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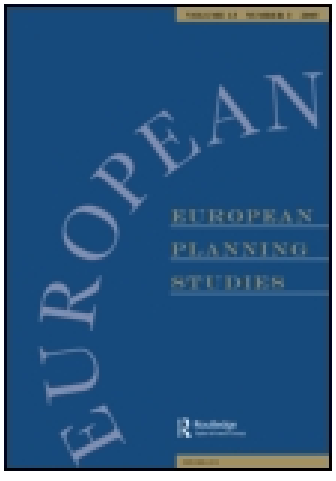

European Planning Studies
Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ceps20

Transforming governance: Challenges of institutional adaptation and a new politics of space

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Published online: 20 Aug 2006.

To cite this article: Patsy Healey (2006) Transforming governance: Challenges of institutional adaptation and a new politics of space , European Planning Studies, 14:3, 299-320, DOI: 10.1080/09654310500420792

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09654310500420792

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European Planning Studies Vol. 14, No. 3, April 2006

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Transforming Governance: Challenges of Institutional Adaptation and a New Politics of Space[1]

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[Received August 2004; accepted June 2005]

ABSTRACT *In the context of the widespread recognition of significant changes in urban and regional governance in Europe, this paper explores the ways of understanding the dynamics of these changes and comments on the implications for recent themes in contemporary debates about urban governance—the extent of the re-scaling of governance arenas and networks, the role of a territorial focus in the new urban governance, the emergence of new forms of politics and the balance of progressive versus regressive potentials in the "new" governance. A brief introduction raises questions about the nature of the perceived experimentation and fragmentation in contemporary urban governance. The paper then outlines an emerging "sociological institutionalist" approach to governance transformation processes which links together the worlds of actors in episodes of governance with the rhythm of established governance processes—networks, discourses and practices, and the deeper cultural assumptions which give authority and legitimacy to actors and processes. The arguments are then illustrated through examples of governance initiatives from different arenas within a particular urban region, all of which to an extent challenge established discourses and practices. The paper concludes with some comments on how to interpret the broader significance and trajectory of transformative shifts in urban governance processes.*

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Urban Governance Transformation Processes

For the past 20 years, social science and public policy debate in Europe have focused attention on the changing governance of cities and urban regions. The reasons for this are broadly shared—the new politics of European "integration", the impact of globalization on the relative importance of the nation state *vis-à-vis* sub-national governance arenas, the shifting dynamics of local economies in the face of globalizing tendencies,

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ISSN 0965-4313 print/ISSN 1469-5944 online/06/030299–22 © 2006 Taylor & Francis
DOI: 10.1080/09654310500420792

the changes in the forms of social welfare delivery and transfer payments, the changes in social expectations about policy agendas and modes of politics (Amin & Hausner, 1997; Cars *et al.*, 2002; John, 2001; Le Gales, 2002; Pierre, 1998). However, there is much controversy about the nature and significance of the emergent governance forms which are arising. Some emphasize the "re-scaling" of governance arenas and networks (Brenner, 1999; MacLeod, 1999; MacLeod & Goodwin, 1999; Swyngedouw, 2005). Others are exploring the nature of the territorial focus emerging at new scales (Albrechts *et al*., 2001; Albrechts *et al*., 2003; Fürst & Kneilung, 2002; Healey, 2004, 2006; Novarina, 2003; Salet & Faludi, 2000; Salet *et al*., 2003). There are also debates about the extent to which new forms of politics are developing (Healey, 1997a; Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003) and whether these are progressive or regressive in their direction (Harvey, 1989; Imrie & Raco, 1999; Swyngedouw, 2005).

Earlier structural analysts presented cities as sites for the organization of "collective consumption" (Castells, 1977; Saunders, 1979), the organization of welfare delivery. This could take many forms, from bureaucratic procedures, to rational policy analysis, to interest-based politics and clientelism. Shifts in urban governance were then seen as structured by contestation over the manner and distribution of welfare activity, over the balance between social and economic objectives and over the tendency for some governance insiders to pursue private interests under the cover of public authority. But by the 1980s, it became obvious that urban elites were deeply concerned about their local economies, especially in areas affected by the decline of traditional industries. David Harvey (1989) described the change as one from "managerialism" to "entrepreneurialism", as urban governing elites shift attention to the promotion of projects and strategies to re-configure and re-position their local economies. By the 1990s, regulation theorists had become interested in the extent to which changes in urban governance processes reflected a shift in "mode of regulation", to parallel the shift in "modes of accumulation" from Fordism to post-Fordism (Jessop, 2000, 2002; Painter, 1997). It is in this context that the "re-scaling" debate surfaced (Brenner, 1999; MacLeod, 1999). Others began to explore the extent to which urban processes were structured by markets (the logic of economic activity), hierarchies (the logic of the established twentieth century welfare state) or networks (the logic of webs of social relations stretching in multiple space/times, rather than just hierarchically (Amin and Hausner, 1997; Castells, 1996). These and other contributions argued that a new form of politics was emerging for a new globalizing or "network" society (see also Hajer, 2003).

But such analyses assumed a certain coherence in urban governance processes and their manner of transformation. In contrast, other analysts whose focus of attention was on the working out of particular policies and mechanisms in urban governance contexts highlighted the experience of "fragmentation" in the 1980s (Cars *et al*., 2002; Le Gales, 2002; Pierre, 1998). Established procedures were perceived as breaking down, in different ways in different areas of governance activity. Systematic "comprehensive" town planning was giving way to a project-driven practice which broke through the constraints of bureaucratically-delivered norms and standards. Poverty policies moved from a focus on the distribution of access to dwellings and welfare benefits to citizen empowerment and area regeneration projects. All kinds of experiments appeared—new kinds of project and new kinds of "partnership" between actors within formal government and between formal government, the economy and civil society. Instead of nesting neatly in a hierarchical model of levels of government responsibility, new urban governance

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arenas and practices were introduced which drew in actors from a variety of different levels of government, from the level of the European Union (EU) to local neighbourhood organizations.

Whatever the assumptions about the driving forces of change, these empirical experiences raise questions about how to understand the dynamics of contemporary struggles to introduce new urban and regional governance agencies and new modes of governance. Do the experiences represent the dynamic evolution of new scales of governance articulation? Or the emergence of "territory" as a new focus in public policy, to challenge deeply-embedded traditions of sectoral government policy communities? Or are they a sign of a new collaborative mode of policy formation, to challenge the traditional separation of politics and policy-making? Is the experience of "fragmentation" to be understood as new social reality in itself, a more market-like, competitive mode of governance, in which authority and responsibility, actions and consequences, become hard to identify and therefore difficult to call to account? Or is it to be understood as a process of "dis-integration", reflecting the weakness of a territorial focus of governance in the face of global networks and technologies, a sign of a disappearing urban collective actor? Or is such disintegration quite the opposite, a necessary destabilization which generates the "moments of opportunity" for new governance modes, coalitions and agendas focused around a strong territorial sensibility able to generate new relations of "integration" so that a city or urban region can once again become a strong collective actor locally and in the European arena? Is the process one of re-scaling arenas from city and "nation state" to "urban region" and "neighbourhood", with the consequent challenge to create a territorial collective actor around a new arena and scale? Or is the "fragmentation" there all the time, for any analyst to see who looks carefully enough at the fine-grain of urban governance processes? Should urban governance be understood as in "continual transformation"?

To address these questions, some "intermediate" analytical tools between the language of structural transformation and that of the experience of particular actors in particular places are needed.[2] Information is drawn in this paper from a particular strand of "institutionalist analysis", particularly as developed in policy analysis and planning, to develop an approach to the analysis of urban governance transformation processes. In this paper, the aim is to summarize this approach, and then illustrate its use in relation to examples from different arenas of governance within an urban region, all of which in some way challenge established governance processes. From the approach and experience, comments are made on the themes raised at the start of this paper and the issue of how to understand contemporary experiences of fragmented urban governance.

An Institutionalist Approach to Governance Transformation

There are many academic frames of analysis which currently cluster under the "institutional" and "institutionalist" label. Broadly, they all share a recognition of the importance of "institutions" in shaping social action. Any analyst of governance processes is inherently concerned with the "institutions" through which social action is mobilized and regulated and hence is to some extent an institutionalist, as political scientists recognize (Peters, 1999). "Institutionalists" differ, however, in the meaning given to institutions and in their ontologies and epistemologies. Within this array, the author's own

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work has developed in a social constructivist and non-positivist frame, related to a dynamic, relational view of social action (Healey, 1999, 2004a).

From this viewpoint, institutions are understood as the ensemble of norms, rules and practices which structure action in social contexts (Giddens, 1984; Powell & Dimaggio, 1991). Such ensembles are brought into existence and given meaning through continual active effort, which re-inforces and changes both meanings and materialities. Social action is constituted by people acting in relation to others, not just through the pursuit of an individualized "rational calculus". In such interaction, people draw on a (shifting) store of cultural resources through which meanings, values and "knowledge" are shaped (Fischer, 2003; Hall & Taylor, 1996).

In this "sociological" view of "institutionalism", the term "governance" has a double connotation. Analytically, it can be used to describe all the processes for the regulation and mobilization of social action. In this meaning, there are always governance processes (Cars *et al*., 2002; Le Gales, 2002) The research question becomes an empirical inquiry into modes of governance manifest in a particular time and place. The political question centres on which modes to pursue in a particular instance in relation to specific concerns. But as a sociological phenomenon, it is also necessary to look at the way the term "governance" is being used in a particular context and the "institutional work" its use performs. In Europe at present, the term is often deployed by analysts and political actors to describe a particular transformation, from modes of government associated with a bureaucratized welfare state focused on universal service delivery to the more "entrepreneurial" modes of governance recognized by commentators such as David Harvey (1989) and Bob Jessop (1998, 2002).

In the author's own work, the general meaning of "governance" is used to encompass all forms of collective action focused on the public realm (sphere) in one way or another, from those orchestrated by formal government agencies, to lobby groups, self-regulating groups and social campaigns and movements targeted at resistance or challenge to dominant governance relations. Analytically, there is no necessary reason why these diverse governance processes should be articulated around an "urban" or any other territorial focus, although in Europe, as Le Gales (2002) convincingly argues, there are strong traditions of "city government" and territorial identity which provide cultural and organizational resources for such a focus. In examining current transformations in urban governance, the author's specific current interest is in the extent to which the diverse actors and networks which coexist within a territory, urban region, city or neighbourhood cluster around a territorial focus, and create the capacity to act (collective actor capacity) for a territory. And there is interest in the potential regressive and progressive consequences of particular institutionalizations of such a territorial imagination and collective actor capacity. This interest connects to the wider debates in urban governance analysis about the "re-scaling" and "re-territorialization" of contemporary sub-national governance.

How then may these institution-building processes be examined? Traditional institutionalists in political science focused on the creation of formal competences, procedures and laws. Or they examined the "overt" politics of battles for formal political control of key arenas and the resources attached to them. These days, analysts struggle with the recognition of the huge multiplicity and complexity of governance processes manifest within an urban area. There are the various and usually sectoralized agencies of higher tiers of EU, national and regional government; the different segments of a municipal administration and the professional and policy communities to which they are typically connected;

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the organizations of representative democracy, with the structures of municipal councils and neighbourhood districts, linked to the organization of political parties and electoral processes. There are a whole array of individual actors and social networks and lobby groups linking businesses and citizens to the formal arenas of government, intertwining in complex ways the worlds of the state, the economy and civil society. These linkages looking "from outside in" to formal government are complemented by the linkages "from inside out", ranging from formal initiatives in building partnerships or "empowering" particular groups to participate in "their" governance, to the informal networks which connect politicians and officials with firms and lobby groups, and in which they participate as citizens themselves. Thus the landscape of the "everyday life" practices of governance in an urban region is not a clearly demarcated territory of levels of government and public versus private action, but a complexly intertwined social reality in which integrations and boundaries, cohesions and exclusions cannot be read off from simple "maps" of organizational structures.

In the author's own work in exploring territorially-focused governance transformation processes, four strands of conceptualization are combined together: Giddensian concepts of the binding flows which link agency to structuring processes (Giddens, 1984; Bryson & Crosby, 1992); Hajer's notions of discourse structuration and institutionalization (Hajer, 1995); concepts of levels of power developed by Lukes and re-worked by Dyrberg (Dyrberg, 1997), and ideas about institutional capacity-building developed by Innes and Booher (2003) and Healey and colleagues (Healey, 1998; Healey *et al*., 2003).

Giddens' structuration theory addresses the interaction between external "structuring" pressures and how actors-in-social-relations respond to these through an emphasis on the formative interaction between "structures" and "agency" (Giddens, 1984).[3] Giddens identifies key linkages through which this interaction flows, and which in turn shape the materialities and identities of actors and create the structural forces which they experience. The first is the flow of material resources (goods and assets, technologies, finance, labour power). The second is the flow of authoritative resources or regulatory power, the power to regulate the behaviour of others through formal and informal norms, codes, laws, etc. The third is the flow of ideas and frames of reference, the power to generate new imaginations and shape identities and values. These flows interweave with each other in different spaces and through different temporalities, producing the material distributions and mental expectations which generate the diversities and inequalities in life experiences. To the extent that they follow stable patterns, they generate the "structural forces" that exert such a powerful influence on opportunities for particular people in particular places. But their patterning is also in continual formation, through shifts in their interactions and through the continual creative work of agency in both realizing and resisting the traditions and forces which bear down upon them. Transformations in urban governance driven by structuring forces would, following this approach, be identified through the power mobilized as resources are circulated, regulatory norms activated and concepts brought to life in arguments and justifications. Transformations driven by agency power in specific situations would be identified by their capacity to produce different patterning tendencies through the impact of the active work of, for example, a territorial collective actor arena.

But such an analysis would say little about how such dynamics were brought about and in effect could become little more than the traditional input–output analysis of Eastonian policy analysis which treated an institutional site of policy-making as a "black box"

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(Easton, 1965). For many years now, it has been recognized that it is necessary to enter this "black box" to examine the complex dynamics of actors and networks as they struggle over resource allocation, over regulatory practices and over framing ideas. Over the past 20 years, there has been an explosion of in-depth case studies of governance processes examining policy formation, policy change and policy "implementation".[4]

Initially, the focus of the stories of these cases was on themes such as the inadequacy of the formalized rational planning model to account for the processes described, or the power of particular groups to define what had been assumed to be the "public interest" which government agencies should pursue. More recently, drawing on policy discourse analysis, there has been a stronger emphasis on how policy change is brought about. A primary inspiration here has been the work of Maarten Hajer (1995) who described the processes of "discourse structuration" and its subsequent "institutionalization". In his work on the acid rain controversy, he looked at a period of policy contestation in a particular department of British government during which the structure of framing ideas was finally shifted by the efforts of activists and scientists who eventually won the argument over the causes and effects of British power station emissions on the acidity of lakes and rivers in north-west Europe. Once this argument was won at the centre of a centralized government policy system dealing with energy and pollution effects, it spread through an array of sub-national government arenas through the central power to define regulations and monitor regulatory practices. The new discourse thus became institutionalized, embedded in norms, practices and discourses, as a new normality. This raises the issue of how discourses and practices come to "travel" from one arena to another and what happens to them as they do so.[5] Following these ways of analysing governance processes, urban governance transformation could be identified where a new discursive frame appears and diffuses to a range of arenas with sufficient effect to shift significantly the way resources are allocated and regulatory tools formulated and used.

In the author's own work on the power of ideas and practices generated in a partnership to diffuse more widely into "mainstream" urban governance practices, significant barriers to such diffusion were found (Healey *et al*., 2003). This confirmed not only the experience of other similar episodes in innovation in area partnerships across the city that were examined, but echoed much of the British experience of urban regeneration partnerships (Carley, 2000; Hastings, 1996; Healey, 1997b; Healey *et al*., 2003; Lowndes & Skelcher, 1998; Peck & Tickell, 1994). In trying to grasp the nature of these barriers, there was a move away from a conception of the landscape of governance as merely an array of different institutional sites or arenas, articulated with each other and with the worlds of economic activity and civil society by dynamic webs of relations, all operating as sites of everyday practices. It was felt necessary to explore more explicitly the deeper structuring that was present in these practices but not always recognized by actors in the episodes in which they were engaged. The idea here is that transformative initiatives which succeed in "institutionalization" need to have the capacity to "travel" not just from one arena to another, but from one level of consciousness to another. By this, a translation is meant from the level of conscious actor invention and mobilization to that of routinization as accepted practices, and beyond that to broadly accepted cultural norms and values. To analyse this, a concept of "levels of power", first articulated by Lukes in 1974, and reworked later by Giddens (1984) and Dyrberg (1997) is studied. Figure 1 summarizes this conception.[6]

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Level	Dimension
Specific episodes	*Actors*—key players—positions, roles, strategies and interests *Arenas*—institutional sites *Ambiences and interactive practices*—communicative repertoires
Governance processes through which bias is mobilized	*Networks and coalitions* *Stakeholder selection processes* *Discourses*—framing issues, problems, solutions, interests, etc. *Practices*—routines and repertoires for acting *Specification of laws, formal competences and resource flow principles*

Figure 1. Levels and dimensions of governance: an analytical schema. *Note:* This figure is an adaptation of equivalents in Healey (2006) and Coaffee & Healey (2003)

Figure 1 expresses the hypothesis that, to have transformative effects, governance innovations (such as new discourses, new allocatory or regulatory practices, the formation of new arenas or networks) must move from explicit formation episodes to arenas of investment and regulatory practice. To endure, they have to become institutionalized in the routines of governance practices. At the level of specific episodes of experience, those actively involved may develop what they believe are new and relevant conceptions of issues, objectives and appropriate processes which guide their own practices. But it is hard to get these new conceptions and their implications to "travel" to other arenas just through processes of "snowballing" individual learning experiences. This is not just because there are other actors in other arenas seeking to resist such initiatives or to promote their own learning experiences. New concepts have to challenge and shift an array of already routinized governance processes, with their complex mixture of conscious and taken-for-granted modes of practice. New concepts have to "jump" boundaries and "break through" resistances, involving implicit and explicit struggles. For initiatives seeking to create a new concept and arena for territorially-focused collective action, this may involve a complexity of relations between different departments of local government, between administrators/officials and politicians, between politicians/officials and citizens, between the state and all kinds of power elites and lobby groups, each with their own relation to allocative power, regulatory power and their own discursive frames. Sustaining and legitimizing both governance processes and specific episodes of governance are cultural assumptions about appropriate agendas and practices of governance held by different social groups in society generally. It is through these assumptions, as recognized by actors themselves and the "media chorus" of critical commentary on their performance, and as evaluated in the formal procedures for challenging governance actions, that those involved in governance are held to account and their legitimacy judged. Shifts at this cultural level, promoted by long-term shifts in economic, sociocultural and political relations, influence both those involved in particular episodes of governance and those involved in routine governance practices. These "prepare the ground" for new ideas and discursive vocabularies.

These levels are not separate realities but mutually constitute moments of governance activity and the everyday life experience of "doing government work". The reasons for

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an analytical separation is that the levels move according to different temporalities and respond to different driving forces. The pressure for transformation may come from any of the levels. Episodes of innovation may create pressures to change governance processes more generally, but there may also be mobilization efforts to initiate such changes elsewhere in governance systems. Shifts in cultural assumptions may put pressure for change on governance processes but provide resources for episodes of innovation. This conception of different experiential levels of governance firstly emphasizes the complexity, the multiplicity of interacting and often counteracting movements promoting and resisting change, the multiple timescales and the likely instability of urban governance transformation processes. Secondly, it stresses that significant transformation would have to affect the level of governance process at the least. To achieve this, initiatives would have to move from the level of an episode to the level of processes, and in some way find resonances with cultural assumptions to have any capacity to be seen as legitimate and to endure, that is, to "institutionalize".

Figure 2 links this conception of levels of governance with the earlier discussion of the Giddensian relation between structure and agency. Episodes of governance are shaped by structuring power embodied in the mobilization of rules and norms, material resources and framing ideas, but they may also be creative of them, implicitly by interpretive work or explicitly by direct challenge. Rules, resources and framing ideas may be vigourously sustained by mobilizing work at the level of governance processes. But these processes may also be open to pressures from broader cultural shifts and from the learning and mobilizing taking place in specific episodes. At the level of cultural assumptions, the authority of rules, the justice of resource allocations and the validity of framing discourses is under continual challenge and re-formulation, re-moulding the principles of legitimacy and accountability through which governance processes and episodes are judged.

In this approach, it is clear that what we take to be "politics" and "policy" are not articulated merely in either the formal arenas of council chambers or the informal processes in

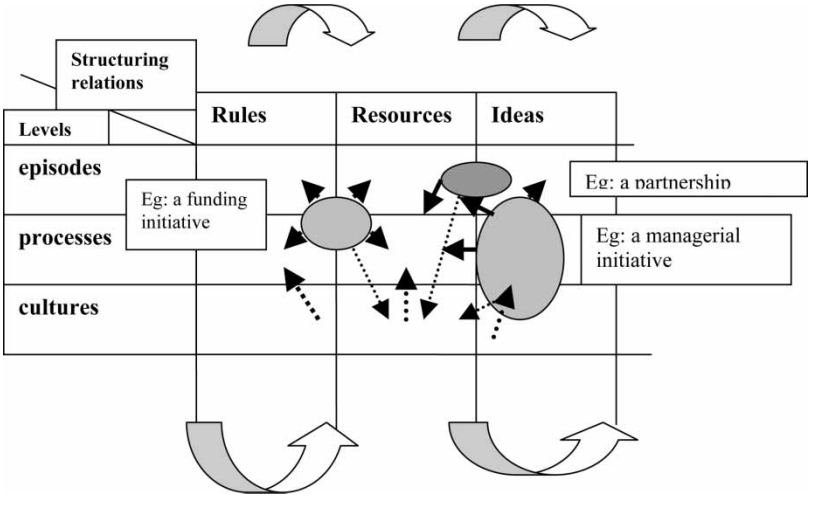

Figure 2. Transformation initiatives in governance dynamics. *Note:* Although laid out as separate levels and structuring dimensions, in any actual instance these all interact

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which politicians are involved. As Hajer (2003) argues, politics and policy-formation emerge from many institutional sites and processes. In this complex institutional terrain, building a new territorial arena of governance or a new mode of politics is likely to involve very challenging efforts in mobilization, in discourse formation and diffusion, and in aligning old practices with new discourses. This is widely acknowledged in the literature on the difficulties of establishing urban region or metropolitan governance where none existed before (Albrechts *et al*., 2001; Healey, 2004; Herrschel & Newman, 2002; Salet *et al*., 2003). Yet sometimes new territorial arenas have emerged as powerful collective actors. The structural arguments for "re-scaling" urban governance to the urban region scale suggest there are contextual pressures acting on all the levels and structuring dimensions of governance identified in Figure 2 which create a "moment of opportunity" for such institution-building work to succeed.

This leads to the fourth strand of concepts, which focus on the building of "institutional capacity" (Amin & Thrift, 1995; Innes & Booher, 2003; Healey, 1998; Healey *et al*., 2003). Some analysts focus on the qualities of "leaders", building on notions of individual capacities ("human capacity"). This kind of approach leads to an emphasis on the qualities of actors such as City Mayors and key professionals who have had a role in transforming some city government agendas and processes. But enduring governance transformation rarely results from the actions of single individuals. Most transformatory episodes mobilize networks of political supporters and expertise, often linking across traditional boundaries and divisions, and with the knowledge to challenge concepts and assumptions embedded in established practices. This suggests that capacity building is a social process, generating, to use Innes and Booher's concept, intellectual, social and political capital (Booher & Innes, 2002). In the author's own work, the notion of "resources", rather than "capital" has been preferred.[7] This examined how and why the resources deployed and developed in an episode of governance largely failed to diffuse into the wider governance context (see the examples which follow). More generally, this work on institutional capacity-building emphasizes that urban governance transformation which leads to the institutionalization of a new territorial collective actor with significant authoritative and generative power needs to mobilize and build knowledge resources and relational resources (social networks) which not only help to consolidate power and legitimacy around the new arena but have the capacity to carry the new ideas, understandings and recognitions of opportunity and struggle through to a wide range of other arenas in the urban governance landscape where practices shape how resources flow and regulatory rules are exercised.

In the next section, the approach outlined earlier is illustrated through three brief examples. They have been selected from the author's own work in Newcastle as representative of attempted innovations, initiated from different positions in an urban governance landscape. The first is a city centre regeneration partnership.[8] The second is an attempt at a city-wide development strategy.[9] The third is an initiative arising from outside the range of formal government which has slowly been drawn into a more formalized relationship.[10] In each case, the initiative as an episode of governance activity in terms of its territorial focus of attention and its position in the governance landscape is outlined. Then, the potential of each initiative to institutionalize, using the analytical lens of Figure 2, is assessed. Finally, the implications of these experiences for the potential for governance transformation in the Newcastle governance context are commentated on.[11]

The Lurching Pace of Innovative Momentum

The Newcastle Governance Landscape

As an urban region, the area is one of Britain's industrial conurbations, with a population of around 1.5 million in its travel-to-work area, which also includes rural areas, coasts and hills, and attractive small towns. Although considerable shifts in social composition are taking place, with an expanding middle class and an ageing and largely static overall demographic profile, it is an area still characterized by high levels of unemployment and social deprivation relative to national levels. There is currently no overall political-administrative government for the most urbanized part of the conurbation, which is divided into five large metropolitan districts. Politically, Newcastle is just one of those districts, although, with some political reluctance from neighbouring districts, Newcastle city centre is recognized as the "regional centre" of the wider urban region. Metropolitan districts are responsible for education, social service delivery, planning and some aspects of transport provision, as well as environmental health, housing management (of what was, in Newcastle's case, once a large council-owned housing stock) and promotion of leisure, sport and cultural provision. Councils also engage vigourously in economic development initiatives, though their work in this field is on a much smaller scale than that of regional agencies. There are also important agencies operating at the regional scale dealing with economic development, health, tourism promotion, and arts and culture promotion, and some others operating at the scale of the conurbation, notably the Passenger Transport Authority which oversees public transport provision. The formal government landscape is complex and cluttered, with many areas of overlapping responsibility.

Local authority funds have come predominantly from central government and have been significantly constrained in recent years. Extra central government funds have been channelled through an array of special initiatives—for housing estate regeneration, area regeneration, overcoming social exclusion, education, healthcare, transport and safety and security. These have brought into conjoined actions in various arenas at different times agencies organized at metropolitan and regional scales. Central government activities are in part coordinated through a Government Office for the Region (GO.NE) With the possibility of regional devolution and an elected regional assembly in prospect, the region also has a Regional Assembly of elected representatives from the different local authorities.[12] Outside the organization of politics and administration, business groupings have consolidated what were dispersed chambers of commerce and lobby groups into a regional Chamber of Trade and Industry. Throughout all these recent changes, and despite some personnel changes, some kind of "governing elite" can be identified, still largely associated with the old industrial politics, dominated by trades unions, a paternalist mode of governance, and focused primarily on poverty reduction and economic development.[13]

In terms of governance, metropolitan city councils in England remain major political actors within this complex governance landscape in which sectorally-organized policy communities and their networks encounter each other but remain driven by their own logics. City councils are themselves multifunctional organizations, with several departments linked to functional service delivery tasks, and with tensions in inter-departmental linkages. Within the Newcastle area, the councils vary in the extent to which it has been possible to develop and maintain a strategic and coordinated approach to city council

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organization. There have also been initiatives in all councils for devolution to sub-areas, a movement encouraged currently by central government's proposals for "modernizing" local government, which advocates the creation of "area committees" (DETR, 1998; Coaffee & Healey, 2003). The creation of a council-wide system of area committees, however, challenges traditions of ward politics and a whole array of special area development initiatives pursued in different neighbourhoods over the past 30 years. Politically, Newcastle City Council seeks to operate as a strong collective actor, with the territorial scale expressed primarily in terms of political and administrative legitimacy rather than any sense of the specific relations and qualities to be found in the city.

The three examples selected are all within the area of Newcastle City Council itself. In terms of economic and social life, the boundaries of the city council area have little meaning. But in terms of the connections between social and economic networks and political ones, the impact of a territorial boundary can be considerable. Access to many material resources allocated by the public sector and to negotiation over regulatory approvals requires some relationship with one or more parts of the city council. This is very obvious in the case of the Grainger Town Partnership.

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Revitalizing the Historic City Centre: The Grainger Town Partnership

This Partnership was created to promote the physical, economic and social regeneration of the nineteenth century core of Newcastle city centre, which had been progressively undermined by the development of new shopping complexes to the north in the 1960s and 1970s and the Metrocentre in an "edge city" location in neighbouring Gateshead, as well as riverside redevelopment for offices and leisure activities to the south. Initiated by conservation and urban design campaigners within and around the city council in the 1980s, the project grew into a regeneration project in order to attract substantial national government funding. In doing so, it had to widen the stakeholders involved to include business interests from the retailing, commercial and property sectors. This was done through the regional Chamber of Commerce and a special business promotion agency, The Newcastle Initiative. The funding streams to which it had access were in part channelled through regional bodies. But when the Partnership was formally created, it was in the form of an "arms-length" agency of the city council. This meant that the projects and practices of the Partnership were under continual challenge from city councillors and officers who felt their own autonomy threatened by the Partnership mechanism and the introduction of strong business partners. For both councillors and officers, the city centre as an area focus had traditionally been of less interest than the poor neighbourhoods to the east and west, which were the heartlands of traditional working class support for councillors and the centre of the council's role as a housing provider.

The Partnership in its formal lifetime (1997–2003) achieved substantial physical improvements in Newcastle city centre, helped by the uplift in property markets regionally and the trend in city centre living among young professionals in the UK. Those involved, from different segments of the business community, those concerned with conservation and design as well as the increasing numbers of residents, not only came to appreciate the area focus of the Partnership but valued the consultative style pursued by the Partnership, which developed an array of mechanisms for consultation with different groups. The Partnership drew on and drew in a number of different networks into its governance arena. It also helped to create social-political networks. These could have some influence on the

fine detail of programme development and delivery. The author's research also shows that the interchanges between actors located in different positions led to a considerably enhanced understanding of the dilemmas which had to be faced in managing the complex socio-physical interactions of the city centre public realm. But the knowledge resources and networks generated through the Partnership were not so easily diffused from the Partnership arena to the wider relations of local area management in Newcastle. Nor was it clear how much of the Partnership style and focus would survive as it was "folded" back into the city council in 2003, as the main extra funding came to an end, a typical experience of the preceding urban regeneration partnerships in the city.

In terms of power dynamics, this episode depended on the nature of the funding available to the Partnership. Without the national funding, it is unlikely that a project of this scale would have taken place and an area-focused Partnership form for the city centre created. The project challenged the geographical imagination which councillors had of the city, which encompassed electorally-significant neighbourhoods in poverty which needed re-distributive attention, while the city centre was the territory of commercial interests which, it was assumed, could look after themselves and even generate funds for the city council. Significant regulatory responsibilities (planning and environmental health) remained in the hands of the city council, and these arenas were used to challenge Partnership proposals. In this case, the authority derived from governance culture and formal government process was used to maintain clear boundaries between the Partnership and the Council, generating all kinds of resistances to the flow of ideas and practices into the Council (see Figure 3). Other pressures were acting on the Council to introduce a new mode of politics, to encourage a much more open and consultative relationship with citizens generally and all kinds of stakeholders, generating a momentum which could not be avoided. But these pressures bore into the Council from different directions and cannot be attributed to the impact of the Grainger Town Partnership (see the next case). Thus the Grainger Town Partnership created an effective but contained and temporary arena in the Newcastle governance landscape. It innovated a strong focus on the area of the city centre and attempted to introduce a new kind of consultative politics, but in the end its power base was too weak to expand and endure. However, it has left behind tensions as many stakeholders valued its presence and argue for some continuation.

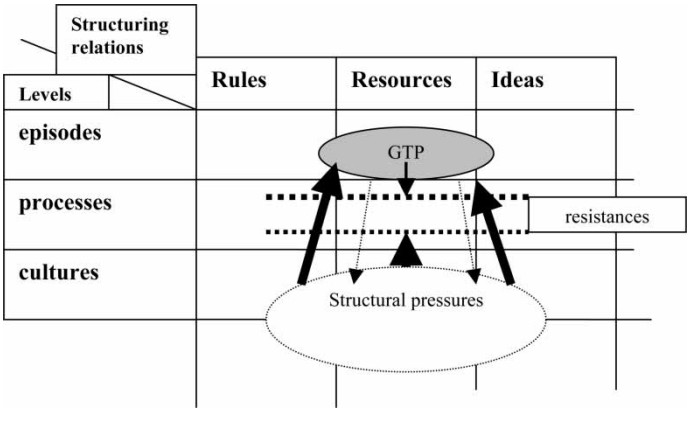

Figure 3. Transformation initiatives in governance dynamics: Grainger Town Partnership (GTP)

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A Strategic Initiative: "Going for Growth"

For many years, the city council (in its political and administrative activities) was held together by a strong pragmatic leader,[14] backed by a group of senior councillors and heads of departments. Council practices were structured by service delivery functions, in which councillors played an important role as "patrons" to the residents in their wards, particularly helping to solve their housing problems. In the mid-1990s, the leader was forced out. In the past 10 years, the Council has struggled to develop a new direction and mode of operation. A new Chief Executive, with a background in management strategy, backed by some councillors, recognized the value of having a clear overarching strategy for the city. This could provide a focus for political decisions, coordinate the activities of the various council departments and position the Council as in the forefront of the post-1997 national Labour government's agenda for "modernizing" local government. Such a strategic initiative represented a break with the pragmatic past, when a clear strategy was considered a hostage to fortune in the shifting sands of national and local politics and funding opportunities.

The result was the production of a strategy known as "Going for Growth" (NCC, 2000). This was articulated by a core group within the Council. It was based on the assumption that the problems the Council faced were well-understood, after years of small-scale regeneration attempts in different parts of the city. The city's population was falling. More affluent families were leaving for the surrounding areas, leading to a concentration of an already large number of poorer families, badly affected by a long history of temporary and then permanent unemployment. Council income was falling, while the problems it had to address were increasing. In addition, its large stock of "council housing", along with other parts of the low cost housing stock, were increasingly affected by disrepair and abandonment. There was plenty of space, on "brownfield land", within the city for housing to accommodate more people. But the social character of many parts of the city had undermined many past attempts at improving and diversifying both the housing stock and the social life of neighbourhoods. The solution, in the words of the Strategy, was to turn around population decline and promote large scale redevelopment within the poorer neighbourhoods. This in effect meant demolition of some streets and the creation of new neighbourhood environments with a different (and more middle class) ambience.

The Strategy was discussed with some elite stakeholders[15] in the city, who were pleased to see a more strategic focus and interested in the potential for new development areas, especially if backed by national government funds. After a brief consultation exercise on the Strategy in 1999, the Council then commissioned "master plan" studies for the two main areas for comprehensive redevelopment. These were produced in mid-2000. A more intensive consultation exercise followed. At this point, residents in these neighbourhoods, many of whom had been involved in council regeneration initiatives before and who expected a reasonably close relation with their ward councillors, exploded in protest (Byrne, 2000; Healey, 2002; Cameron, 2003). In part, this was due to the content of the masterplans. Residents were worried about road proposals which seemed to turn some streets into major highways. They were anxious about their houses, fearing demolition, especially if they had spent a good deal on interior decoration, despite the abandonment going on around them. In any case, the neighbourhoods were already very diverse with different qualities in different streets. But above all, they felt disconnected from the processes which had produced the masterplans. They too understood

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the problems. They were living with them on a day-to-day basis. What they demanded was to be "part of the solution". Especially, they resented the lack of consultation with them about their futures. They were challenging the Council's mode of governance as much as the content of the strategies.

Well-orchestrated citizen protest led to a fundamental re-think within the Council. The overall Strategy was retained, but the Strategy Team shifted attention to engage in very detailed consultations with residents through which new plans were produced and new ways of understanding the plans developed. Thus a new mode of politics began to emerge, with the Strategy used as the basis for obtaining substantial government funding for urban regeneration. But by 2003, many of the senior councillors and officers actors involved in the "Going for Growth" initiative had left the Council. Some of the elements of the Strategy are rolling forward, backed by national government money. Some of the consultative practices have spread into other areas of the Council's work. But at this moment, the Council is once again in re-organization, the outcome of which is not yet clear. The struggle here lies within the Council, over modes of politics and, implicitly, over concepts of the city and over the priorities which should underpin Council strategy and programmes. Collective actor capacity in terms of relations with other stakeholders and with other government levels is continually undermined by this uncertainty (see Figure 4).

The "Going for Growth" initiative can be interpreted as an attempt to "upscale" the horizons of councillors and officers of the city council, to focus attention on the city as a whole, and the wider picture affecting options for action and the coordination of effort across departments. It was very much encouraged by the wider climate of local government "modernization" as well as the building up of an emphasis on the wider "region". Key actors in the Council sought to position themselves in this wider discourse and arena. But to do this, they had to change the mode of operation of local politics, particularly the relations between citizen and councillor, and the internal organization of the council, which had operated in the past very much through individual service fiefdoms. But in attempting to make this kind of shift, they initially neglected to consider the relation between citizen and state, particularly among the councillors' heartland voters in the poor neighbourhoods. Since 2000, the Council has set up Local Strategic Partnerships and Area

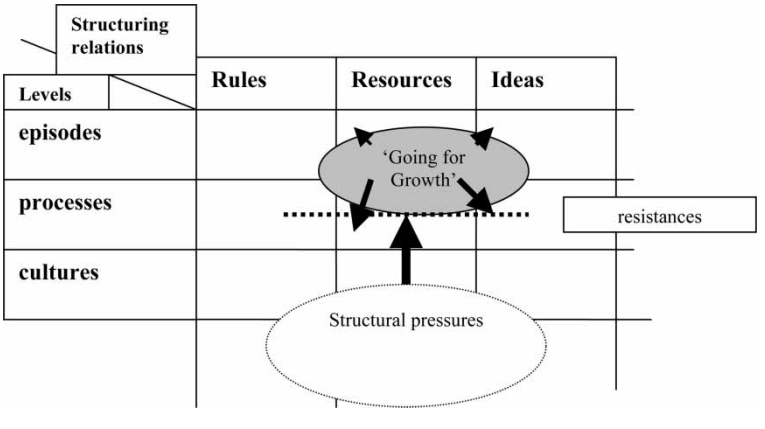

Figure 4. Transformation initiatives in governance dynamics: "Going for Growth"

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Committees, following national guidance, and has sought a much more consultative relationship with residents, in effect the kind of mode of politics promoted in the Grainger Town Partnership and in earlier partnerships in the area. But how far this will protect the politicians from electoral challenge from Liberal Democrats,[16] and how far either party will continue to sustain an "upscaled" strategic approach and a deeply consultative relationship with residents, remains to be seen. Transformation in governance discourses and practices is a long process with many "folds" and "bends".

Mobilization Outside the State: The Ouseburn Trust

Within the UK, the state in the form of national and local government bodies, is a very strong presence. This has meant that governance initiatives outside the state have had difficulties growing and surviving without finding a way to link to formal government in some way. This issue is currently being examined in relation to "social economy" and related initiatives in an EU F5 project led by Frank Moulaert (SINGOCOM). The final example is drawn from this work (Gonzalez & Healey, 2005). The Ouseburn Valley is an area of the city between the city centre, poor neighbourhoods to the east, and an area of intensive riverside redevelopment initiated in the late 1980s. It is a typical "in-between" part of the city, with old industrial buildings being used for various workshops, some ecological projects, and pubs which attracted a distinctive "alternative" clientele, all clustered down the sides of a steep valley, making it a curious and attractive physical locale.

The initiative which turned this "in-between" place into an active "place-for-itself" was sparked off by mobilization "against the state". A group of local people, including someone from the local church, organized first to demand a voice in the major redevelopment of the riverside area, so that the Ouseburn Valley area would not be cut-off from the main riverside. Success in this mobilization gained them the status to become active participants in the ongoing consultation process which developed around the riverside regeneration projects. This focus soon widened out to include people concerned with industrial heritage and environmental issues, neither of which were well-articulated policy issues in the city council, where the focus had long been on "housing" and "jobs". By 1996, these various networks around the Ouseburn area had become consolidated into a formalized Trust. They then widened out further to involve other community, business and local groups and the city council, forming a Partnership which obtained modest funding from central government for development activities. This funding finished in 2002, and the Trust now survives with a more permanent link to the city council, employing four officers seconded from the city council in the Ouseburn Resource Centre in the area, dealing with several development projects.

The trajectory of this initiative is not unlike the Grainger Town Partnership (see Figure 5). It started off through an activist campaign around neglected issues, developed a wider agenda in order to participate in government opportunities for consultation and funding, became more formalized, and then was absorbed more closely into the city council organization, where its future has to jostle with many other commitments and organizational arenas, and will depend on both the commitment of a few activists and how well the initiative "fits" the prevailing interests of local and national politicians and officials. It has created a "place identity" which has filtered into the consciousness of both government actors and local people. To safeguard as much autonomy as possible, the Trust has set out to acquire some land and buildings. It has also built links to a range of

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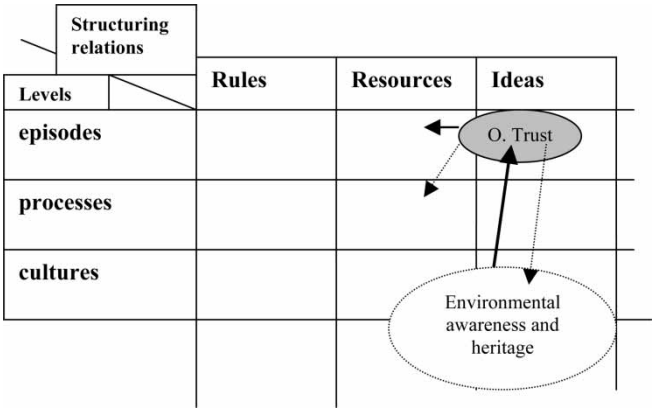

Figure 5. Transformation initiatives in governance dynamics: the Ouseburn Trust

national agencies. It has been a local pioneer for a fine-grained, ecologically-sensitive and consultative approach to project development, which is in line with much national thinking but challenges Council traditions. It thus provides an exemplar of a new way of doing things, but, as with the Grainger Town Project, has had little wider impact on Council discourses and practices, except perhaps as a demonstration project of "downscaling" governance activity and what a new mode of local, socially-driven entrepreneurial development might look like. Nor has it made links to a wider "movement politics" which could have enlarged its scope of influence.

Struggles for Change

These "cameos" of governance activity in and around Newcastle City Council all seem to suggest the continuing capacity of a local council to resist change and to undermine the innovative potential of experiments in new government forms. Yet the content of these pressures and the initiatives, conflicts and struggles they give rise to are not the same as they were in the 1970s or even the neo-liberal 1980s. The context of power dynamics, funding, demands and expectations is different. The terrain of invention and struggle is different. The interpretation is that, drawing on Figure 1, the level of governance processes in Newcastle is "in movement", particularly since the change of leadership in the mid-1990s (Coaffee & Healey, 2003). What is unclear is the trajectory of this movement, and whether it will ever come to "rest" in any kind of stable set of networks and coalitions, discourses and practices.

Within this "movement", there are some signs of a re-scaling of focus, from political wards and social housing neighbourhoods, and the promotion of the city's direct interests in land, property and its income base, both upwards to its wider role as a city in a region and downwards to neighbourhoods and locales within the city. The "Going for Growth" experience shows that this double re-scaling cannot be achieved without equivalent attention to residents' concerns, particularly in the political heartland poor neighbourhoods. There are initiatives underway to develop a more systematic approach to absorbing residents' views into the shaping and delivery of Council policies (the Area Committees etc.). But this brings different arenas in different locales within the city into clear conflict with

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each other, whereas in the old days of councillor patronage, it was the councillors who struggled in the City Council Chamber on behalf of their ward constituents. The acute tension for city council politicians and managers is how to manage the shift going on in its broader socio-economic context, which is bringing many more middle class people to work and live in the city and thereby over time potentially changing both policy priorities and modes of politics. Can a city council transform itself without struggle and crisis? Or are these essential ingredients for "unlocking" the inertia of "old ways"? Certainly, Newcastle City Council has been experimenting in all kinds of ways, which at least provides an experience on which to draw if and when the various strands of initiative come together into a "new way" of doing governance in the city. But inevitably, such a transformation will and should involve struggle, as it would re-distribute access to resources flows, regulatory practices and the formulation of policy ideas.

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Conclusions

The rhetoric of the well-publicized initiatives in urban and regional governance "modernization" in Europe provides many indications of an emphasis on new scales for the articulation of policy and politics, for the emergence of a territorial focus and for the development of new modes of more collaborative governance. But a fine-grained and institutionally-situated examination of such initiatives, such as those described in the previous section, suggests that whether and how far these practices develop is highly variable and contingent on local particularities (see also Le Gales, 2002; Swyngedouw, 2005).

In relation to re-scaling, the Newcastle governance case suggests that the old power of the city council is under serious challenge, with a strengthening possible at both the regional and the sub-municipal level. But the arena of the metropolitan district remains important, both in terms of the articulation of formal politics, and the organization of policy and administration. That this power is constrained by national government regulatory and resource allocation power has been a long-standing feature of central-local government relations in Britain, and shows few signs of abating as yet in England. It remains to be seen whether new regional levels emerge with real power to act "for themselves" rather than operate as creatures of central government, or local government, or both (Jeffrey *et al*., 2002; Murdoch & Norton, 2001). The continuing strength of city councils in England lies in part in the range of functions they still perform and in part in their well-established legitimacy and authority. But it also lies in the expectations that others have of "the Council". Residents and business interests may be very critical, and may complain of the distance between local government and citizen, but yet they expect councils to "do things" for them and often wrap together a whole array of government bodies as an imagined collective "council". Structural imperatives for both more efficiency and more open and participative democratic processes challenge traditional practices, but do not necessarily encourage the re-formulation of scalar relations.

This raises the question of territorial focus. Curiously, and despite the "Going for Growth" initiative, the institutional arena of Newcastle City Council has a very uncertain conception of Newcastle as a place. This vagueness about territorial qualities is shared with many other organizations in the city (Vigar *et al*., 2005). The city council is clearly a powerful collective actor, but the city as a territory is only implicitly present. For politicians, councillors, citizens and other stakeholders, the Council is a collection of service departments, not an aggregation of distinctive locales or a locale in and for

itself. This is probably true of many other city councils in the UK. In such a context, the rhetoric of "joined-up government" and of "integrated governance" promoted by the UK national government in the late 1990s and early 2000s finds difficulty in transferring to an actual practice. Where it does so, the focus tends to be on the needs of individuals and firms in locales, rather than on the qualities of places, that is, developing a voice for people-in-places. The current initiatives in integrated council strategy and in area/neighbourhood government may have the effect of creating new policy spaces in which a new politics with a strong "territorial focus" will emerge, but there is no clear evidence for such a development at present in Newcastle.

The pressures for a more consultative and collaborative style of policy-making from residents is clear in the Newcastle case. In fact, the experience of area regeneration partnerships in the past had encouraged the demand for "voice" in the poorer neighbourhoods (Coaffee & Healey, 2003). This is challenging the old paternalist and quasi-clientelist practices of councillors and the delivery modes of officials. But councillors and officers have also to adjust to the demands of central government to perform according to a "best value" target-driven performance regime, which gives little space for transforming citizen-state relations in significant ways (Stewart, 2002). Caught in this structural tension, initiatives in more intensive resident consultation are driven by the search to underpin the authority of council attempts at strategy with the legitimacy of "deep consultation", but residents are often well-aware that the council needs the consultation for its own purposes rather than as part of a shift in power relations between council and citizen.

In the Newcastle case, therefore, my analysis suggests that governance processes are "on the move". This conclusion is made not because of the array of new initiatives of all kinds, but because, at the level of government process (see Figure 1), the mixture of attempts to manage and resist the changes set in motion by the new initiatives and the general sense of uncertainty (reflected in regular re-organization attempts) suggests a diffused sense of the need to change. But what kind of trajectory will emerge remains very unclear, and is still strongly dependent on a central–local government power dynamic. In this dynamic, some business interests and residents in some neighbourhoods may gain, but a new inclusive "politics of space" which could provide a voice for people across the city in relation to the different needs, lifestyles and their different locales of living seems a long way off. This case thus confirms Le Gales' general conclusion for urban governance in Europe that some kind of transformation is underway (2002, pp. 276–273), but that as analysts we should be careful of deterministic over-generalization.

A possible "over-generalization" of the Newcastle case could be that the city council level is slowly "dis-integrating" its established departmentalized organization and paternalist mode of politics. It may be losing power as a new regional scale begins to institutionalize. In which case, this could be an example of de-stabilization prior to a new and re-scaled territorial integration. Such an integration, in the particular context of the north-east of England, where there is a long-standing awareness of economic vulnerability, is likely to focus on territory as a "container" of economic assets, favouring business interests directly in order to win "jobs" to favour the traditional north-east worker. However, how far a new arena will be able to accumulate sufficient force to challenge the embedded practices of central–local relations and whether a concept of territory will emerge which is more than a "container" remain very uncertain potentials at the present time. In 10 years time, analysts may conclude that the Newcastle governance

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story is one of continual transformation, of an unending and "restless search" (Offe, 1977) for a stable resolution to contradictory structural imperatives and historically-embedded discourses and practices. The analytical tools summarized in this paper are put forward to help both in assessing these evolutions of "governance on the move" and as aids to those actively involved in struggles for transformation.

Notes

1. This paper is a revised version of one given at the 54th Meeting of German Geographers in Bern, 28 September–4 October, 2003. Workshop FS26: New Urban Governance—Institutional Change and Consequences for Urban Development.
2. The author and colleagues have been developing such intermediate tools through empirical research on planning and urban regeneration experiences (Healey & Barrett, 1990; Healey, 1992, 1998, 2004a; Healey *et al*., 2003).
3. There are many critiques of Giddens' structuration theory [see, for example Seidman (1998) and Thrift (1996)], but the basic conception of the mutual constitution of "structure" and "agency" remains a very helpful approach.
4. See, for example, Flyvberg (1998), Harding (2000), Healey *et al.* (2003), Hillier (2000), Murdoch and Abram (2002), Raco (2003).
5. See Innes and Booher (2003), Healey (2004a), Hajer (2003). In developing their concepts of "institutionalization", Gromart and Hajer (2003) have recently been drawing on some of the concepts in the socio-technical systems literature with its particular conceptions of actor-networks involved in the formation of knowledge and technology, and with the capacity of this knowledge to "travel" from one institutional arena to another when "black-boxed" into a discursive metaphor, a technique or a procedure (see also Murdoch & Abram, 2002).
6. Figure 1 in effect provides a way to express the structure/agency relation, often expressed by others in terms of linking macro-, meso- and micro-levels of power. See also Fischer (2003) for a similar conception of levels.
7. "Capital" suggests that different resources can be agglomerated into a unitary currency, which is not the author's view.
8. See Healey *et al*. (2002, 2003). The author would also like to thank collaborators, Claudio de Magalhaes, Ali Madanipour and John Pendlebury, and to the ESRC, who financed project R000222616.
9. See Coaffee and Healey (2003). The author would also like to thank collaborators Jon Coaffee and ESRC Ph.D. student Lorraine Johnstone.
10. The author would like to thank colleagues Sara Gonzalez and Geoff Vigar, and EU F5 SINGOCOM project leader Frank Moulaert, for permission to use this material.
11. The Newcastle area was selected not because it has a striking history of governance transformation but because, through the various research projects conducted there by the author and colleagues in SAPL/GURU, the author has a rich understanding of its governance dynamics.
12. Under recent legislation, regions can set up political assemblies with powers "in between" those available to Wales and Scotland, if a majority of local voters support this in a referendum, which will also convert all local authorities into a single administrative layer (i.e. abolishing either counties or districts where a two-tier system still exists). The first referendum was held in the North East region in November 2004 and was heavily defeated.
13. The opportunity of the recent and ultimately unsuccessful "Cultural Capital of Europe" bid helped to enrich this traditional pre-occupation, but was continually justified in the language of job creation and social inclusion.
14. In the UK, the Leader of the Council has traditionally been the important political figure, the mayor being a ceremonial position. As part of the "modernization" of local government, there is an encouragement for new, more powerful elected mayors, as in the London case.
15. Especially from other public agencies and commercial interests.
16. It dit not. The Liberal Democrats gained control of the city council in May 2004.

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