

Raynsford Review : Evidence of Professor Alister Scott

I have structured my evidence based on my reflections as a researcher involved in several research projects dealing with spatial planning challenges which have given me an insight into the operation of the planning system with outcomes looking to improve way policy and decision making processes are created, delivered and evaluated.

- (2017-2020) *Mainstreaming green infrastructure in planning policy and decision making: Translating NERC science into a co-produced spatial planning toolkit* NERC 226k)
- (2016) *From Citizen to Co-innovator, from City Council to Facilitator: Integrating Urban Systems to Provide Better Outcomes for People* (BOP) CI 400k Urban Living Partnership RCUK and Innovate UK (Co Investigator and Work Package leader)
- (2015) *Testing a natural capital tool for improved green infrastructure* 120k NERC (Co-investigator and Work Package leader)
- (2015) *South Downs National Park: mainstreaming the ecosystem approach into the local plan*
- (2014) *Maximising the Impact of Games as Effective Knowledge Exchange Tools: The Rufopoly Resource Kit* Grant to ESRC 120K
- (2014) *Sustainability Appraisal Spatial Plan for Recovery and Growth, NEA and Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership* 33k
- (2012-2014) *National Ecosystems Assessment Follow on UNEP WMC WP9: Engagement with end users and development of a framework to prioritise tool development.* Research Councils \UK; Defra, Welsh Government 100K
- (2012-2014) *National Ecosystems Assessment Follow on UNEP WMC WP10: Development and enhancement of tools and resources for with the findings/methods of the UK NEA Research Councils \UK; Defra, Welsh Government 100k*
- Reed, M, Scott, AJ et al (2012) *Developing Visitor Payback as part of a Payments for Ecosystem Services* Defra 30k
- (2010-2011) *Managing Environmental Change at the Fringe Phase IV RELU* ESRC 145k <http://www.bcu.ac.uk/research/centres-of-excellence/centre-for-environment-and-society/projects/relu>
- Larkham P; Scott AJ; Curzon R; Lamb J and Hardman, M. (2010) *Improving community involvement: Etching Hill and The Heath Cannock Case* District Council
- (2004-2006) *Economic aspects of rural development* RO203909 SEERAD (£500k)
- (2004) *Role of Local Landscape Designations in the Town and Country Planning system in Scotland.* (Macaulay Development Trust £25k)
- (2004) *Sustainable Landscape: criteria and indicators for measuring and characterizing the landscape of Wales* (CCW £15k)
- 2004) *Regulatory Impact Assessment: Common Land Legislation (DEFRA contract) in conjunction with Gloucester University (CCRU) and Asken Ltd.* (£58k)

I am also able to reflect on 30 years experience as a lecturer in planning with some 10 years working in built environment RTPI accredited planning schools and 6 years as a member of RTPI partnership boards.

As a chartered planner myself (MRTPI) this gives me the experience to offer reflective thoughts on the current direction of planning in both academic and policy/practice terms and why there needs to be a fundamental rethink. My evidence is structured around the following core themes which impact directly on your terms of reference

Some of my arguments have already been rehearsed in my submission to the house of Lords Built environment inquiry into the operation of the planning system¹ and I recommend that these are incorporated into your analysis. As far as possible I have referenced my own work and outputs to evidence my thoughts.

1. The lack of a coherent vision for the kind of place we want to see
2. The disintegrated nature of planning policy and decision making.
3. Where has strategic planning gone
4. Poor use of decision support tools.

1. The lack of a vision for planning and the disconnect between academic theory and practice.

What does a successful planning system look like and what kind of society and places are we trying to create? These questions are not just academic navel gazing and represent a major void in uniting planning theory, policy and practice across the built and natural environment which hinders and distracts agencies working together on a shared mission based on a set of shared values (UKNEAFO 2014)². The repercussions are serious as planning then becomes disjointed and manipulated to fit other agendas rather than having its own direction which others buy into. This has happened with the way planning has been slotted into housing and economic growth agendas with profound negative impacts on social and environmental justice³. These core concepts in planning have effectively disappeared from much contemporary planning discourse. Compare this with the bold and exciting visions of the founding fathers of planning who had an overarching vision which significantly was rooted in interdisciplinary thinking where health, quality of life, green space, equity housing, services and economy all combined to optimise

¹ <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/lords-committees/built-environment/Combined-evidence-volume.pdf>
see page 1660ff

² UKNEAFO,(2014) UK National Ecosystem Assessment Follow on: Synthesis of the Key Findings, UNEP-WCMC,LWEC, UK <http://uknea.unep-wcmc.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=5L6%2fu%2b%2frKKA%3d&tabid=82>

³ Scott (2015) The Disintegration of the Housing Debate Adjacent Government January 2015 1-3

societal benefits (Adams and Scott 2013⁴). Such vision led planning as championed by Howard and others is conspicuously absent these days as planning becomes subsumed under the umbrella of the latest industrial strategy or housing requirement. It becomes disjointed and fragmented and crucially reactive rather than shaping such strategies.

However, where bold visions have been developed we can see meaningful and exciting progress. So for example Plymouth Local Plan 2016 was presented within a bold vision of place to act as a conduit to synthesize and synchronise over 100 other strategies to help deliver a shared vision that the people of Plymouth have bought into⁵. Equally the South Downs national park has embarked on its own vision as evidenced through its management plan which has then given rise to a series of ecosystem science led plans including the local plan⁶.

My own observations is that planning has a crisis of identity rooted in deep insecurity partly in response to the failed tower block experiments of the 1970s where a bold plan of community and neighbourhoods was socially engineered and delivered but with perverse negative outcomes. This resulted in a reluctance to advance further visions preferring instead to work at the margins of other areas and priorities which indirectly has led to its marginalisation as a discipline and arguably a profession. Also planning as a profession has been attacked by those in government and industry as restrictive and even as the enemy of enterprise. Such negativity can easily lead to a crisis of confidence and few leap to planning's defence. Today the visibility of planning and planners in driving societal agendas is woeful and should be a source of major concern given the pace and scale of changes that are occurring (Adams and Scott, 2013⁷).

The marginalization of planning has not been helped by academics who have pursued their own specialist research agendas driven by research assessment exercises rather than help shape practice. Here the lack of attention as to how to

⁴ Adams D and Scott AJ (2013) In Search of Positive Planning, Town and Country Planning February 2013; 88-91

⁵ Barnard 2016 The value of the Plan : keynote presentation given to Annual RTPI conference June 2016 <http://api.ning.com/files/hbjtvQvq-mFCdor7KHeUTRMKS77nkHDINHPHTmGNcxfUxmzQYis0YADLdvyOOKEF9hwHF5JTztY0pi1WXUvmnkPuz--hivf/PaulBarnard10.30.pdf>

⁶ Scott, AJ; Carter C., Hardman, M. , Grayson, N. and Slaney T (2018) Mainstreaming ecosystem science in spatial planning practice: exploiting a hybrid opportunity space Land Use Policy [https://authors.elsevier.com/sd/article/S0264-8377\(16\)30642-1](https://authors.elsevier.com/sd/article/S0264-8377(16)30642-1)

⁷ Ibid 4

operationalise spatial planning is most evident (Scott et al., 2013⁸). The more holistic thinking upon which planning was founded appears to have retreated; ironically at a time when research agendas are now stressing the need for interdisciplinary approaches (Scott et al, 2018⁹).

Recommendation:

In the past there were bold visions that were developed by key individuals. I would argue that we need is a vision of planning and places that unite those involved in planning in ALL its aspects. Starting with a shared concept of placemaking and building better places we co-design a more inclusive vision that goes beyond the normal and gets people thinking about quality, viability, equity, diversity, productivity, capability and connectivity as guiding principles. This is not about any one aspect of planning but more of its integration, interdependencies and relationships. However before we can do that we need to overcome the disintegrated nature of planning.

2. Disintegrated planning

“The planning system is not fit for purpose” is a common refrain among successive governments and some developer-led agencies. This then leads to a series of incremental policy and legislative interventions to try and improve it. However, the problem with such thinking and actions is that they are not based on the full diagnostics of what is actually wrong (ULB, 2017)¹⁰. So whilst we can all readily observe delays in the planning system and a serious undersupply of housing as symptoms of a wider malaise, the interventions have been symptom-driven in isolation rather than focussed on the key drivers and pressures that actually generate the symptoms in the first place (see figure 1).

This is compounded by the multiple scales at which these interventions are applied with potential disconnects and conflicts (Scott 2013¹¹). For example, government proposals at national, regional and local can conflict over the current

⁸ Scott, A.J., Carter, C.E., Larkham, P., Reed, M., Morton, N., Waters, R., Adams, D., Collier, D., Crean, C., Curzon, R., Forster, R., Gibbs, P., Grayson, N., Hardman, M., Hearle, A., Jarvis, D., Kennet, M. Leach, K., Middleton, M., Schiessel, N., Stonyer, B., Coles, R. (2013) Disintegrated Development at the Rural Urban Fringe Disintegrated Scott (2011) : Re-connecting spatial planning theory and practice Progress in Planning 83 1-52

⁹ Scott, AJ; Carter C., Hardman, M. , Grayson, N. and Slaney T (2018) Mainstreaming ecosystem science in spatial planning practice: exploiting a hybrid opportunity space Land Use Policy [https://authors.elsevier.com/sd/article/S0264-8377\(16\)30642-1](https://authors.elsevier.com/sd/article/S0264-8377(16)30642-1)

¹⁰ Urban Living Birmingham Project <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/business/research/research-projects/urban-living-birmingham-project.aspx> see also <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-social-sciences/business/research/city-redi/ULB-Summary-For-AnalystFEST-PDF-241KB.pdf>

¹¹ Scott AJ (2013) Re-thinking English Planning: Managing Conflicts and Opportunities at the Urban-Rural Fringe in Shaw K, and Blackie, J. (2013) eds *New Directions in Planning: Beyond Localism*, Chapter 5. University of Northumbria: Newcastle

operationalisation of new housing development in green belts as typified by Northumberland County Council (Dissington Garden Village Development) and Redditch Borough Council (new housing in green belt)¹². It is the separate identification and treatment of the symptoms without reference to the wider ecosystem within which they sit that drives what I call disintegrated development (Scott et al 2013¹³). This critique also extends to academia where research tends to specialise on specific areas of planning rather than look at the wider picture. It is here that social-ecological systems thinking can offer useful insights (Scott et al., 2018¹⁴). Building on the ULB work there is a case for a wider review of planning as part of the built and natural environmental jigsaw informed by the vision that we currently lack (see section 1 above).



Figure 1: Disintegrated Development. Scott et al 2013: p5

The concept of disintegrated development was promulgated to characterise the state of planning in the rural urban fringe (Figure 1). This contested and messy space is located theoretically and spatially at the intersection of urban and rural domains each with different landuses, governance, tools, designations and theory operating simultaneously in the same geographic space. Crucially different specialist gatekeepers control the information and evidence that is acceptable to them and thus

¹² Ibid 11

¹³ Ibid 8

¹⁴ Ibid 6

have different evidence based policy responses¹⁵. This then results in different decisions which cumulatively may result in chaos, conflicting policies and perverse outcomes (Scott et al 2013¹⁶).

The current devolution agenda is adding to this disintegration with combined authorities and city deals developing their own bespoke governance arrangements in order to tap into central government support monies. Under the guise of localism there is something deeply unsettling when the structures are largely determined by central government with areas chasing the money. What this generates is an ap of England that is deeply inconsistent with different functions ascribed to different areas leading to a confused picture of governance and where perverse outcomes are highly likely¹⁷.

Our research on the rural urban fringe¹⁸ uniquely comprised an interdisciplinary project team across a range of academic, policy and practice partners who operate in these spaces. Drawing from their combined experience and expertise a series of cross cutting themes (connections, long termism and values with the addition of equity) were identified from the intersection of spatial planning and ecosystem approach paradigms to provide a more interdisciplinary lens help integrate the evidence bases and information flows to improve resulting decisions¹⁹. Such thinking lay at the heart of the Urban Living Birmingham project (ULB, 2017²⁰).

The approach was part and parcel of a wider endemic problem in the design, delivery and evaluation of planning where such silos and institutional myopia hinder effective interventions (Scott et al 2004²¹; see also Kerslake 2014²²). Whilst organisational change can help address, this the current swathe of change rarely considers such goals and certainly does not invest in the necessary resources, capacity building and behaviour change that is required. Indeed, often such changes

¹⁵ This is exacerbated by the creation of additional forms of governance with narrow remits so for example we see the creation of local nature partnerships (environment) and local enterprise partnerships (economy)

¹⁶ Ibid 8

¹⁷ Exposing the illusion of devolution <https://criticalurbanists.wordpress.com/2015/01/20/exposing-the-illusion-of-devolution-by-alister-scott-university-of-birmingham/>

¹⁸ Managing environmental change at the rural urban fringe ESRC <http://www.bcu.ac.uk/research/-centres-of-excellence/centre-for-environment-and-society/projects/relu>

¹⁹ This is in keeping with more recent guidance I was involved in co developing with Currie, M., Macleod, CJA; de Bruin, A.; Maynard, C., Bammer, G., Meagher, L., Scott, A.J., Reed M. and Campbell C. (2016). Working together for better outcomes: good practice for interdisciplinary researchers. Working Together for Better Outcomes, 26-27 March 2015, Edinburgh, UK, DOI:

²⁰ Ibid 10

²¹ Scott A.J. Midmore P and Christie M (2004) Foot and Mouth: implications for rural restructuring in Wales. Journal of Rural Studies 20 1-14

²² Kerslake Review 2014 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/birmingham-city-councils-governance-and-organisational-capabilities-an-independent-review>

result in less resources to do even more roles with performance targets and reviews still based on sectoral targets.

However, within my research experience I do sometimes come across good practice. Yet such outcomes are the exception rather than the rule and tend to be achieved in spite of the system rather than because of it. Key to this is the role of key individuals/innovators who are prepared to take risks and go outside usual comfort zones within their job roles to achieve such outcomes even in the face of opposition (Scott 2011²³).

Another dimension of this disintegration is the way different components of planning are seen as bolt on extras and are not effectively mainstreamed into the system (Scott et al 2014²⁴; Scott et al 2018²⁵). In particular the environment is poorly understood by planners (reinforced by the lack of any training in planning programmes) (Scott, 2012)²⁶. This leads to a culture where it is seen as something extra to add into the system. This perception of environment as an outlier and as something separate to the planning system is dangerous. A similar argument can be made for the way social issues are treated within planning as marginal to the core purpose which is housing and economic growth. Such thinking inhibits nature based solutions that can help with issues of housing and industry location as well as help maximise quality of life for people in terms of where they live. The reformulation of the environment as an economic asset helps redress that balance. This is why a lot of my recent research has been predicated on exploring the synergies between the ecosystem approach and spatial planning given their hitherto disparate theories. This theoretical mainstreaming is important to help inform policy and practice too but crucially needs to be built upon hooks²⁷ and bridges²⁸ (Scott et al 2013²⁹; Scott et al 2014³⁰; Scott et al 2018³¹)

²³ Scott (2011) Beyond the conventional: meeting the challenges of landscape governance within the European Landscape Convention; *Journal of Environmental Management* 92 (10), 2754-2762

²⁴ Scott, A.J, Carter, C., Hölzinger, O., Everard, M., Raffaelli, D., Hardman, M., Glass J Leach, K., Wakeford, R., Reed, M., Grace, M., Sunderland, T., Waters, R., Corstanje, R. Grayson, N., Harris, J and Taft, A. (2014) Tools – Applications, Benefits and Linkages for Ecosystem Science (TABLES), Final Report to the UNEPWMC Research Councils UK, Welsh Government and Defra June 2014.

²⁵ Ibid 6

²⁶ Scott AJ (2012) Exposing, Exploring and Navigating the built and natural divide in public policy and planning . In *Practice*, March Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management 20-23

²⁷ Hooks as a key policy or legislative term, duty or priority that relate to a particular user group

²⁸ Bridges as a term, concept or policy priority that is used and readily understood across multiple groups and publics as translational mechanisms

²⁹ Ibid 10

³⁰ Ibid 24

³¹ Ibid 6

So I see new schemes that try to challenge this thinking. For example, Dissington garden village³² seeks to build a new community using the principles of live, learn, work and play. This kind of shared vision helps put the “P” back into planning around notions of “placemaking” within an exemplar development. A similar process was observed in Carclaze³³ garden village development near St Austell. What was particularly inspiring here was the way the local authority, developer, agents, highways and drainage engineers were all in the same room working together on integrated solutions and working across traditional sectoral silos. This example forms part of a wider EU Interreg green infrastructure project PERFECT³⁴ exploring environmental growth in an economic context.

In my current role as a NERC knowledge exchange fellow³⁵ I have collated evidence from 20+ research projects where planned pathways to impact all aspire to inform and improve planning policy and decision making and in so doing are creating new tools. Yet it is highly significant that very few involve planners explicitly in their design and implementation with none working with councillors³⁶. There appears to be a real gap in knowledge about the planning system and its fixed procedures and quasi-judicial systems that makes the adoption and incorporation of the proposed new tools and frameworks virtually impossible. It raises a key question about why research is not more focussed on improving existing tools that comprise the systems of policy and decision making. So, there is a wider issue of how new research could help inform planning reform but is failing to do so due to a lack of understanding on both sides; RCUK need to involve more planning representation in the commissioning of research programmes to optimise potential impact and DCLG and local authorities need to work more closely with such research projects to ensure that they deliver valuable and accessible outputs that policy and practice need. Finally individual research projects principal investigators need to involve planners in their research design and delivery. This problem is compounded in my view by

³² Dissington Garden Village proposal <http://www.dissingtonestate.co.uk/dissington-garden-village>

³³ West Carclaze Garden Village <http://www.westcarclaze.co.uk/>

³⁴ PERFECT <https://www.tcpa.org.uk/perfect-project>

³⁵ Scott 2017 Scott, AJ (2017-2020) Mainstreaming green infrastructure in planning policy and decision making: Translating NERC science into a co-produced spatial planning toolkit NERC <https://mainstreaminggreeninfrastructure.com/index.php>

³⁶ Can we be smarter with green infrastructure research https://mainstreaminggreeninfrastructure.com/blog/posts.php?Smart_GI

the lack of visible planning champions when compared to other built environment professions notably architects³⁷.

This disintegrated development problem also persists within many built environment programmes. In my past role(s) as a programme manager of masters planning programmes set within wider built environment schools I am mindful of the silos that exist across the different built environment courses therein which is far more entrenched than what is currently experienced in practice. This then perpetuates the culture wherein planning, real estate, architecture, building construction and architectural technology have their own identity and core with only limited cross-discipline interaction. The main barriers seem to be the established mindsets of programme managers and the shift to large credit modules meaning that priority subject areas are chosen. Such narrow thinking is then fed into the newly emerging wave of built environment professionals.

One of my chief complaints here was the lack of any shared built environment foundation across the different accredited programmes so that people could see areas of convergence and synergy and it is this specialisation that tends to exacerbate the planning problem in my view. This is where the results of the Farrell review³⁸ are so key; and which in itself should be a key source of evidence for the Ravenscroft Review. This also raises the issue of the number of separate professional bodies out there that give accreditation. This is fine and most necessary for sure, but they do tend to champion their own silos rather than unite to present a coherent voice about the kind of integrated built and natural environment we need. A cross-body drawn from representatives across these institutes would be a good way to start moving away from the silos.

Recommendations:

1. There needs to be better diagnostics of the problems with delivering planning. This is more than simply compiling an evidence base. It is how such information is assessed and integrated. The medical analogy is key here in that we need special case reviews where all the specialists come together to look at the evidence rather than in silos. An agreed treatment plan stands the best chance.
2. My own work at the intersection of spatial planning and the ecosystem approach is rare and this suggests that we need a uniting theoretical

³⁷ This is only my emerging findings from a relatively quick and dirty exploration of research projects and practice needs. See this output for some evidence. <https://mainstreaminggreeninfrastructure.com/outputs-page.php?GI-Challenges>

³⁸ <http://farrellreview.co.uk/> accessed 5th November 2017

framework that can help inform practice. Academics need to focus on this aspect to help drive integration through a theory that is accessible and operational.

3. Moving away from one dimensional views of planning delivery in terms of housing or environment to embrace a more joined up approach. Here the concept of placemaking becomes critical as a foundation to lay the core components of a new and fit for purpose planning system.
4. The disintegration is also caused by the rather technocratic language that each discipline or profession likes to use, Developing a shared language using IT tools that enable people to better interact with plans helps people see the bigger picture particularly where interdependencies and synergies lie.

3. Where has Strategic Planning gone.

The abolition of regional planning was a retrograde step by Eric Pickles and the Coalition government based on policy based evidence with view that the planning system was broken³⁹. There was a failure to capture the lessons from regional planning and, in particular, where it did add value to the planning system. Work we undertook within our rural urban fringe project captured the lessons learnt from all the strategic planners in the West Midlands⁴⁰. This capturing of institutional capital is rare in todays world of voluntary redundancies and staff restructuring and often the lessons learnt lie buried in the experience staff that leave agencies. The abolition of the tool of regional spatial strategies is one thing but the abolition of the regional layer of planning itself has, in my view, been disastrous. What we see now is a hotch potch of activity that relates to region. Some under the banner of combined authorities; some under the local enterprise partnerships and some under the duty to cooperate. This back door and back window use of regional planning breeds disintegration and also fuels inconsistency. This is made worse by the economic primacy that then fails to capture strategic planning issues like climate change,

³⁹ Open Source Planning Conservative party 2010 : p1

<https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/view/43517875/open-source-planning-green-paper-the-conservative-party>

⁴⁰ Scott AJ (2011) Capturing Institutional memory: the case of the rural-urban fringe workshop Tripwire p11 March/April 2011

biodiversity, energy and water management and all undertaken in the complete absence of an overall strategic spatial plan.

In this free for all we see the national government narrative for economic growth and housing trump all else. Under the guise of localism a narrative is developed that enabled local communities to take back control. This is illusory as national government still dictate the kind of localism that is allowed. Using tools such as (economic) viability (NPPF: par 176) this restricts the wider consideration of other matters if they affect economic profitability.

The replacement measure of the duty to cooperate is not adequate for regional planning matters of strategic importance. Currently housing dominates the duty to cooperate discourse as housing market areas are wider than local authorities. Thus they need to cooperate to agree housing targets and to calculate their own assessments of need. This has recently changed with the development of a universal method for calculating such need which is to be welcomed although the precise metrics are yet to deal effectively with the different spatial issues affecting England⁴¹. In the absence of any regional tier the main agent of the duty to cooperate becomes overtly political and housing focussed. This leaves other issues on the margins which originally would have been part and part of a regional tier. My only observation here is that the boundaries for regional planning are often artificial and geographically irrelevant for planning purposes. In (Scott 2013: Scott et al 2013) I argue for regions to be defined naturally using river catchments thus requiring different authorities to work together on a range of issues that have both spatial and functional coherence.

The current planning system is being driven through the NPPF and treasury with central dictates then being translated through the messy governance regimes we now have created. In my view there is a need to rebuild the NPPF in line with the recommendations of the CLG select committee NPPF report 2 years⁴² on to support sustainable development goals.

Recommendations.

The regional level of planning needs to be formally recognised with important implications for the way the NPPF is designed and delivered. In essence my argument supports the need for a plan led system that works down from the national to the regional to the local to the neighbourhood and which crucially operates like an accordion where it is opened up to the appropriate scale you are

⁴¹ Another reason for the need to develop a spatial planning framework.

⁴² CLG select committee report NPPF 2 years on <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/communities-and-local-government-committee/inquiries/parliament-2010/national-planning-policy-framework/> see also House of Lords built environment committee report.

working at. Thus the plan needs to be built around the overall spatial vision and plan at the national level within which key principles are developed. These principles are then operationalised at the regional level within a series of strategic issues leaving the local and neighbourhood plans to be developed in response to more local needs and issues. This system is different from the current in one further respect. There is a two way flow of information to inform plans (thus keeping the accordion in tune). Currently we have the NPPF dictating too much detailed policy on the ground (for example if there is no 5 year land supply). This can all too easily conflict with the thrust of the local plan. My argument is that there is a need for regional plans to help tackle strategic issues that go beyond individual local authority borders. (housing, employment, climate change, biodiversity). This can be one by seconding planners from constituent authorities perhaps linking into a comprehensive combined authority layer (pragmatically but not ideally speaking) to create frameworks for local plans. The current spatial planning framework being prepared by Greater Manchester is kind of the output I have in mind⁴³.

4. Poor use of decision support tools

A lot of planning policy makes use of decision support tools⁴⁴. Here the family of impact assessments are particularly important⁴⁵. However, they are often viewed as hurdles to overcome or part of a box ticking culture. Recent government responses have also attacked them for always being wrong⁴⁶. This reflects a widespread corruption and misunderstanding of their usage and role in planning (ie through the assessment of plans, policies, programmes and projects PPPP). Ideally they should be used to help shape a PPPP process and preferred option. Through a systematic consideration of their impacts across a range of alternatives a preferred option can be selected. This evidence based policy assessment is a clear goal; ideally shaped through effective public participation process. The key is that the impact assessment runs alongside the PPP creation informing the stages. This artificial separation into a plan and SEA for example is counterproductive. It should be embedded as an integral part of a plan or planning application. Proportionality should then intervene to decide what kind of impact assessment is necessary.

⁴³ Greater Manchester Spatial Framework <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/GMSE>

⁴⁴ Decision support tools are tools that are able to use evidence and through their analytical processes provide outputs that enable choices to be made. They do not provide answers but rather assess impacts of particular alternatives. The choice is down to the user.

⁴⁵ Regulatory Impact Assessments, Strategic Environmental assessments, Environmental impact assessments

⁴⁶ Jacob Rees Mogg The World Tonight 6 December 2017 Radio 4

However, the reality of impact assessment use is often very different. In some cases they can be used politically to confirm and justify a policy or decision that has already been made. Here the illusion of a process corrupts their value and leads to policy based evidence. A good example of this is the way Eric Pickles undertook a SEA retrospectively some 2 years after the abolition of regional spatial strategies. The SEA was not worth the paper it was written on as the decision not only had already been made but the institutional structures had been abolished.

This leads to the second issue with impact assessments in that for many large projects massive SEA reports get produced sometimes involving millions of pieces of paper (eg. HS2) thus making it a nightmare for effective scrutiny within traditional consultation periods. Cynics might argue that the explosion of material is for that obfuscation. If we give word limits for our students for assignments why are there not word limits for SEA to prevent obfuscation through such voluminous reports.

Another key decision support tool is public participation. At present the planning system is predicated upon confrontation and objections. People are asked to make representations on a given PPPP. The current government approach to public participation seems to be to reduce/streamline it reflecting a view that the public are a nuisance and often frustrate plans or developments thus causing delay. This observation may be correct but the intervention to reduce it does not address the cause. It reflects a failed diagnostic which needs better public engagement at the outset of projects rather than the current trend to consult after decisions have already been made.

Many local authorities fail to invest in upfront consultations and engagement due to cost and resource issues and thus use the web as a cheap proxy. This is not participation but simply consulting. Such approaches are a false economy as this fails to account for the extra time and cost later on in the plan making stages when objections and protests start. I would argue that we need to build more deliberative and iterative processes into a given PPPP process. Here the local plan is absolutely key and it should be the linchpin of the authority documents given its statutory function for land use planning over the next 25 years. In our ESRC project participology⁴⁷ we developed a board game approach to participation to change the way the public engaged with issues. This proved very successful and has been used to help shape local and landscape scale plans in the South Downs, Adelaide and

⁴⁷ Participology <http://www.participology.com/>

Flanders⁴⁸. Work that has been done as part of the Dissington Garden village⁴⁹ proposal also shows how by using codesign a plan can be more effectively owned by the publics who might benefit from them. Here we need to champion and value the process and outcomes that can emerge from effective public participation exercises. In recognising that we need to understand where we currently fail in the way we engage⁵⁰.

Indeed from our assessment of practice we devised some core principles that might be useful to employ⁵¹ (Clarity, Inclusivity, Appropriateness, Timing, Informing, Bounding, Effective, Recording, So What). It is also worth recognising that public participation can actually build social capital and capacity for working with local communities and thus produce powerful outcomes. In research I undertook for the Scottish government⁵², I was able to unpack an exemplar project that had enabled local communities to co-develop and deliver landscape strategies for National Scenic Areas in Dumfries and Galloway. The reason it worked so well was that the 2001 foot and mouth outbreak had enabled the project officer to spend much more time working with these communities up front to get their views and build trust and to then work with them to co-design and thus own the strategy. In normal times she would have had numerous farmers to visit and by her own admission would not have achieved such positive outcomes. Ironically this lesson rarely gets used in practice now as many professionals see the public participation aspect as a hurdle to overcome or a box to tick with meagre budgets.

My view is that we fail to get the potential from decision support tools because of the poor way that they are being used. This is exacerbated by the disintegrated development described earlier. In so doing we neglect other decision support tools that can help deliver better outcomes; we fail to recognise the value of ecosystem assessments, social impact assessments for example. We need a more positive dialogue with publics. A recent workshop I attended in Edinburgh looked how to mainstream green infrastructure into social housing provision and delivery⁵³. This

⁴⁸ Participology case studies <http://www.participology.com/case-studies.php>

⁴⁹ Dissington Garden Village Enquiry by Design <http://www.dissingtonestate.co.uk/sites/all/themes/dissington/video/Dissington%20Garden%20Village-%20Enquiry%20By%20Design-SD.mp4> note the involvement of the Princes Foundation

⁵⁰ Scott A.J (2002) Assessing public perception of landscape: the LANDMAP experience, *Landscape Research*, 27 (3) 271-295

⁵¹ Core participatory principles <http://www.participology.com/citizen-principles.php>

⁵² Scott (2011) Beyond the conventional: meeting the challenges of landscape governance within the European Landscape Convention; *Journal of Environmental Management* 92 (10), 2754-2762

⁵³ Working across boundaries and professions to deliver transformational change: <https://mainstreaminggreeninfrastructure.com/blog/posts.php?SNH-socialhousing-greeninfrastructure>

in itself was a useful way of exploring a neglected interface in planning policy and practice but what was transformational for me was that the audience involved built and natural environment professionals from national, regional and local agencies , project officers, tenants, developers, building control; people that rarely talked to each other,. The managed “safe” space of this workshop enabled a really rich and productive dialogue to emerge with social learning on all sides that actually led to immediate positive actions. But it also enabled improved understandings of different viewpoints. This type of process worked well and in my mind all too often people congregate in their silos to advance their views without engaging with diverse and conflicting viewpoints. Indeed, they often dismiss opposing views. The use of safe spaces is lacking in the planning system as all too often the decision making process has already started and people have not been engaged earlier enough. The current preapplication process has potential to deliver this kind of outcome but doesn't in its present guise and particularly where payment is required. This needs reform.

This kind of thinking needs to be captured in the way PPPs are developed and publics are engaged. Using latest technology to show the results of decision support tools enables people to better understand the implications of particular courses of action and thus start to have meaningful discussions about the kind of places we want.

Conclusion

The planning system is not broke; rather it is currently being bound by the way policy and practice are disintegrated. We lack a comprehensive vision about the kind of planning we want set within a spatial planning framework. Planning is currently an activity that is manipulated into other agendas and practices ; cherry picked to support economic growth or housing . This lack of vision co developed across the built and natural environment professions is tragic. It allows planning to be abused and renders many planners impotent in the face of a hostile government, media and public.

Equally academics have retreated into their own silos and rarely put their head above the parapet to criticise the current direction of travel of planning. This is compounded by the lack of any coherent work to translate planning theory into effective practice and delivery.

We need to focus our efforts on improving the tools and systems we currently use. We need to create a new vocabulary around placemaking and crucially we need to put social and environmental justice back on to the core principles of planning which appear to have lost their way. Finally and perhaps crucially we need an inclusive planning system that is not owned by planners but becomes part and parcel of peoples lives.