders in the qualities of places. The discourse of this regulatory process is grounded in procedural and legal argument about the legitimacy of various constraints.

It is this approach which permeates the British planning system at the present time. It has a number of advantages, notably formal clarity about the criteria which will be applied. This gives it the appearance of accountability, as did the traditional zoning approach. It cultivates the assessment of development proposals in terms of clear arguments grounded in the criteria. Policy statements and plans act as collections of arguments to be activated in conflict
situations. But it encounters major problems. These arise from the inherent tendencies to failure in land and property markets (Evans, 1985), the extreme diversity of the regulatory object, and the multiplicity and diversity of stakeholders. Whether the process of legitimising the regulatory principles takes place at the level of the project, or the apparently more efficient level of the plan, large numbers come forward to 'object', or just to make points. Because the stakeholders are varied, they have different views about how a project will affect their strategies and interests, and their values about a place. The focus on specific policies and projects fragments consideration of overall qualities of places and the cumulative impacts of specific actions. The emphasis on 'hearing objections' in the regulatory process pushes conflict mediation to the end of the process and encourages people to construct their concerns in adversarial terms and to take entrenched positions. Thus the process has a tendency to create 'not in my back yard' (NIMBY) attitudes, that is, defensive opposition to any change (Bryson et al., 1991; Wolsink, 1994). The way forward from this situation seems either to progress further down the path of legalised conflict resolution processes, following the tendencies already strongly evident in United States (US) planning practice (Cullingworth, 1993), or to find ways of developing strategic agreements about what places could be like and the opportunities and limits of transforming them. This is where the second approach comes in.

THE COLLABORATIVE PLACE-MAKING FORM

The above argument proposes that the pressure for an approach to spatial planning as strategic collaborative place making arises from the search for more efficient ways of conflict management. There is much evidence to support this argument, especially from the US, where local government is strong relative to higher levels, the public sector fragmented and where planning argument is dominated by legal discourse. When power is widely diffused, conflicts will crop up in a wide variety of forms across a political community unless efforts are made to build up consensus on strategic issues. In Europe, the search for active processes of strategic place making arises more from the pressures outlined at the start of this paper. Here, the place promotion purpose of planning systems is much more important. Political and business elites in cities and regions are aware of the value of building up the qualities of places in the competition for economic growth opportunities. They appreciate that political communities demand action in the living place of the town and region in relation to environmental regulation and social opportunity. They operate in cultures where the qualities of places are often strongly asserted politically (Newman and Thornley, 1996; Healey et al., 1997). In this context, the processes of spatial

1 The discretionary form of the British planning system allows different approaches and practices to evolve within the system without significant changes in the governing legislation.

2 This is evidently a force behind the development of consensus-building practices in environmental and land use issues in the US (Innes, 1992).
planning systems are being used as arenas within which certain stakeholders can develop and convey visions of how the city could be, and as tools to translate these into actions, via both investment and regulatory measures. However, collaborative place making as a form of planning is something more than this.

In the collaborative approach to place making, the regulatory object is the way people think about place and the meanings they give to it (see Fig. 3). It is in effect the policy discourse about place making and its insertion into the thoughtworlds of stakeholders. Exercises in collaborative planning seek to maintain and transform mindsets about the meaning of places and the priorities for action. If effective, they generate ‘strategic conviction’ (Habermas, 1993). Stakeholders who think differently, it is anticipated, will act differently. The concerns about social and environmental costs and about the shaping of market processes will in this way be taken into account at the start of developing planning frameworks, as stakeholders imagine their strategies and projects, rather than much later in the process, when a project is ‘taken through’ the regulatory process. The approach assumes that land and property markets are prone to failure, and that polities with diffused power, the shared power worlds of a multi-stakeholder society, will compound this inherent failure with uncertainty about regulatory frameworks, unless collective efforts are made at shared strategy development. Spatial planning provides a useful role to improve the functioning of markets through reducing both investment uncertainty and regulatory transaction costs, the costs of conflict resolution. Its more significant role, however, is to promote the particular qualities of places, to achieve broader economic development, environmental quality and social development objectives.

An important task of such exercises is to translate policy principles into criteria to be used in regulating land and property development rights. The performance criteria approach which has developed in Britain provides a helpful groundwork upon which to build this translation as it emphasises argumentation around policy principles. But these principles cannot merely be articulated into abstract norms and criteria. Because of the variety of manifestations of spatial change, their social meaning and relevance have to be constructed and interpreted in the context of concrete places and the lives of real people and companies. They have then to be translated not merely into legal administrative terms but into the way stakeholders are thinking. Strategic place making undertaken in a collaborative way helps to articulate a shared language which can relate the concrete realities of lived experiences to general principles and organising ideas and then translate them back into arguments to be used in framing investment and regulatory decisions. Such a style of place making develops into a framework which serves to shape and coordinate the actions and attitudes of many stakeholders (Schon and Rein, 1994; Faludi, 1996; Healey et al., 1997).

The process of strategy development is a critical activity in this approach. Often undertaken through informal or specially-created fora, it is through processes of interactive strategic imagining and consensus building that such a language can be created, with its storylines and metaphors. The vehicle of a
formal spatial planning process may provide such fora, or it may be used to translate the strategy into a form of contract among the parties. If the strategic work of collective, imaginative place making has been undertaken well, it should have generated integrative conceptions of place and supporting arguments. It should have shared a degree of mutual understanding and even ownership among the stakeholders. A formal development plan becomes an expression of this. Such an approach to planning will generate a discourse of debate about concepts of place and their meaning, combining images and symbols to express these qualities with arguments about social, economic and environmental dynamics and their expression in the lives and meanings of people and firms in particular places. These meanings will then structure the debates about specific investment and regulatory decisions.

The collaborative approach to strategic place making presents a demanding challenge to political communities. As a regulatory relationship, it is likely to take different forms, depending on the range of stakeholders who get involved, the power relations among them and the institutional context of their involvement. It also requires the exercise of complex skills in managing processes of multi-party strategic imagining, consensus building and argumentation (Innes et al., 1994; Innes, 1996; Innes and Booher, 1996). Some political cultures provide much more fertile ground for such approaches than others, because their institutional histories have allowed a store of ‘institutional capital’ to build up which encourages horizontal consensus seeking and fosters awareness of spatial issues (Healey et al., 1997; Healey, forthcoming, Putnam, 1993). In Britain, although some examples of such approaches are struggling to emerge, they are unlikely to flourish without some changes in political culture and institutional design. The next section outlines some of these issues in more detail. Despite these challenges, the approach has the capacity to meet the demands outlined at the start of this paper for a more focused emphasis on place making in public policy. It should provide a means to reconnect the discourses about land use rights and conflict mediation to a strategic and place-focused perspective. It should also have a major impact on resolving the old dilemma in strategic planning, that only technical experts seemed to understand strategy. This derives from the assumption that strategy making is a technical task. The collaborative approach emphasises that strategy making is instead an interactive and highly political endeavour, using symbolic language rather than technical data to provide understandable storylines and metaphors which both capture widely-shared social meanings and serve to create them.

**Collaborative strategic place making: key elements of the approach**

In the 1990s, in Europe and the US, new collaborative approaches to place making are being developed in both the discourse of international planning theory (Innes, 1995), and in the evolution of practices (Innes, 1992; Healey et al., 1997). The two tendencies are reinforcing each other, as the theorists observe and record the practices, and the practitioners find in the theory the vocabulary
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to describe what they are inventing. This is leading to a powerful challenge to the performance criteria approach. The new approach seems to offer both a more effective and efficient regulatory process and a coherent response to the reawakening interest in place making in contemporary Britain. But it is happening as much around and outside the practices of the planning system at present. Some effort at transformation of these practices will be needed if the collaborative approach is to take hold as the dominant approach to the regulatory relationships of the system.

It is often argued that planning systems and practices could be transformed merely by encouraging the diffusion of such ideas and practice examples. This assumes that planning systems, whatever their formal parameters, are primarily shaped by the dynamics of the practices through which they are realised (the agency view). This leads to the conclusion that the transformative work of changing the direction of planning systems must therefore be focused on the institutional design of localised specific practices. This conclusion, however, ignores the way systemic parameters—and in particular the law governing the regulation of land rights, the distribution of government competences and the patterns of resource flow—structure the evolution of practices. These set limits to possibilities and encourage one form of regulatory relationship over another. This leads to the conclusion that attention is also needed to the institutional design of systemic parameters (Healey, 1997).

At the level of the design of practices, there is now a growing literature on the dimensions to be considered. This emphasises two sets of issues in particular. The first concentrates on how collaborative processes are constructed. This stresses who gets involved, the arenas where collaboration happens and how legitimacy to a wider constituency is ensured. This discussion provides a normative dimension to contemporary analysis in urban and regional geography and urban politics of the formation and operation of strategic spatial alliances, coalitions and ‘urban regimes’ (Harding, 1995; Stoker, 1995; Lauria, 1997). A key theme underlying this level of discussion is the extent to which collaborative processes merely end up being conversations among elites, new forms of an old corporatism (Friedmann, 1987; Fischer, 1990; Healey, 1997), as opposed to real attempts to consider and involve multiple stakeholders. A multi-stakeholder society seems to require the latter, and the more participatory forms of policy development provided by inclusive collaborative multi-party planning approaches.

The second set of issues concerns the dynamics of the processes of interactive strategy building. How do new ways of thinking get generated and shared among a complex polity? What kinds of discussion arenas allow often silent voices to be heard? What helps people move from where they are to learn about where other people are at, and to share experiences and dilemmas? What generates creative

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3 See especially Innes et al. (1994; 1992), examples from community development (for example, Bishop and Bonner, 1995; Taylor, 1995; Friedmann, 1992) and environmental mediation (Susskind and Cruikshank, 1987; Freeman et al., 1996) and Healey (1997, ch. 8).
thinking and the construction of new discourses with the power to command conviction among the many parties? What encourages mutual learning and the development of skills in collaboration? What encourages this understanding and skill to develop into a form of institutional capital to be activated in future situations (Innes, 1996; Taylor, 1995; Putnam, 1993)?

There is a great deal of practical invention of such processes occurring at the present time in Britain. Yet those involved are often unaware that they are engaged in ‘process innovation’. They are commonly motivated by deep commitments to empowerment and to multi-stakeholder involvement. They may draw on experiences in environmental conflict mediation, business development or community development. There are also many exercises underway in ‘partnership’ collaboration. These are typically driven by the criteria of funders. These partnership examples in the UK illustrate how often early commitment and enthusiasm can be dashed by lack of attention to process and/or the cynical involvement of stakeholders as part of ‘playing the funding game’. What is now needed is consolidated critical inquiry into these efforts in practical process innovation, to identify and exchange ‘good practice’, and increase knowledge of bad practice.

But it is clear also that the evolution of ‘good practice’ in collaborative planning is not just a matter of the capability and commitment of those involved in particular practices. Its possibility is encouraged or constrained by the institutional context. Some of this context is rooted in local institutional histories, in the resources of relationships, arenas, discourses and trust which have built up over the years. But it also lies in the way rights and duties are defined in law, in the competences formally allocated to particular levels of government and agencies, in the patterns of resource flow and in dominant tendencies in policy discourses. The power of these parameters can be seen in the way alliance-building practices have changed locally in Britain once the law, and central government affirmation of it, emphasised the development plan as the locus of conflict resolution. Another example is the rapidity with which the discourse of environmental sustainability washed over the plan-making process once central government promoted it (Marshall, 1992). Yet so far there has been little discussion in the literature on collaborative planning on how the design of spatial planning systems could facilitate or inhibit collaborative, multi-party place-making practices. Drawing on studies of European planning systems and on recent literature on discursive and participatory democracy, it is possible to identify the following key systemic institutional parameters (Healey, 1997):

- the right to a voice in spatial planning processes for all stakeholders;
- the duty on those centrally involved in spatial planning processes to consider the concerns of all other stakeholders;
- the requirements to provide robust justification and reasoning for place

4 This is happening in relation to plan making and project development in and around planning practices in Britain, but is perhaps even more strikingly evident in relation to economic strategy development, Local Agenda 21 work and community development partnerships.
managing or place making, grounded in discourses of argument (collective reasoning) which have been produced through collaborative processes which attend to all stakeholders, and which combine technical and scientific reasoning with other ways of thinking and arguing;

• the requirement to consider qualities of places and the spatiality of development impacts as a criterion, along with other criteria which are defined as of EU or national importance;

• the promotion of the competences of local and regional levels of governance in articulating planning strategy and policy, and the limitation of central government involvement to a few criteria, aimed to protect and promote matters of wider concern and subject to the same assertion of rights and exercise of duties as for local strategy builders;

• the provision of resources in ways which cultivate consideration of places and collaborative processes.

Evaluated in the light of such parameters, the difficulties of developing collaborative multi-party place-making processes in Britain become obvious. In this context, the emphasis on the importance of the development plan in the early 1990s in Britain can be seen as more than merely a more effective way of achieving conflict mediation. It was also encouraged by central government’s own attempts to push the task of conflict mediation away from itself, and to get the stakeholders, or at least the powerful ones, to work things out together at the regional and local level. But this move was not linked to changes in rights of voice and duties to be heard, nor in policy discourses, competences or resource flows. These continue to be skewed in favour of property interests. They remain dominated by legal/administrative discourse and by the ‘topic’ discourses of those clustered around particular sectors. They are located within a vertical debate about the interpretation of central government policy. Within the distinctive discretionary system of land use regulation, civil servants and local government planners, consultants and lawyers dominate the interpretation and hence the construction of the meanings of planning policy. This all takes place within the context of reduced resources for local authorities and increasingly fragmented, short term and unpredictable ‘bursts’ of funding for particular projects and areas. The opportunity for the evolution of multi-stakeholder collaborative planning processes in this situation is thus severely constrained. This then inhabits the evolution of effective responses to contemporary demands for more focused efforts in place making.

Designing planning systems and practices

This paper has argued that the regulatory relationships embodied in the British planning system and its practices need to change, in order to reconnect the detailed practices of conflict management with those of strategic place making. This reconnection is needed if the system is to play a positive role in the new politics and practices of place making which the emerging ‘new times’ seem to demand. There are signs in practice of attempts to move in this direction
Changes in practices
Responsibilities of local governance elites
- build horizontal networks and partnerships;
- develop stakeholder mapping and find ways to involve stakeholders in policy development;
- create and maintain arenas for open debate on strategic issues;
- develop public discourse about the qualities of places;
- cultivate moral and imaginative argumentation, to complement legal/administrative and scientific-technical argumentation;
- cultivate practices which connect strategic ideas to regulatory and investment decisions.

Changes in governing law and procedure
Actions needed by central government and the EU
- strengthen the power of local and regional government in the regulation of, and investment in, economic development, social cohesion and environmental sustainability;
- treat supra-local interests as stakeholders;
- give rights to challenge investment and regulatory decisions to all stakeholders;
- impose a duty on all governance elites to attend to the concerns of all stakeholders;
- require impact assessments of policies and major projects, to include consideration of qualities of places, as well as effects on social, economic, environmental and governance relationships;
- require challenges to decisions and impact assessments to be argued and ‘redeemed’ in relation to policy principles and forms of argumentation developed through open and collaborative processes.

Fig. 4 Evolving collaborative planning practices in the British planning system

(Kitchen, 1996). Such a reconnection, in the context of present tendencies and pressures, needs to happen in ways which acknowledge the range, variety and political salience of the many stakeholders in what places are like and could become like. This paper has stressed that this involves moving away from sole reliance upon a largely aspatial, performance criteria approach to regulation, towards more collaborative and strategic approaches. It has argued that such an approach has the potential to achieve more effective conflict mediation. It also responds to the pressure for an emphasis on strategic spatial policy development at the regional and urban level demanded by many stakeholders who are concerned about the qualities of places and seek a more stable strategic framework within which development initiatives and partnership processes can be imagined and taken forward. Collaborative planning as an approach in a multi-stakeholder society is thus justified because it is more efficient (reducing regulatory transaction costs in the longer term), because it is more politically legitimate and because it ‘adds value’ to the on-going flow of place-making actions, through building shared knowledge and understanding, generating opportunities for creative synergy, and developing the capacity among stakeholders to work together locally to solve common problems.

To develop this approach within the British planning system, however, will require a considerable transformation of the parameters of the current system and its practices. Figure 4 summarises key areas where change is needed. It draws on a more extended elaboration of a collaborative approach than is possible here (Healey, 1998). If such changes were pursued vigorously, the result would be a fundamental transformation of the administrative/legal, topic-based discourses into which the planning system is currently locked, and its replacement by place making at region, city neighbourhood and settlement...
levels. The advent of a new central political administration in Britain in 1997 could provide the impetus for such a transformation.

Fifty years ago, new legislation emerged from a rich environment of forward thinking by planners who sought to design a new system and its practices and who were very aware of the need to position it centrally in the structure and discourses of the newly emerging welfare state. Eighteen years ago, Thatcherite neo-liberalism caught planners on the hop. There had been little creative thinking about what changes this could entail. The danger is that there are no strategic ideas from the planning community to offer to a new government seeking to revitalise and refocus the planning system to respond to the new pressures for strategic place making. Collaborative planning for a stakeholder society could just be one!

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