Practising Governance: Multi-Party Decision Making in a Multi-Scalar Context

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Abstract

The much vaunted shift from 'government' to 'governance' in recent years involves (among other things) increased attention to the participation of 'stakeholders' in policy making, a trend affecting not only the actions of politicians but also the day-to-day practice of public servants. In my field, urban/regional planning, this attention has led to a 'communicative turn' in the academy; planning practice is increasingly seen as discursive rather than technical. This reframing leads to some significant tensions: between interactive processes and traditional forms of rationalist legitimacy; and between local aspirations and strategic concerns at other geo-political scales. In this paper, I examine how these tensions were negotiated in one case of participatory planning, a meeting of a committee charged with recommending strategies to solve a perceived shortage of industrial land in a remote Australian town. Using discourse-analytical methods derived from systemic functional linguistics, I describe the committee's construction of a 'common interest' between the local and state levels, placing the discursive practices underlying this construction in a context of multi-scalar governance and power relations.

1. Introduction

1.1 The shift to 'governance'

Over the last two decades, 'governance' has become a central theme, not only in the social and political sciences but also among policy institutions at all levels. While 'notoriously slippery' (Pierre and Peters 2000: 7), the word refers generally to changes in the ways that the business of government – public services, infrastructure, policy – is delivered: a shift from hierarchical, rules-based, territorially bound systems to looser multi-party arrangements which can transcend and/or blur traditional boundaries between the state and civil society, and also between different levels or scales of jurisdiction.

The field of governance theory is vast and intersects with a wide range of social science disciplines including sociology, political science, economics, public administration, development studies, and more (see Berger 2003; Stoker 1998; Leubolt 2007). It is also highly contentious: new governance arrangements – often imposed by powerful, non-democratic institutions on

dependent states – interact in complex ways with related trends such as public sector funding cuts, distancing of government from public service delivery, assumption of market rationality as the guardian of efficiency, citizen participation, responsiveness to 'customer' demands, and the move to 'outcomes-driven' public sector management (see Osborne and Gaebler 1992), trends which create peculiar ideological and practical tensions between (representative and participatory) democratic, bureaucratic and market norms (Swyngedouw 2005). However, a generally agreed-upon empirical feature of the shift from 'government' to 'governance' is that the need to build and sustain policy and service delivery networks places an increased emphasis on *interactivity*. Interactivity, often structured around 'projects' rather than procedure, has been posited by organisation theorists as the defining characteristic of a possible 'post-bureaucratic' ideal type (Heckscher 1994, Iedema 2003).

This article is concerned with this interactivity as a transformation in the work practices of public servants, who are often now expected to engage in almost constant dialogue, team work, 'networking', shared vision building and so on, not only among themselves but with a range of actors from other realms of practice (business, civil society, other levels of government). These 'boundary encounters' (Wenger 1998) constitute new spaces of struggle, in which actors must discursively perform and (re)negotiate power relations, interests and professional identity (Iedema and Scheeres 2003). The texts they generate instantiate this struggle as part of the changing face of the state, and provide an interesting object for analytical attention.

1.2 Contextualising governance discourse

A sociological analysis of texts demands attention to context, specifically to the social practices and broader institutions in which those texts are situated (Fairclough 1992, 2003). The theoretical framework for the analysis which follows draws on systemic functional linguistics (SFL), which traditionally characterises context in terms of register and genre (Eggins 1994, Halliday 1978, Halliday and Hasan 1985, Martin 1997). Register is seen as an immediate 'context of situation', constituted by field, tenor and mode, which in turn are projections of the systemic functional grammar's (SFG's) three metafunctions: respectively ideational, interpersonal and textual. Genre represents a 'context of culture', and is the textual aspect of social action (Martin 1985).

This framework is a useful starting point; however, the culture and situation of governance texts need to be understood in terms of the current transformations, as dynamic and unstable, as hybridising different institutions and practices brought into contact with one another by the new arrangements. As Pierre and Peters (2000) point out, the new governance arrangements – often characterised as 'flat', self-organising or networked structures (Rhodes 1996) – have not displaced traditional hierarchies, but interact closely with them. Likewise the communicative processes of power-sharing and accountability associated with 'governance' are mixed up with traditional technical and regulatory procedures. Thus, tensions can arise from such 'hybridisation' (Fairclough 1989, 1992) in at least two dimensions: the risk to which conventional bureaucratic practices and their associated rationalities are put by potentially conflicting modes and norms; and the

upsetting of long-established jurisdictional scales as associations are established and powers exchanged across different levels of government.

The shift to governance involves the establishment of fora for multi-party decision making, whether these are associated with formal partnerships, informal networks or citizen participation (see Skelcher et al. 1996). These fora rarely have the permanence or generality construed by traditional (institutionalised, procedural) modes of public decision making; they are more likely to be temporary groupings of people for particular purposes. As those people may come from any number of realms, including the infinite variety represented by the 'citizen' or the 'consumer' (Burns 2000), they may each frame their interactions differently; that is, they may have conflicting understandings of the genre (what is a 'meeting', exactly?). In addition, for each participant any event or meeting in which they participate represents a stage in an idiosyncratic intertextual/genre chain (Fairclough 2003); thus, they may have quite different ideas about what they are doing and where they are going. These different framings compete for recognition, if not for dominance. Moreover, those managing the decision-making process (usually public servants) often need to explain the principles and (administrative and material) technologies that constrain it, making explicit and, thus, opening to challenge generic conventions that are normally tacit and unquestioned.

In the second dimension, project-based governance recognises multiple loci of accountability for managing broadly defined issues. This means that multiple levels of governance may be engaged in ways that downplay traditional 'general-purpose' hierarchies in favour of task-based responsibilities (Marks and Hooghes 2004). Thus, it makes sense to contextualise governance in terms of scale, implying a space of socio-political action (Swyngedouw 2000), rather than level, implying an inflexible hierarchy (Leubolt, Novy and Beinstein 2007, Neuman 2007). Governance is multi-scalar not only because it involves representatives of various different jurisdictional scales in its projects, but also because it is influenced by institutions and political/economic events which operate across local, regional, state and national borders. In this context, power relations, interests and limiting factors are ambiguous and contestable.

In the following case study, I focus on how such ambiguities and tensions play out in institutionally constrained talk between representatives of civil society and of different levels of government. The immediate context for this talk is a committee established to address a complicated and (locally) controversial land use planning issue in regional Australia by bringing together representatives of relevant local and state public sector agencies with a group of stakeholders who would likely be affected by any resulting action. To enable cooperation, there is a need to negotiate both a shared substantive interest, or enterprise, and a shared set of legitimising norms.

2. *The Harbourtown Industry Committee*

2.1 Background

The case study is a 'stakeholder' committee which worked from 2000 to 2005 in a town called, here, 'Harbourtown'.[1] The catalyst for this case was a

political dispute that arose when the local government authority, the 'Shire of Harbourtown and Environs (SOHE)', tried to change their town plan to make residential dwellings a not-permitted use in their industrial zone, 'Lumbervale' (Figure 1). Residents of Lumbervale had been upset about this proposal, to say the least, and, after an intense period of lobbying, negotiated an agreement with SOHE Council that included (*inter alia*) the establishment of a 'Harbourtown Industry Committee (HIC)' to look at the medium–long term future of industry planning in the municipality. HIC's membership included representatives from SOHE staff and Council, from the 'Lumbervale Action Group (LAG)', and from State government. The latter included the manager of the Harbourtown Port, which shared a boundary with the Lumbervale industrial zone and constituted the Shire's major economic asset. The early phases of the committee's life were characterised by considerable mistrust and conflict between LAG representatives, SOHE and the port manager, who saw Lumbervale as a buffer area between the port and the suburbs, and who therefore also wished to see residential use of the area phased out.

Figure 1: Indicative map of Harbourtown
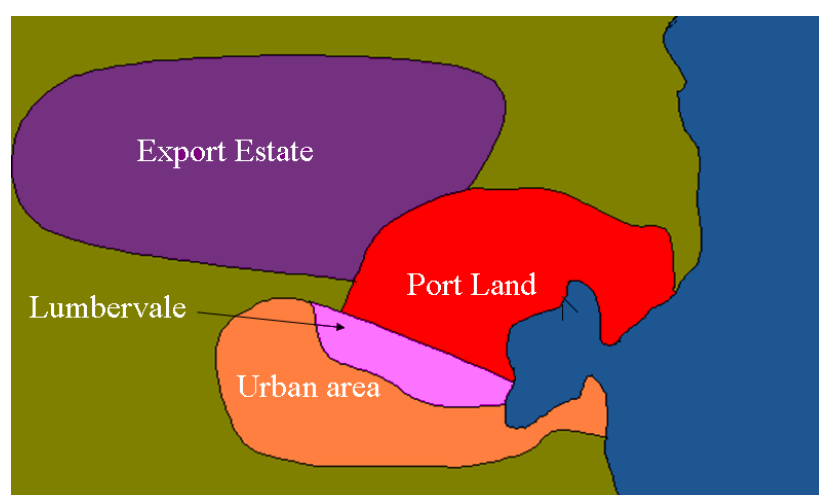
Because the land-use conflicts in Lumbervale were seen to limit the industries that could establish there, a key part of HIC's mandate was to work together to identify and recommend other locations to be developed for various types of industrial use in and around Harbourtown. The meeting discussed below – the committee's sixth – took place after they had first formulated a list of potential and preferred sites, including 'Export Estate' (an area designated by the State for future port-related industries) for general industry. Recognising that the release of the land would need to be progressed by State government departments not already present, the committee decided to invite the 'Department of Industry' to this meeting, in order to gain their support and devise a way forward.

This is an unusual thing to do. Normally, negotiating with the necessary departments is considered part of the *implementation* of recommendations, which is seen as the responsibility of the project managers and financial partners, not of a participatory planning body. The role of the LAG representatives was thus underdetermined by this context. Moreover,

standard bureaucratic practice is to first gain a decision at the political level (in this case, endorsement of the preferred sites by SOHE Council) before implementation. HIC, however, had a strong orientation to inclusiveness – a large part of its *raison d'être* was to show good faith to both LAG and the port management in a conflict situation. The process so far had achieved a considerable amount in terms of mutual learning and of mending relationships, and members wished to continue to be involved in all aspects of the process. The sixth meeting therefore represents a kind of hybrid genre in which participatory governance and traditional bureaucratic institutions are both affecting the discourse.

2.2 Cast of characters

In the transcript fragments reproduced in this paper, speakers are referred to in code. For ease of reference, local government officers are given names beginning with 'L', state government officers with 'S'. LAG members – all small business proprietors – have names beginning with 'B'.

Present are:

- Len – the Chief Executive Officer of SOHE

- Lance – the Town Planner

- Belinda – LAG member

- Barbara – LAG member

- Barry – LAG member

- Sam – the Port Manager

- Stan – Regional Planning Officer for the State Department of Planning (DOP)

- Scott – Regional Officer for the Department of industry (DOI) Scott is not a member of the committee.

- Chris – a planning consultant attending the meeting as part of some work for SOHE. Chris is not a member.

Absent from this meeting are:

- Sue Smith – recently relocated Planning Officer for DOP, whom Stan is replacing

- Steve – Regional Development Officer for the State's relevant Regional Development Authority

- Sean – Regional Environmental Officer for the State Department of Environment

Also referred to in the transcripts is:

- Stuart Simons – a senior manager at the Department of Industry

2.3 A multi-scalar context?

The membership of HIC thus represented interests at the local and regional scales of governance (as defined by jurisdictional boundaries). However, influences on the committee's decisions extended across further scales.

Although HIC was nominally an equal partnership between the local and state levels, it is still the case that public servants, in particular, work within institutionally defined hierarchies. All the 'regional' players on HIC actually worked for the State government; their jobs were as much to implement State policy within the region as to represent the region's interests. Local government has no constitutional role in Australia and receives its authority from the State. And, although the States generally have responsibility for land and urban infrastructure, State legislation/policy is in most matters subordinate to Federal legislation/policy. Thus, 'absent' actors – in particular, state and national governments, policies and statutes – constrained the committee's decisions in well defined ways.

In addition, there were many less formally influential actors. Most obviously, both the port and the LAG representatives were explicitly mindful of their business interests. The port's customers include, primarily, export businesses operating at the national level, mostly controlled by multinational corporations. Lumbervale caters for a more local clientele, though in some cases (such as transport and fabrication companies) also for regional, state or national customers. Of course, influences on members may also include their entire social networks (Figure 2).

It is also clear that the committee's discussion draws on discourses associated with a range of 'big picture' institutions which cut across all of these scales: for example land markets; finance; industrial structure and change; trade relations; welfare regimes; Common Law; competitiveness; privatisation/ corporatisation; labour relations; family structure. These institutions affect the substantive content of the debate in various, more or less significant ways.

Thus, the substantive and political/governance contexts – approximating Halliday's field and tenor – for HIC's discourse involves multiple scales in interactions which are not simple exchange. Rather, a complex mix of relations – hierarchical and non-hierarchical, personal and institutional, intertextual and intersubjective – frames the construction of a shared enterprise and shared norms of legitimacy.

Figure 2: Membership/guests (in black) and external influences (in grey) on HIC includes actors at multiple scales

Local	Regional	State	National	International
Local Policy		State Policy	National policy	International Agreements
Councillors		State Government	Federal Government	
SOHE officers	Regional Development Officer	RDA + Minister		
	RDA Board			
	Regional Planning Officer	DOP + Minister		
	Regional Environmental Officer	DOE + Minister		
	Regional Industry Officer	DOI + Minister		
Port manager		Department of Transport + Minister	Port customers	
		Consultant		
Residents (business proprietors)				
	Lumbervale businesses' customers			
	Family, friends, associates etc			

3. Negotiating Interests and Rationalities

3.1 Power and context in oral discourse

A committee meeting is a form of naturally occurring oral discourse, albeit one whose cultural context includes systematic intertextual links to various written genres (an agenda, minutes, reports and so on – see Fairclough [2003] on genre chains). Critical analysis of such texts is relatively rare. Although naturally occurring talk – particularly in work contexts – is the central object for the field of Conversation Analysis (Boden and Zimmerman 1991; Drew and Heritage 1992), this tradition explicitly disembeds such data from any assumed background institutions, treating context as that which is demonstrably relevant to the speakers themselves (Schegloff 1997). On the other hand, few researchers in the field of Critical Discourse Analysis – for which background is crucial – have paid much attention to extended oral texts. The most common exceptions have been in the areas of classroom discourse (e.g. Baxter 2002, Bergvall and Remlinger 1996, Christie 2002, Hanrahan 2005) and television/radio talk (e.g. Wodak and Vetter 1999; *JOP* 2007); however these genres are constrained by conventions rather different

from those of the planning meeting which provides the data below. Moreover, authors in the critical tradition have tended to focus on specific issues of structural or cultural inequality (gender, ethnicity, etc.) rather than on the more general dynamics of context.

My starting point is provided by two exceptions to this tendency. In the 1980s-90s, Suzanne Eggins (1990) showed that even casual conversation does important cultural work, for instance by reinforcing conventional mores, solidarity ties and structural inequalities. The analytical resources for this research combined elements of conversation analysis with tools from SFG (Eggins and Slade 1997), and included a framework for interpreting the exchange structure of dialogue, with particular attention to how power and solidarity relations (crucial aspects of tenor) are construed at the level of discourse semantics (that is, within the text, rather than the clause). Eggins' and Slade's exchange system posits a complex range of possible basic moves (1997: 169-226) of which any person's turn can be made up of one or more. Tenor redounds with the expression of moves: as the following fragments illustrate, the use of 'grammatical metaphor' (Halliday 1985: esp. 354-65) to allow for reframing of the speaker's intent may indicate asymmetrical power relations; power and solidarity are also construed in speakers' choices to respond with supporting or confronting moves.

Another useful contribution is Rick Iedema's work on institutional discourse, starting with a study of a planning committee for a mental hospital in Sydney (Iedema 1997), whose object of analysis was a series of texts generated during an extended project. Also drawing on SFG, Iedema showed how, in such institutional contexts, diffuse, vague and fragmented meanings – expressed as talk – can be drawn together and fixed in more durable semiotic forms through a process of morphogenesis (as when the planner summarised preceding discussion) and resemiotisation (translation into writing for the minutes, for example). In addition, Iedema identified influences on the committee members in terms of diverse intertexts (or, rather, interdiscourses) which formed part of a slightly different context of culture for each participant.

Like those of both Eggins and Iedema, my analysis uses complexes of tools from SFG, rather than focussing on a single metafunction or lexicogrammatical resource, in an attempt to get at the messy, tangled nature of the meaning making and interdiscursive ties in extended dialogue. The following discussion therefore refers to transitivity, appraisal and theme (at the clause level) as well as to exchange structure and morphogenesis.

3.2 'This town needs to attract more industry': Making a shared enterprise

HIC's sixth meeting began in earnest with a lengthy monologue by the Chair, Len, to introduce Scott, their visitor from the Department of Industry, to the background to the committee's decisions so far, as a preamble to their request for assistance in releasing Export Estate for general industry. The following fragments of transcript are from the phase of talk immediately following Scott's reply.

3.2.1 Models of power

Fragment 1:[2]

1.	Scott:	… Cos I think that is very important to ah, make sure that they're not constrained : um, in any way from perhaps stopping industries and {port facilities.
2.	Len:	{Yeh! And that, that's a very important point. And, and certainly Sue Smith ah, has done a, a lot of work in ah, in ah, in assessing those sorts of issues. And of course Sue was intimately involved in, in the preparation of the um, ah, Harbourtown Planning Study, which was done a few years ago and which, which really gave a broad brush ah, concept of, of where those industry development and infrastructure corridor needs might be.

Fragment 2:

1.	Scott:	{Um, ju' --
2.	Belinda:	{Can I just say that I think – as Len said – as a Council, and as a community, I think we're sort of ahead of you, and what we're saying is, we're looking further ahead. At this point in time we can see what we need as a community – um, like as in a town-overall view – and that we're looking for progress for it. Like we're waiting for sort of, like those sorts of things to happen, … so that we can sort of move forward. And so I think that's probably where we're at!

In these two fragments, Len and Belinda are enacting very different power relations. They are making essentially the same point, that is, that Scott's point is redundant because the committee has already considered it – a rebound, a confronting move, in Eggins' and Slade's terms. However, Len's rebound is transformed into a (supportive) agreement, in which he uses emphatic positive valuation regarding Scott's statement (*'a very important point'*). Then the actor given credit for having worked on *'these issues'* is not 'we' but Scott's State-level colleague, Sue Smith. The deference Len is displaying here is ambiguous. Scott holds power within this negotiation because he represents the DOI, whose support is crucial to implementing HIC's decisions, rather than as a representative of the State as such. However, unlike Sue Smith, whose (ex-)membership of HIC associates her with the local scale (note Len's familiar reference to her), Scott is seen as – in DOI's own discourse – concerned with strategic priorities rather than the interests of Harbourtown (c.f. Gallent 2008). To protect the negotiation, then, Len consistently avoids explicit confronting moves directed to Scott (see MacCallum 2007, pp. 154-58).

Belinda, on the other hand, makes no attempt to disguise her confronting move. She makes her interruption of Scott explicit (*'Can I just say'*); she uses explicit appraisal placing HIC *'ahead'* of the State; and employs first and second person pronouns (*'we'* and *'you'*) rather than distancing the agency. So Belinda has not shown deference to Scott's status as the decision maker in a sensitive negotiation. She treats him as an equal partner in conversation, and assumes some kind of congruence of values and interests between *'a Council, and … a community'* and the State, which in various aspects is responsible for making *'those sorts of things … happen'*.

3.2.2 A common interest …

In the context of a bureaucratic negotiation, Belinda's directness is face-threatening (Goffman 1959, Sarangi and Slembrouck 1996). Her assumption

that the DOI is interested in progressing HIC's agenda exposes Scott to the possible need to make a confronting denial. During this meeting, such moves are frequently interrupted by public servants Len and Sam. Fragment 3 immediately follows Fragment 2, and shows how Len mitigates Belinda's move by (ideationally) constructing the congruence of interest that she had (interpersonally) expressed through appraisal.

In the above fragment, both Len and Belinda attempt to persuade Scott that the release of Export Estate is in the State's interest. Again, they do this in very different ways, this time presenting rather different – and possibly contradictory – arguments: Len's concerns the open availability of land; Belinda's the efficiency of its use. However, both draw on discourses that posit attracting industrial investment as an unquestionable 'good'. In line 12 Belinda – speaking of local needs (it appears to be the exclusive *'we'* she is using) – makes a direct connection between *'going backwards'* and not *'attract[ing] more industry'* (paraphrased by Barbara as *'passing us by'*).

This equation of progress with attracting external private investment is a key axiom (perhaps *the* key axiom) underlying the competitiveness discourse invoked more explicitly by Len. His method of development (Martin 1992: 434-48) is striking, with a macro-theme in line 2 (*'We … need to look at it on a … statewide basis too'*) being recalled in an impressively textured morphogenetic coda to the phase (line 20). His elaboration of this macro-theme shifts the thematic focus from the exclusive local 'we' (line 2, *'we're not just competing with … down the road'*) to a 'we' that could be considered inclusive of the State (lines 4, 6, *'we're competing with … Australia and … the world'*). Modality and appraisal are missing from this statement, with the exception of *'in many cases'*; the 'fact' of national/international competition is presented as incontestable. And, indeed, it is uncontested here, in spite of its being a very dubious claim to make about general industry (whose uses include haulage, panel beating, food processing, and so on).

Fragment 3:

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1.  Belinda: {Cos --

2.  Len:    {We, we we really do need to look at it on a, on a statewide basis too! Because we, er
            y'know we're n, we're not just competing with, with [town] down the road ah,
            {for the establishment of some of these plants;

3.  Belinda: {No.

4.  Len:    we're competing with other sites in, within Australia, {and,
5.  Scott:                                                           {Mm.

6.  Len:    and in many cases ah, in other sites within the ah, within the, the world!

7.  Scott:  Mm.

8.  Len:    And ah, I'm told that, that, that [state] er, y'know, a proponent, proponents that come to us
            will, will go to [state], or go elsewhere in many cases …. And, and [state] has got a set up
            whereby in essence they say: "here is the ah, the land …." We're a long way from ah,
            {from achieving that!  And we really do need to do a lot of work on that,

9.  Belinda: {Mm.

10. Len:    {if we're going to be ah, remotely competitive ah,  {for these proponents  {of any size.
11. Scott:  {Yeh,                                                {Mm.                  {Yeh.

12. Belinda: This town needs to attract more industry! I mean it's, it's going backwards at the moment,
            because we can't provide --

13. Barbara: And they're passing us by!

14. Belinda: Um, these sorts of oppor {tunities! And I think it's sort of not just from our point of view -
15. Scott:                           {Mm,

16. Belinda: it's no good having a great tract of land there that's earmarked for something um, that
            effectively can't be used unless you've got a big proponent
            {that's possibly not in the wings at the moment.
17. Scott:  {Mm,

…

18. Belinda: And,  {and, and so, [:]  {but there were,              {No!  {It's --
19. Scott:        {Mm.            {                               {Mm, {No.
20. Len:                                {So it's not just a Harbourtown is {sue!  {It's, it's, it's, it really is
            {a state issue.  {And the state needs to consider it  {seriously!
21. Barry:  {Yeh,           {                                     {
22. Scott:                  {Yeh.                                 {Well, …
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Competitiveness, like 'globalisation' (Hay and Marsh 2000; Brenner et al. 2003), is a hegemonic discourse in liberal societies: an 'economic imaginary' (Jessop 2004) 'normalized as a regime of truth in the remaking of capitalism' (Sum 2005: n.p.). It circulates globally via policy statements, corporate literature, scholarly books and articles, negotiations, promotional material and so on in a self-reinforcing discursive chain (Fairclough 2003) which permeates almost every area of public policy – not only economic policy but also that which concerns the environment, welfare, labour relations, cultural heritage, and many others (de Souza and Novy 2007, Krugman 1994). That is, it is a central underlying justification for the neo-liberal project. Although other discourses have more recently captured the economic development imagination – notably 'innovation' and 'the knowledge society' – competitiveness is still the 'last word' in, for example, the vision statement of

the Australian Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research:

> The Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research strives as a key priority to encourage the sustainable growth of Australian industries by developing a national innovation system that drives knowledge creation, cutting edge science and research, international competitiveness and greater productivity. The Department is committed to developing policies and delivering programs, in partnership with stakeholders, to provide lasting economic benefits ensuring Australia's competitive future. (<http://www.innovation.gov.au>)

Statements such as Len's, then, are difficult to challenge on ideological grounds. His further elaboration (line 8) adds weight to his claim by raising the dangerous spectre of another Australian state which is more competitive than 'we'. Notwithstanding Len's reference to competition with *'other sites … within the world'*, the national interest is not at issue here. The very notion of competitiveness, the construction of a group's political identity as 'competitors' of the 'other' (Sum 2000), may preclude such a view – unless, of course, the national scale were to be represented at the table.

3.2.3 … and a common enemy

At all of HIC's meetings, a recurring theme was the invocation of higher levels of government as constraints or barriers to Harbourtown's agenda. Frequently, this meant the State itself, in the form of those departments (such as DOI) with no local or regional presence; Belinda's turn in Fragment 2 draws directly on earlier discussions to this effect. In this sixth meeting, with DOI present, criticism of the State was consistently suppressed – interrupted, qualified, reframed – by the public servants (as in Fragment 3).

However, the Federal level, in at least one aspect, was invoked as a problem. In the following fragments, Scott and Len discuss the State's obligation under the Commonwealth *Native Title Act 1993* to negotiate changes in land use (including acquisition of previously unallocated land) with any claimants to traditional ownership of that land.

In these Fragments (see lines 1 of both), Native Title is framed as an *'issue'* that needs to be *'dealt with'* or *'resolve[d]'*, an instance of 'performative' negative appraisal associated with institutional functionality rather than 'authentic' emotion (Iedema and Grant 2004).

Fragment 4:

1.	Scott:	… that's one of the issues that still has to be dealt with, is the Native Title [.] and the acquisition of land by government. …. Um, so until that happens as well, until that process is concluded, ah, I think ah, I can say that um, [department] at the moment [.] can only do so much, um, and have to hold off until that process {is finalised.
2.	Len:	{Mm. Now that, that, the, specifically the ah, the Native Title ah, issue and the Native Title process. [.] My understanding is that that's being progressed at the moment.
3.	Scott:	Mm.
4.	Len:	Ah, ah, {is there an opportunity --
5.	Sam:	{It's very, very slow, Len. I --
6.	Len:	Very slow! Is there an opportunity for us to ah, … from Council's point of view, to, to assist in that, in that process? Being that, y'know we're on the {ground here we can,
7.	Scott:	{Mm. Mm.
8.	Len:	we obviously have a relationship with the local people.
9.	Scott:	Mm.
10.	Len:	Ah, and ah we may well be able to ah, to expedite that. Where ah, doing it from [city] is sometimes ah, quite ah challenging! A' and we've had this comment from [private] companies as well.
11.	Scott:	{Yes. {Ah, -- {Mm.
12.	Barbara:	{Challenging! {[laughs]
13.	Len:	{Ah so it's, it's not just, {it's {not just the state government.

Fragment 5:

1.	Scott:	… So it'd be worthwhile [.] ah in raising that [.] ah, opportunity for ah, assistance. …. I know that current government policy is to resolve the Native Title issues as quickly as possible, because I think it's been recognised at a high level that it is um, stalling [.] development [.] um, in regional areas. [. .] Not only from industry point of view, but also from the expansion of, {of residential areas.
2.	Len:	{Ah. Well! In even, even looking at, y'know, establishing things like cinema complexes!
3.	Scott:	Mm.
4.	Len:	Y'know [.] when you start telling people that ah, well you've a couple of years to, to go through a process that's likely to be lengthy and, and, and complex, {and ah, and expensive!
5.	Scott:	{Mm.
6.	Len:	They go elsewhere!
7.	Scott:	Unfortunately they do. [.] S, we've got the same with overseas ah, customers as well. It is ah very hard [.] to convince people that y'know, some of the processes can be dealt with quickly when, they look at the way, [.] the frustration that government has with ah, with the process itself.

In Fragment 4 (lines 10 and 13) Len, in typical face-protecting style, mitigates the criticism implied by his offer of assistance by deliberately drawing blame away from the State for the *'very slow'* (lines 5-6) progress of the negotiations.

This lays the groundwork for the creation of a monster a few minutes later. In Fragment 5, the 'issue' is elaborated cooperatively by Len and Scott: Native Title requirements are *'stalling development'* (lines 1-2), they constitute a process that's *'lengthy and ... complex and ... expensive'* (line 4), unfortunate and frustrating (line 7). As in fragment 3, factual claims about cinema developers and overseas 'customers' – note the discursive 'corporatisation' of the State – *'go[ing] elsewhere'* are accepted at face value. The co-framing of Native Title as a problem is given meaning by its intertextual embedding in the unquestionable discourse of competitiveness.

At the same time, the existence of the 'problem' is, in part, a result of the Federal system's hierarchy of government. Commonwealth-State relations over introduction and implementation of Native Title legislation have been fraught, to say the least, played out in both the political and legal arenas and in most cases decisively subordinating State powers to Federal legislation (see Brennan 1998, Cowlishaw 1995, Nettheim 2003). The monster is an aspect of the Commonwealth's power over the States. That the hierarchy is multi-scalar is also evident here, as HIC's State public servants (Sam and Sue Smith) had stated at the first meeting that Native Title negotiations were the responsibility of the State and developers, and that local government should leave them alone. Shortly after Fragment 5:

Fragment 6:

> Sam: ... ... Now I, I, y'know I, as a - cos I'm ah, representing the port here - I won't support Len's comments. Ah, they're not the ah, um to l, negotiate. That might be Council's position, but I, as a member of this group, I'm not putting my name to that ah particular proposal. But I do believe there's an opportunity for the state government to pursue ah, more vigorously the ou' an outcome to this, this whole claim in this area. ...

3.3 'Then you get a technical working group': Governance norms

The next set of fragments comes from very much later in the meeting. By now, Scott's support, though not that of DOI's management, is assumed and in the background; the committee is discussing what to do next. As they do, there emerges a complex interplay between technocracy, stakeholder participation and informal policy networks. The performance of these sometimes conflicting modes of governance creates tension between HIC's members.

3.3.1 Advancing it

The phase from which the next two fragments come from follows a discussion on the need to act quickly, in which Belinda, Barbara and Barry express (authentic) impatience with the slowness of the decision making process so far. During that discussion it was agreed that there should be some ongoing work on the industrial estates rather than waiting for each slow step of the statutory process of land release (including Native Title negotiations) and rezoning. In particular, the DOI could begin the process of planning the estates' subdivision, generic use pattern and infrastructure.

Fragment 7:

1.	Len:	Cos from, from Council's point of view we ah, we're obviously very keen to advance it. … Ah, but what we need to do, I suppose, is to perhaps work with {DOI to, to really work up {ah, a program, {[.] whereby whatever we do is
2.	Scott:	{Mm hm, {Mm. {Mm.
3.	Len:	{going to be compatible and helpful {[.] {to ah, to the DOI's {side of it.
4.	Scott:	{Mm. {Yeh. { {
5.	Belinda:	{Yeh! {Otherwise we've only been {[inaudible]
6.	Scott:	{Perhaps maybe, I might suggest, ah Mister Chairman, that um, DOI um, I'd, I will try and, and get some high-level support within my department to ah sit down with Council and prepare a structure plan, for um, presentation to this [committee], um, if not next meeting but the meeting after?
7.	Belinda:	Mm. Sounds good!

Fragment 8:

1.	Scott:	Um, if I get the right level of support um, we certainly could um, prepare, well, some ah, structure plans. And if you got resources to put them into drawings, and do some drafting - um, Chris I'm sure could do - um, we'd be certainly um, able to assist from that point of view! Um --
2.	Len:	Would a quiet word with the minister help?
3.	Scott:	[laughs] Wouldn't go astray!
4.	Len:	We can raise that.

The talk is entirely supportive, marked by frequent agreements, positive appraisal (*'very keen', compatible and helpful', 'sounds good'*) and references to future cooperation. The support of LAG members – by their own accounts during later interviews – reflected their relief and pleasure that the conversation had finally shifted from possibilities to the practicalities of 'making it happen'. However, the scene is being set for the emergence of a new tension: these future activities are to be undertaken by Council, the DOI, and perhaps the consultant. The LAG stakeholders are not included as participants, except passively as part of '*this [committee]*' (Fragment 7 line 6). That is, what HIC itself frames as a participatory model of governance is being reframed as an inter-governmental policy network. In Fragment 8, Len goes further, invoking his informal personal networks (*'a quiet word with the minister'*) as a means to achievement. Such informal networks are said to be a feature of contemporary governance, realising a relaxation (a 'flattening') of traditional hierarchies.   In Len's case, though, the productive network relations he draws upon are consistently between elite actors (the minister here, Stuart Simons later in Fragment 12); moreover, those actors' status comes from the normal hierarchy of traditional government, in which seniority/rank construes a range of cultural/social capitals (Bourdieu 1984, 1994) including various forms of institutional literacy (Iedema 1998) and distance from the minister. Hierarchy in this network model, while reshaped and less visible in terms of procedure, is still very much present (cf. González 2008).

3.3.2 Enrolment

Fragment 9:

1.	Len:	And if ah, if you get a positive response from ah, from your senior people in DOI, ah, how would we see this progressing? I mean obviously there would need to be some, y'know, a little working group, {and ah, and a,
2.	Scott:	{Mm hm,
3.	Len:	a general agreement on ah, on how we would tackle it, {first up.
4.	Scott:	{Mm hm,
5.	Len:	Ah, is this working group the appropriate one, or do we need a subset of this to ah, for further ah, input of people like Chris, as a consultant, and maybe some of the DOP people as well as ah, DOI people? {Maybe based in [city]? To get, to have some ah, some people get input there.
6.	Scott:	{Mm.
7.	Scott:	I think we could certainly um, ah, between the Council and DOP and DOI, ah sit down and work through what needs to be done, and report on progress to the working group!
8.	Lance:	Yes.
9.	Barbara:	Mm hm.
10.	Belinda:	Mm hm.
11.	Len:	And [HIC] would, would be almost the steering committee!
12.	Scott:	Yes.
13.	Len:	Then. Providing the oversight.
14.	Scott:	Mm. Mm, mm.
15.	Len:	Then you get a technical working group, which ah, which, which'd which, and we a, we agree {to the objectives!
16.	Scott:	{Mm.
17.	Len:	What we're trying to achieve would be a general agreement between the parties.
18.	Scott:	Mm.
19.	Len:	Ah, and then there would ah, perhaps we'd have a smaller {working group,
20.	Scott:	{Mm.
21.	Len:	{of mainly technical people! Y'know, to {do the ah, flesh it out!
22.	Scott:	{Does the details! {I think between, well, two town planners and an engineer I think we can work something out.

Fragment 9 is an extended suggestion (in exchange terms, a demand) by Len, with some support from Scott, that a technical working group be established to do the planning for the estates. Len's strategies indicate caution: he anticipates the suggestion with a statement that, as a general procedural structure, it is self-evident (line 1, *'obviously there would need to be …'*); he reframes the demand as a request for opinion (line 5), he reduces the force of the detail through both graduation (line 11, *'almost'*) and modalisation (line 5, *'maybe'*, line 19, *'perhaps'*). Moreover, these strategies are associated with moves that refer to the technical working group and not with the other part of his suggestion, that there be agreement on the objectives first (lines 15, 17).

This caution suggests an understanding that the move is threatening, that it may not be accepted by all HIC members. There is good reason for this. The demand is for a radical reframing of HIC's responsibilities, a shift, as Osborne and Gaebler (1992) might have it, from a 'rowing' role to 'steering' one (cf. line 11). And, while the latter role may be conferred with some institutional authority, HIC's members understand that the former holds control over the details of the planning process. Len is well aware of the conflict and mistrust underlying HIC's creation, and that that conflict concerned planning decisions recommended by technical experts – including, in particular, Chris (see line 5). This may explain another framing shift that Len appears to be enacting: the objectives (line 15), *'what we're trying to achieve'* (line 17), are expressed not as the result of working together, but in contractual terms as *'agreement between the parties'*, that is, as the outcome of (interest-based) negotiation, not of (understanding-oriented) dialogue or (persuasive) debate (Forester 2007, 2008).

This phase, therefore, instantiates significant tensions. Len's demand is to return from a (nominally) discursive, inclusive mode of knowledge creation to a technocratic, expert-driven one governed by a negotiated agreement, a model that Scott, in acquiescing to the demand (lines 7, 22) also appears to accept as 'natural'. In response, the LAG representatives must work hard to maintain their relevance.

3.3.3 Objectives …

Fragments 10-12, which follow the fragment above, represent a continuous stream of talk in which successive phases serve progressively to abstract and deactivate HIC's involvement in the technical group's proposed work.

In Fragment 10, Belinda takes up the suggestion of *'additional discussion'* (framed by Chris as guidance for the technical group, line 1) and mobilises it for slightly different purposes: to ensure HIC's continuing relevance, to speed the process up, and to *'add … weight'* (line 12) to the argument for DOI's support. Scott and Lance, the two junior public servants, cooperate with her to develop these themes as justification for the suggestion. This is chaotic talk, more like casual conversation than a chaired committee meeting. They constantly interrupt and talk over each other, but always with supporting moves – repetitions, agreements, positive elaborations and enhancements – jointly constructing both an ideational consensus and interpersonal solidarity (cf. Eggins and Slade 1997: 276-78 on gossip). As this consensus is to do something – *'write a set of objectives'* (line 3) – it sets up an expectation of immediate further action.

Fragment 10:

1.	Chris:	I certainly think there may need to be some additional discussion about clearly defined ah, the tasks to be undertaken by that working group, or that steering committee. …. So we perhaps we {just need to sort of clear all of that {out of the way.
2.	Scott:	{Yeh. {
3.	Belinda:	{So do we, sit down and write a set of objectives, and set, send you away with, not only do you find out whether you've got support from {the upper levels, but if you have got,
4.	Lance:	{Mm hm, the ones who get some work?
5.	Belinda:	If you get the yes, then this {is the next {level? Straight away?
6.	Scott:	{Yes. {The next step. Yeh. Yeh. Yeh. Don't {have to wait to come back here and say: "yes, I've got support",
7.	Belinda:	{Is that alright?
8.	Scott:	and {then, mm. {No, no. I --
9.	Belinda:	{And then we wait another {two months? {
10.	Barry:	{And give you {[inaudible] {
11.	Lance:	{Precisely. And {then, then write a list where y', I think, yeh. If we have a, a, s, the objectives spelt out by the working group, um, then getting the support, getting the structure plan, and working through those things, um then we report back to a {meeting with the --
12.	Belinda:	{Might add more weight {to your request too! Because if they c --
13.	Lance:	{Er, and I think it, I think it will help with the support! Because they can say, "well what do they want you to do?" {"This is what they want me to do."
14.	Belinda:	{"This is exactly what they want!" But {oh, yeh!
15.	Len:	{Mm.
16.	Scott:	{Yeh.

Immediately following, though, this agreement is reconstructed.

Fragment 11:

1.	Belinda:	… But {oh, {yeh!
2.	Len:	{Mm. {
3.	Scott:	{Yeh. {
4.	Sam:	{Scott, er er, are you in a position to er say that ah, your agency can work on a structure plan, or, or do you need to go back and {check with people?
5.	Scott:	{I need, I will need to go back {and check.
6.	Sam:	{Make sure the ah, er resources can be allocated to it and so forth. So it might help you to have a bit more definition as to what we're asking for! So a, a letter from us, --
7.	Scott:	Yes.
8.	Sam:	as a, as er a, a committee, asking Council to write to you on, on the ah, - cos this is a committee of Council -
9.	Scott:	Yeh.
10.	Sam:	Um, Council to write to you indicating what the committee is ah, suggesting?
11.	Scott:	Mm hm.

The substantive content of Sam's talk in Fragment 11 is almost precisely that of the preceding phase. However, there is no textual cohesion (anaphoric reference, ellipsis, textual conjunction, thematic development) at all linking it to that phase; Sam is effectively discounting it and reinitiating the suggestion for action. As he does this, he draws on 'correct' government protocol (line 8) to distance that action from HIC's role, placing it instead in the hands of Council. Moreover, in Sam's more formal speech the request (line 10, '*indicating what the committee is ... suggesting*') has lost the specificity demanded by Belinda's '*write a set of objectives*'.

The proposal becomes even more distant and vaguer when Len, as the chair of the meeting and the expert in Council protocol, reinterprets the action again.

Fragment 12:

1.	Len:	Well that was going to tha' er ah, I'd envisaged that that was ah, going to be contained in the letter to Stuart Simons.
2.	Sam:	{Yeh.
3.	Lance:	{Yep.
4.	Len:	Seeking formal support, and ah, and and ah, and a level of commitment to, to working within a ah, particular ah, structure --
5.	Scott:	Mm.
6.	Len:	to further progress all of these areas, and answer some questions, as well as mm, [.] and proposing a, a structure by which we do that.
7.	Scott:	{Mm hm.
8.	Sam:	{You might have a chance to take it down and hand it to him next week?
9.	Len:	Mm.

In Fragment 12 Len is closing the discussion. His use of the past tense rather than the irrealis (line 1) works to place his proposal beyond debate, and the textual organisation of that proposal, through dense nominalisation and the elision of human agents (especially lines 4 and 6), makes it more suited to written than spoken English (Halliday and Martin 1993): he appears to be resemiotising for the minutes rather than inviting any response. Through such abstracting language, the content of the earlier consensus-building talk (Fragment 10) is reduced to generalities and its key idea – that the committee write some objectives now so that Scott can get started straight away – is lost.

This action leaves the interpretation of the committee's desires (objectives) in the hands of Len (as the senior SOHE officer), apparently to be implemented through his own informal elite networks (see Sam's line 8), once again undermining the participatory mode of governance that HIC was originally meant to realise. In Len's reframing, then, even HIC's 'steering' role has been reduced to one of oversight rather than direction setting. Not surprisingly, given their history of conflict with SOHE (and with Len in particular), the LAG members were reluctant to accept this statement as closing the matter. When the opportunity arose later in the meeting, they brought it up again.

3.3.4 ... and again, objectives

During the phases following the shifting of responsibilities above, the conversation tended to become more and more technical, drawing in particular on the planners' and public servants' knowledge of current inter-departmental policy discussions and, later, of accepted planning principles. LAG representatives played progressively less and less part in each of these phases, but took advantage of transitional moments and pauses to attempt to reclaim HIC's (and, through HIC, LAG's) responsibility for direction setting.

Fragment 13:

```
1. Len:     Okay, . . Item 4 - items to be discussed! ... Is there any items to be discussed? ...

2. Barbara: Are we putting then ah, some objectives for you to take back with you?  [.] If they do give
            you the support, and they say "well what do they want?"  And you can just say
            {"well, here you are."
3. Scott:   {Yes, mm.

4. Barry:   {Yep,
5. Lance:   {Yeh.

6. Scott:   Yep, I think [.] that's what we'll be looking for, is a --

7. Len:     Alright.

8. Scott:   A --

9. Len:     Are you suggesting we throw some {things on the table  {for it?
10. Barbara:                                 {Yep.
11. Belinda:                                                       {I do.

12. Len:    {Alright.
13. Scott:  {Terms of reference, or a, something like that.
```

Fragment 14:

```
... [a long discussion on planning principles]

1. Len:     From a planning sense, you would look at how best and most logically to, to, to work that
            into your structure plan.

2. Scott:   Mm.

[.]

3. Belinda: So. Our first objective is? [laughs]

4. Barbara: Yeh, what's the first objective?
```

Fragments 13 and 14 show how Belinda and Barbara are unwilling to let the matter of the objectives rest, reopening the proposal even after Len, as the chair, had apparently performed the morphogenetic moves that, in conventional bureaucratic practice, close the topic and allow discussion to move onto new things. What they are insisting upon – that the objectives should be set by HIC, through discussion at this meeting – is not self-evident to Len (Fragment 13, line 9). Further, their desire to make the objectives specific and concrete does not seem to match Len's understanding: his summaries tend to generalise and abstract (Fragment 14, line 1; also Fragment 15, line 3), inevitably failing to satisfy.

However, a new analysis eventually leads to an agreement.

Fragment 15:

```
1.  Barbara: Yeh, what's {the first objective?
2.  Scott:                {I think all I see, it's --
3.  Len:                  {I think the objectives are, are ah, are pretty well to ah, ah to jointly develop a
             ah, ah, a structure or in principle plan ah, for the development of the Export Estate. …
             That sort of thing.

4.  Sam:     And I suggest that you do say up front that you um, want the process of clearing the land
             and making it available ah expedited?

…

5.  Barry:   Stress the situation that ah, where we are at the moment - if somebody comes to town, ah
             we gotta say, "sorry, we can't help you! {We just don't have anywhere to ah, to {thingo!
6.  Barbara:                                          {We've, we've already done, I think, that.
7.  Lance:                                                                                    {Well,
             what I was about to suggest is, probably what we almost have  {is we have [.]
8.  Barbara:                                                               {Lost the business!

9.  Lance:   a primary objective - this almost heads back to where we started off with, with Sam - and
             the primary objective we do have is to create land  {for industrial purposes.
10. Barry:                                                        {Urgently! Yeh!

11. Lance:   Then we have a methodology to achieve that objective. That methodology is: [.] to get
             DOI to create [.] a structure plan in partnership with whoever we believe's possible,
             required. … I think they're all methodologies --

12. Barry:   Mm!

13. Lance:   that we utilise, or we get DOI, DOP … to, to actually utilise to get our overarching
             objective, which is to create industrial land to meet industrial demand in the municipality
             of Harbourtown! And then our methodology will determine that. But to create industrial
             land with our primary objective also {says to them --
14. Len:                                          {That's serviced land, Lance!

15. Lance:   we want [.] that land. [.] And it's our primary objective, and that puts it up there, that we
             want to expedite this process to meet our primary objective!

16. Len:     Alright, {so our primary objective is     {to create serviced industrial land,
17. Barry:            {That's an excellent summary!  {
18. Barbara:                                           {Well said! [applauding]

19. Len:     to facilitate the establishment of general industry.

20. Lance:   Yep.

21. Barbara: {Yess.
22. Belinda: {Yep.
```

In Fragment 15, the 'objectives' are reframed in terms of development, rather than planning. This is a significant shift: what Len wrapped up in Fragment 14, line 1 concerned principles governing the details of the proposed structure plan (infrastructure corridors, generic zoning, sizes of land parcels and so on) as an outcome in itself (Fragment 15 line 3); what Lance develops here is a picture of the plan as merely the means to a more basic end.   The resources for this reframing are initially provided by Sam (line 4) and Barry (line 5), who uses the moment to rehearse an argument in favour not of planning *per se,*

but of releasing land for local economic development, an argument made meaningful by the assumption that economic development is dependent on direct investment from outside the locality – that is, again, by the discourse of competitiveness. Lance takes the argument a step further, shifting from Barry's hypothetical (*'if somebody comes to town'*) to the unchallengeable, backgrounded to 'subordinate' circumstance (line 13, *'to meet industrial demand'*) and proposing a 'primary' objective that, finally, receives the enthusiastic approval of the Lumbervale residents.

Lance's achievement in Fragment 15 was not simply to identify an acceptable 'primary objective'. He has also constructed a framework in which an expertise-based policy network can assume a substantive role (*'methodology'*) alongside that of the participatory forum that HIC is supposed to be, resolving (for the time being) some of the tensions raised by hybridising modes of governance. To do this required a detached analysis of his own profession, bringing to the foreground a context for land use planning that, in traditional day-to-day practice, needs no explicit expression. This analysis is, of course, highly contingent, framed by the meeting's consistent reinforcement of the progress-as-investment discourse and by the locally developed consensus – realised especially in Len's line 19 – that further industrial development within Harbourtown is in the interests of the State as well.

4. Conclusion

The talk generated by contemporary governance practices provides evidence of changing processes and relations in the public sector, and of some dilemmas and tensions that these changes bring. The Harbourtown Industry Committee realised a commitment to stakeholder participation that is so prevalent in current planning discourse that it is often – as in Harbourtown – implemented with little reflection on its case-specific implications and challenges (Campbell and Marshall 2000). The involvement of residents in this case sharpened the committee's focus on local interests, necessitating extra work to frame those interests as transcending the local scale when the state's support was required. At the same time, public servants were forced to expose their conventional modes of practice – both technocratic and via elite policy networks – to scrutiny by lay-members of HIC, bringing mistrust to the surface and creating a curious dynamic in which the LAG members, who were most concerned with the urgency of the actions, also actively resisted closure.

The temporary resolution of these tensions drew on a conception of progress as a function of foreign (or external) direct investment, a construction of a trans-scalar shared interest as Harbourtown's place in global networks of production and trade, with planning as merely the means to this end. While this may seem unsurprising when the field of planning is industry, it contrasts markedly with the types of arguments that often dominated HIC's debate when the DOI was not there. The original, localised conflict over Lumbervale's zoning, and the debates of HIC's early meetings, were framed largely by interdiscourses concerning property rights and finance, home ownership, security from crime, small business practices, family needs, and urban consolidation. These arguments all gave way to (inter)national competitiveness in the sixth meeting, apparently for Scott's sake. Diverse political identities as local actors were, through this rescaling project (Smith

2003), subsumed by a vision of the local community (for LAG members) or the state itself (for Len and Sam) as 'competitors' (Sum 2000). Equally, the debate was remarkable for the absence of alternative imaginaries of economic development. The 'transition to a service economy', 'innovation', and 'sustainable development' are key themes in strategic planning for industrial areas in metropolitan regions; not so in Harbourtown.

Practising 'governance' means navigating a dynamic conflux of traditional and emerging power relations, professional identities and modes of decision making: tangled hierarchies, technocracy, informal networks and participatory fora intermingle, all demanding recognition for differing powers, roles and norms in the everyday actions of public servants. If the neo-liberal vision, through the unquestionable discourse of 'competitiveness', provides a comfort zone in which to resolve these tensions, small wonder people use and reproduce it.

_____

[1] Details of this case are de-identified at the request of the participants. For this reason, no documents from the case are cited.

[2] In the transcripts, overlapping talk is indicated by having no extra line break, with opening braces ({) showing the start of the overlap in both/all turns. Pauses are indicated by '[.]', with additional full stops lengthening the pause by approximately one second each.

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