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Joining up public services : a critical realist framework for holistic governance

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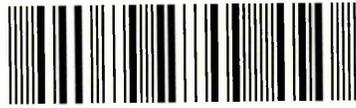
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**JOINING UP PUBLIC SERVICES: A CRITICAL REALIST FRAMEWORK FOR
HOLISTIC GOVERNANCE**

Richard Michael Breese BA (Cantab), MA, MRTPI, MAPM

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
Sheffield Hallam University
for the Doctor of Business Administration**

March, 2007



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Abstract

The thesis is concerned with the conceptual development and application to practical management issues of a general descriptive theory called the 'Operational Dimensions Framework'. It is argued that attempts to join up public services need to take into account the dimensional complexity of the operating environment for their delivery. The Operational Dimensions Framework is underpinned by realist assumptions, and the methods used to evaluate it apply critical realist social theories in innovative ways.

The Operational Dimensions Framework was originally developed when the author was working as a regeneration programmes manager at Barnsley MBC in the late 1990's, continually involved in the interplay between different dimensions in the formulation and implementation of regeneration programmes. The basic model has been further developed and refined in the course of the research.

The research uses theories of truth as criteria against which to assess the Operational Dimensions Framework as a tool to assist public service management and better achieve joined up working. This involves,

- assessing the coherence of the Operational Dimensions Framework as a general descriptive theory (coherence theory of truth)
- reviewing practice in joined up government in Great Britain against the Operational Dimensions Framework (correspondence theory of truth)
- assessing where there are gaps in existing theories which could be addressed through the Operational Dimensions Framework (consensus theory of truth)
- using the Operational Dimensions Framework to help with practical management issues (pragmatism theory of truth)

The conclusion drawn is that both the Operational Dimensions Framework itself and the methods used in the research make significant contributions to management theory. Furthermore, the Operational Dimensions Framework can be used to develop management tools to improve practice in a variety of contexts.

JOINING UP PUBLIC SERVICES: A CRITICAL REALIST FRAMEWORK FOR HOLISTIC GOVERNANCE

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Declaration:

This thesis is all my own work, and has not been submitted for any other academic award.

Richard Michael Breese

1. Introduction

The principal subject matter for the thesis is the Operational Dimensions Framework, a new analytical tool, which can be used in the management of public services – in preparing strategies, implementing them, designing staff structures, reviewing operations and, in particular in achieving joined up working. I originally formulated the Operational Dimensions Framework in 2000, to assist with the restructuring of the Special Programmes Team at Barnsley MBC, where I worked at that time.

Because the Operational Dimensions Framework is so central to the thesis, it is important to explain what it is at the very beginning. Having explained what the Operational Dimensions Framework is and how it is relevant to the delivery of public services, it will then be possible within this first chapter to cover

- the type of theory that the Operational Dimensions Framework is, and hence the way in which it should be used – including the limits/boundaries to its use and how it can be used in combination with other theories (Section 1.3)
- why the focus is on public services and on joining them up (Section 1.4)
- my conception of the research process, and the Institutional, Realist model of research I have developed (Section 1.5)
- who, where, what, why, when, how and for whom the thesis has been undertaken (Section 1.6)
- the aims of the thesis and the four theories of truth (Section 1.7)
- a brief outline of the structure of the thesis (Section 1.8).

1.1 The Operational Dimensions Framework

The concept of 'operational dimensions' came initially out of work in the year 2000 on a restructuring exercise for the staff team at Barnsley MBC which had responsibility for regeneration strategies and programmes (see Chapter 2 for a detailed description of the origins of the Operational Dimensions Framework). By analysing all the work undertaken in the team and the way in which it was divided up between different individuals, it seemed that there were seven different dimensions. I subsequently refined the Operational Dimensions Framework in a number of ways, and the most up-to-date version at the time that my DBA research started in 2002 is shown as Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Operational dimensions for Public Service Delivery – categories and sub-categories

Type of Dimension	Inputs	Processes	Outcomes	Outcomes	Contextual	Contextual
	<p>1. Resources - Combination of human and physical resources and funding</p>	<p>2. Functions - different activities undertaken within services</p>	<p>3. Customers - impacts on different groups in society</p>	<p>4. Theme - impacts on different aspects of life. What kind of changes in people's lives is the service aiming to achieve?</p>	<p>5. Time over which service processes and outcomes are delivered</p>	<p>6. Space – geographical area over which service is delivered</p>
Categories within the dimension	<p>Human Resources, Capital Resources, Financial Resources</p>	<p>Breakdown of the different activities involved in delivering a service, eg into a sequence of processes</p>	<p>Breaks down into 'diversity' groups – ethnic origin, age, gender, disability, sexual orientation.</p>	<p>Themes include housing, social care, health, crime, education, sport, environment, employment, transport, culture,</p>	<p>Different temporal units come into play in service delivery, eg day, week, month, year?</p>	<p>Different spatial units, both in administrative terms and in the perceptions of service users.</p>
						<p>7. Stakeholders with an interest in the service Who are they? What are their interests in service delivery and achievements?</p>
						<p>Internal stakeholders from the organisation itself and external stakeholders. Stakeholders may be defined as organisations or as individuals with organisational allegiances</p>

The Operational Dimensions Framework (hereafter generally abbreviated to the ODF, except at the beginning of each chapter and in Figure/Table headings) is an attempt to capture the complexity of the operating environment for any organisation delivering a service to the public. At its most basic, it is a list of things that ought to be addressed, or a way of thinking about delivering a service. The term 'dimension' is used to convey two of the aims of the ODF, that

- each of the basic categories, the dimensions, is discrete from all the other dimensions – each dimension is conceptually simple and easy to define, and there is no overlap with the conceptual underpinnings of any of the other dimensions, *in a social science context*. For example, in social theory space and time are conceptualised as being different dimensions – it does not matter that in physics they can be viewed as conceptually indistinct from each other.
- the ODF aims to be comprehensive and universal, within its terms of reference. All the different things that are relevant to the delivery of a public service have a place somewhere within the framework, or in the connections between the different elements of the framework. What is more, the framework is applicable anywhere, any time – the dimensional approach is pitched at such a basic level that it is universally applicable – even if the cultural and philosophical baggage that comes with it means that some people might not recognise it as a valid way of thinking about the world.

Whether these two aims of the ODF hold up in practice is one of the issues to be explored in the thesis.

The seven dimensions are based on particular assumptions about the delivery of a service which seem to have a universal quality. The input/output model provides the basis for the first four dimensions. To undertake any kind of service you have to have **resources** of different kinds – both human assets and inanimate, physical assets – as inputs (Dimension 1). The resources are then combined and deployed in activities which form the **functions** undertaken through the service (Dimension 2). The functions have consequences for those at whom the service is aimed, arising in two further dimensions. First, the functions have an effect on lots of people, who may be different from one another in fundamental ways, eg different ethnic groups, different ages etc. The **customer** dimension covers the diversity of different people affected by the service (Dimension 3). Second, the functions affect customers in different ways, depending on the nature of the service involved. For example, if the service is preventing crime, then the impacts of the service will be skewed towards those aspects

of people's lives affected by criminal or anti-social behaviour, eg how safe they feel. The **theme** dimension covers the different types of effects arising from the service (Dimension 4).

In Table 1.1, the three other dimensions are 'contextual', because they provide the context for the input-output sequence to take place. All activities take place in **space** and **time** (Dimensions 5 and 6). All public services take place in the context of a wide variety of different organisations and individuals who have an interest of some sort in what is being undertaken, for whom the umbrella term is **stakeholders** (Dimension 7).

All the dimensions can be broken down into sub-categories. In many cases the sub-categories are familiar, as the classification is one which underpins a branch of social science and is understood and accepted widely in society. The best example of this is the customer dimension, which breaks down into the equal opportunities or, as they are more commonly referred to now, diversity groupings, eg ethnicity, age, gender, disability. For those dimensions where there are sub-categories within the dimension I will explore the status of the sub-groupings in Chapter 5.

The theme dimension is particularly interesting to explore from this perspective. There are generally accepted categories which cover the range of activities in which the state is involved, such as the division into economic, environmental and social policies which is reflected in the powers available to local authorities in Britain through the Local Government Act, 2000. A more fine-grained classification might divide policy up into economic development, employment, education, environment, sport and leisure, culture and the arts, community development, community safety, health, housing and transport categories. While these terms are in common usage, it is seldom that we look underneath them to question what they mean and why the range of policy areas is divided up in the way that it is. I would argue that the underlying principle is that people have different needs, which can be disaggregated and compartmentalised into particular policy areas. So, for example, housing reflects the basic need for shelter, which has been refined over time into a need to satisfy more complex needs arising from the way in which our lives are patterned so that different activities are carried out in different places at different times, with different companions. Joining up services involves making links across the range of human needs and desires.

While the ODF requires that the seven dimensions and the sub-categories within them are distinct in conceptual terms, the delivery of any public service involves the coming

together of all the dimensions. When the sub-categories are taken into account as well, the translation of the ODF into a multi-dimensional matrix of potential policy areas is, to all intents and purposes, infinite for most organisations. In practice, any public service has to simplify this complex operating environment, for the purposes of devising strategies and formulating organisational structures (see Table 1.2).

Any organisation starts with a remit which can be defined through the dimensional approach. Within this overall remit, certain dimensions will be used as the key determinants of strategy and organisational structures and others will be less prominent. For example, local government (defined geographically) has generally been organised first into *themes*, eg education, housing, economic development, and then by *function*, eg strategy teams and operations teams and/or *area*, eg neighbourhood offices. However, Social Services Departments have had *customers* as a more significant organising dimension, eg adults and children's services, and every local authority will be different in the way it combines the different dimensions. The sequencing of the dimensions within organisational structures influences the way services are shaped and delivered.

While two dimensions might be combined into 'matrix management' organising structures, the overall framework for delivery cannot be as simple. Because every dimension has a bearing on public service delivery, none of them can be ignored. For example, policing is a service defined on a theme basis, but the delivery of the service involves the other six dimensions, and also other themes which are not central to the remit of the service. Policing has an impact on employment, housing, education and other themes, as well as community safety.

1.2 Relevance of the Operational Dimensions Framework to Public Service Strategies and Structures

The potential uses of the ODF will be covered in much more detail later in the thesis, but for now it is perhaps useful to outline briefly how it might be used to improve management practices.

Table 1.2 Operational dimensions for Public Service Delivery – Implications for Strategy and Structure

Type of Dimension	Inputs	Processes	Outcomes	Outcomes	Contextual	Contextual	
Questions for strategy	<p>1. Resources - Combination of human and physical resources and funding</p> <p>How can resources be maximized/used more efficiently/combined in different ways</p>	<p>2. Functions - different activities undertaken within services</p> <p>Introduction of new processes or more efficient implementation of existing processes</p>	<p>3. Customers - impacts on different groups in society</p> <p>Who is the service aimed at? What is to be the balance between different groups? What impact will that have?</p>	<p>4. Theme - impacts on different aspects of life</p> <p>What kind of changes in people's lives is the service aiming to achieve? Does that vary for different groups in society?</p>	<p>5. Time over which service processes and outcomes are delivered</p> <p>What is the timescale for service delivery? What is the timescale for any planned changes?</p>	<p>6. Space – geographical area over which service is delivered</p> <p>Where is the service to be delivered? What geographical variations in service delivery will there be?</p>	<p>7. Stakeholders with an interest in the service</p> <p>Who are they? What are their interests? How do they want to see the service delivered? What do they want to see the service achieve?</p>
Questions for organisational structure	<p>Are there any key divisions between inputs, eg funding source, that need to be reflected in structures?</p> <p>Strategies and structures for each funding source, eg SRB, Objective 1, National Lottery</p>	<p>Does service delivery divide up into distinct groups who might form separate teams?</p> <p>Increasing emphasis on evaluation reflected in strategies and structures</p>	<p>Should the service be divided into teams dealing with different groups?</p> <p>Strategies explicitly considering their impact on different ethnic groups,</p>	<p>Should the service be divided up according to different stages in delivery?</p> <p>Division between strategy formulation and implementation</p>	<p>What geographical units should be used for organising the service?</p> <p>Neighbourhood regeneration strategies, and their relationship to strategies for larger areas</p>	<p>Should there be people within the service looking after the interests of specific stakeholders?</p> <p>Strategies/structures so that interests of the key stakeholders, eg funder, Accountable Body, local partners, are met, as well as interests of beneficiaries</p>	
Example from regeneration work							

Faced with such a complex operating environment, a common response in both strategy development and organisational structures is to simplify 'the problem', moving from one dominant dimension to another, for example, reorganising from Borough-wide thematic services to integrated services for small geographical areas, and expect that a decentralised organisation will operate more effectively, without considering the consequences for all seven dimensions of the changes taking place. The result is often that new problems emerge for the service itself and other service providers, leading to further compensating changes, and so on.

If the complexities of working within the seven dimensions are acknowledged in the first place, there are ways in which strategies and organisational structures can be devised to be clear, simple and robust. One way of simplifying the management task is to look for commonalities between different dimensions – for example, in regeneration work the *funding source* is a critical consideration (Dimension 1) and the funder is always a key *stakeholder* (Dimension 7). The funder may also influence who the *customers* are (Dimension 3) and/or limit the *themes* addressed (Dimension 4). It may therefore be possible to group different dimensions together for the sake of strategy formulation and organisational structures. Another technique is simply to prioritise the dimensions so that some of them become dominant determinants of strategy and structure and others become subsidiary.

Having simplified the dimensions, any service will be left with a variety of strategic objectives and influences on organisational structure which may appear to be in conflict with each other. For example, a Police Service may identify a number of objectives, including

- focus resources on some particular disadvantaged neighbourhoods where nuisance is increasing (Dimension 6, *Space*)
- deal with difficult relationships with a particular ethnic group wherever they live (Dimension 3, *Customers*)
- deal with problems created by drug dealing around schools (Dimension 4, *Theme*)
- have a more visible police presence (Dimension 2, *Function*)

By analysing the different objectives against each other and identifying priorities it would be possible to devise an integrated strategy which recognises the compatibilities and incompatibilities of the different objectives. It would provide a good starting point for change management, balancing different priorities and helping to minimize the

unintended consequences of change which often bedevil attempts to introduce new strategies.

1.3 Different types of theory and the Operational Dimensions Framework

The brief example provided above illustrates the relevance of the ODF to the practice of delivering services. It provides a way of ordering the approach to delivery of any public service. At a more fundamental level, it is a way of thinking about the world – recognising that there are many different dimensions to the operation of a public service, which all have to be taken account of in policy-making, delivery and evaluation. As a way of thinking, it is relevant not just to the formal processes of the policy cycle. I have found that it can also be a way of structuring an argument or an instrument to use for countering someone else's position in a negotiating situation.

Part of the strength and the robustness claimed for the ODF is that it applies anywhere, anytime. The dimensions reflect something of what the world is, no matter what country you are in or at what point in the history of public services. It therefore operates at a very high level of generality. It cannot be used to say what a policy maker should do, only that there are a number of different but inter-related things that he or she needs to take into account.

In order to pin down the uses and the limits to the use of the ODF, it is useful to explain what type of theory it is. As will be explained in Chapter 3, the philosophical underpinnings for the thesis come from realist positions, so the sources used to explore different types of theory are from this background as well.

Andrew Sayer identifies three senses in which the word is used,

1. Theory as an ordering framework....., which permits observational data to be used for predicting and explaining empirical events.
2. Theory as conceptualisation, in which 'to theorise' means to describe a particular way of conceptualizing something.
3. Theory is also often used interchangeably with 'hypothesis' or 'explanation' (Sayer, 1992:50).

At first sight, the notion of theory as ordering framework would seem to fit closely with the ODF, because the grid in Tables 1.1 and 1.2 is highly ordered and compartmentalised. However, the grid is the manifestation on paper of a deeper

attempt to conceptualise the different facets of delivering a public service. In Chapter 5 I will look in detail at the different parts of the framework, in order to question how many of the terms in common usage in public service delivery have arisen and what fundamental properties of being human lie behind them. The ODF is not the same as a hypothesis or explanation, but it is a tool which can be used to test hypotheses and arrive at explanations. Therefore, the Operational Dimensions Framework is first and foremost a theory in the second sense as listed by Sayer. It also provides an ordering framework, not in the sense of establishing correlations between different variables, but in identifying a range of relevant variables.

Another categorisation of theories, also writing from a critical realist perspective, identifies four inter-related, but distinct, types,

- meta-theories, which are concerned with the foundational assumptions and preconditions of science, eg critical realism, hermeneutics.
- normative theories, which support various ideas about what something ought to be, focusing on moral, political or ideological issues.
- descriptive theories, for specific objects of research, eg unemployment, drug abuse
- general descriptive theories, marking fundamental aspects of social activity, interaction and development (Danermark, Ekstrom, Jacobsen and Karlsson, 2002:117-121)

From this list, it is possible to identify a hierarchy, with meta-theories at the top, general descriptive theories in the middle, providing the tools for normative and specific descriptive theories at the bottom of the hierarchy. The Operational Dimensions Framework seems to be a 'general descriptive theory' in this context. It is based on a meta-theory, critical realism, and provides a basis for more specific theorising, either on specific objects of research within the wider framework or for normative theory. The ODF itself contains no moral presumptions. It could be used to develop specific theories for public services that would aim to exacerbate economic and social inequalities equally well as for services aiming to reduce inequalities.

Most of the times where it is used, there is no need to place the ODF within any kind of wider context to describe 'what it is'. However, there are instances where it is helpful within the thesis to specify what type of theory the ODF is. For example, one of the aims of the thesis concerns the coherence of the ODF (see section 1.7 and Chapters 3 and 4). In this context it will be necessary to be able to say what type of theory the ODF

is, because the criteria for assessing coherence will depend on it. Where it is necessary to be clear about the nature of the ODF, the term 'general descriptive theory' will be applied to the ODF, based on the definition from Danermark et al (2002).

The type of theory that the ODF is also affects the overall objective of the research, to improve the integration and coordination of public services and achieve 'joined up working'. By having a good appreciation of what the operating context for public services is like, capturing its complexity in an ordered way, there should be a better chance of joining up services than if the operating context is conceptualised in a haphazard and/or partial way. This in turn should give a better chance of services being efficient and effective, although, again, there is no guarantee of this.

No claims will be made that the ODF provides a blueprint for joined up working. It is just a good starting point for conceptualising the nature of a particular service and how it links to other services. The ODF is a tool which can be of help in a variety of different tasks, including

- preparing a strategy
- devising an organisational structure
- overcoming a problem in service delivery
- evaluating a service
- linking different services together in a better way.

As a general descriptive theory, the ODF becomes an analytical tool when it is used. That use might be for an analytical task, for example, evaluating practice, or it might be for a management task, for example, changing a staffing structure. Often the two will be linked, such as when an evaluation is followed up with a programme of change.

The ODF will not guarantee success in any of the different tasks to which it might be applied. A good analysis of the operating context may be followed by a flawed attempt to negotiate change. It is an inherent part of the ODF that translating understanding into action is difficult. For example, it is perfectly possible to identify who the key stakeholders are for achieving change, but then fail to engage effectively with them.

My claims about the ODF are that it is a realistic starting point for achieving joined up working and contributing to holistic governance. In using the word 'realistic' I refer both to underpinnings in realist philosophy and also to the general use of the term where there is a course of action that has a good chance of success.

Consistent with the reference above to the ODF having no moral component – it is a tool which could be used to achieve both good and bad aims – the objective of joined up working is similarly a means rather than an end in itself. An oppressive totalitarian regime is likely to strive towards joined up working to increase the control it has over people's lives, albeit working in a different way to a participatory democracy.

The ODF has potential to be used in conjunction with normative theories to develop management tools, which I would distinguish from analytical tools because they incorporate value judgements on 'what ought to be'. The ODF could also be used to enhance existing management tools.

1.4 Focussing on 'joining up' public services

The relevance of the ODF is not confined to public services. If my claims for its universal properties can be substantiated, it is equally applicable to other activities, such as retailing of goods by private firms. There might be opportunities to use the ODF to develop management tools for other contexts, but the thesis is deliberately focussed on public services.

It is important to be clear that I am not referring to a demarcation between services delivered by public sector organisations as opposed to private or voluntary sector organisations. The distinction I want to draw is rather that the services are for the public, involving funding from the State, in contrast to activities funded solely from private sources (see Parsons, 1995:2-10 for a brief history of 'public' and 'private' as economic concepts). Many 'public services' are delivered by private and voluntary/community sector organisations. Thus a company limited by guarantee running a sports centre subsidised by the local Council is running a public service, whereas a private health club funded exclusively through subscriptions and private loan finance is not.

Why make this distinction? The answer lies in the 'joining up' part of the title of the thesis. 'Joining up' as a term dates from the early 1990's, but the objective of coordinating public services is one which has a long and complex history. The key point is that where public funding is involved there is a duty on those delivering a service to look wider than their own activities to see how they link up with other public services (and sometimes with privately-funded operations as well). If a service using

public funding is duplicating another service or is failing to achieve benefits for its customers by linking up with other services, it is a matter of concern which should generate action by those responsible for the service to improve the situation. In contrast, if funding is exclusively from private sources, there is no such obligation, and whether to 'join up' is a decision that can be taken on the basis of commercial interests. So long as the activities remain within the law, collaboration and coordination with other organisations delivering similar or complementary activities is not required. The primary subject matter for this thesis is those services where there is an obligation to try to join up activities with other services, for the public good.

The ODF is not in itself a tool to achieve joined up working. As explained in Section 1.3 it is a general descriptive theory about the world, of use as a way of conceptualising the world and providing an ordering framework. As we have seen already in Section 1.2, it is a good way of relating different organisational priorities and pressures upon an organisation's structure to each other. Taking this a stage further, it also helps to place the activities of a particular organisation into a wider context. In the hypothetical example of Police Service priorities in Section 1.2, the way in which each priority is translated into service provision needs to be related to activities carried out by other agencies, which will affect how effective the police will be in their work. Using the seven dimensions of the ODF, the linkages with other services can be identified on a comprehensive basis. By assessing how important these linkages are, a set of operational priorities for joined up working could be identified.

Where there is an obligation to attempt to 'join up', as there is with any public service, the ODF is always going to be relevant as a good starting point for analysing the complexities of 'joining up' activities both within and beyond the delivery organisation.

1.5 The research process – an Institutional, Realist Model

Having explained what the subject matter for the thesis is, the next step is to relate it to an overall conception of the nature of the research task. The model of the research process that I have developed, which I have labelled an Institutional, Realist Account, includes consideration of various constraints upon the researcher. It is therefore important to outline the model first, before launching into the aims of the research. The Institutional, Realist Account of the research process is shown diagrammatically in Figure 1.1.

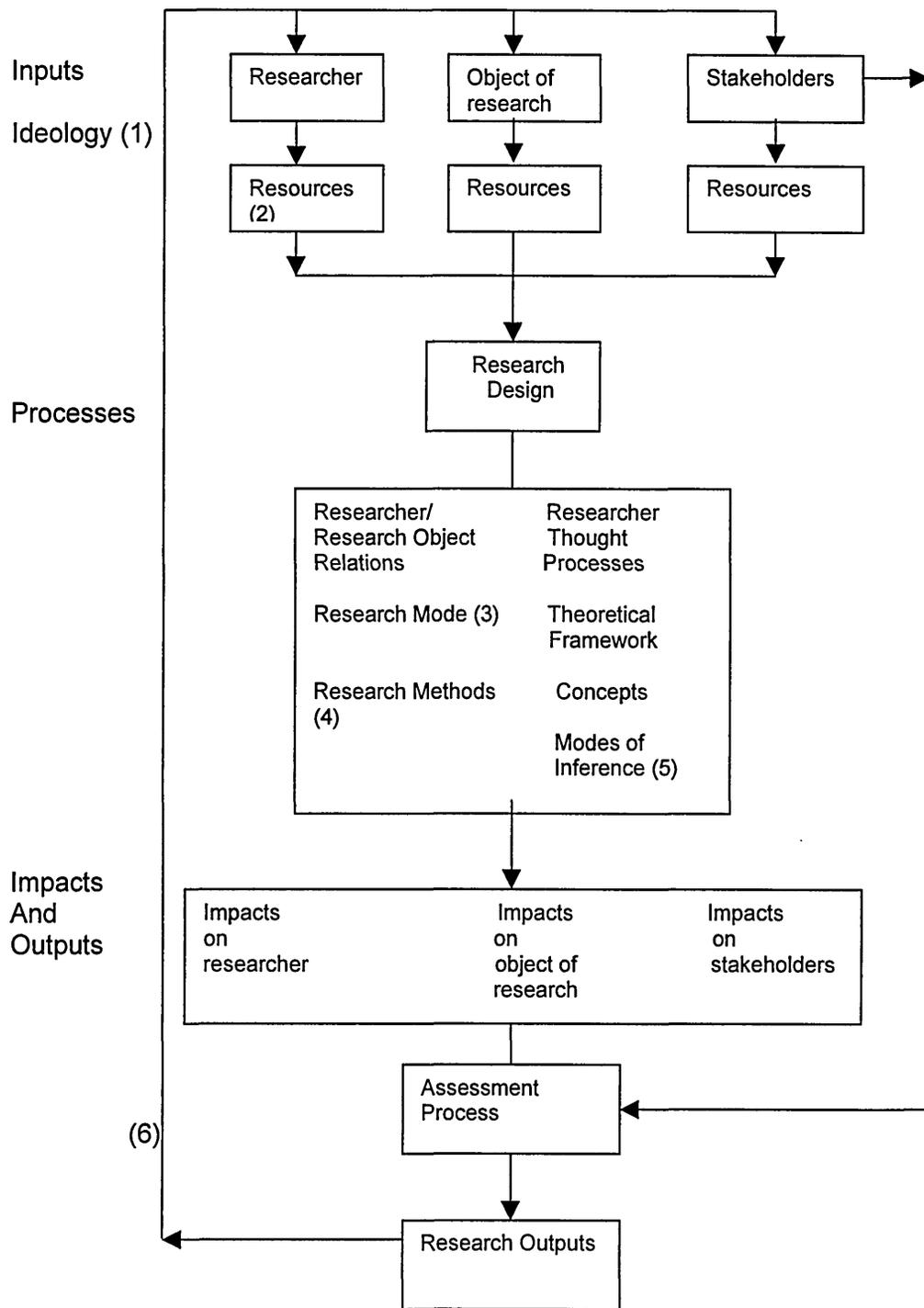


Figure 1.1
The research process in the Social Sciences : An Institutional, Realist Account

Notes for Figure 1.1

1. Ideology is the set of belief systems – includes ontological and epistemological positions and their articulation into meta-theory and methodological standpoints.
2. Resources include finance, physical resources (eg computers) and intellect.
3. Research mode is the relationship between the researcher and the object of research, particularly in terms of the 'distance' between them. The 'methodological continuum' in Gill and Johnson (2002:44 (their Table 3.1)) refers to research modes identified with specific researcher-object of research relations, eg experiment, action research, ethnography.
4. This covers what the researcher actually does to obtain information about the world, which complements the thought processes, with which there is an iterative relationship. Many meta-theories have a strong emphasis upon this iterative relationship, eg critical realism (Danermark et al., 2002), critical theory (McLean, 2002), hermeneutics (McAuley, 2004).
5. Modes of inference are deduction, induction, abduction, retroduction (see Chapter 3).
6. Feedback loops occur at all stages in the research, but for simplicity are only shown at the end of the process. The feedback loops often take the form of formal stages in the research where a university research degree is involved.

In later chapters I will describe how and why a realist philosophy underpins both the ODF and the research methods for this thesis. I will introduce a model for explanatory research developed from a critical realist perspective by Danermark et al. (2002) to inform my own research method.

Although I draw heavily from their work, I would argue that writers such as Danermark et al who use realist philosophies to inform their approach to research have not fully addressed the implications of a realist position for the research process itself. This is what I have attempted to do in the Institutional, Realist Account. The term 'Institutionalist, Realist' is one that Steve Fleetwood has used to develop ideas about the labour market (private correspondence in 2002). My model of the research process is realist, because it is based on a realist meta-theory, and institutionalist, because it is centrally about the institutions, or the durable systems of embedded social rules and conventions, which structure the research process.

The principal ordering framework in the model for research is an *input/output* conception of the research process. This is appropriate for research because it almost always follows a linear course, with a definite output in the form of the research paper, in this case the DBA thesis. The inputs come from the researcher, the research object and stakeholders. All participants bring ideologies, or belief systems, to the research project. Sometimes these ideologies are translated into specific meta-theories or more object-specific theories. In the case of the University as a stakeholder, the ideologies held by academics are numerous and the researcher will, hopefully, be matched with advisers who share, or at least empathise with, the ideology of the researcher. In my own case the key stakeholders are,

- Sheffield Hallam University, through the Faculty of Organisation and Management and the individuals concerned with the running of the DBA course and the supervision of my research.
- The South Yorkshire Coalfield Partnership (SYCP) and the South Yorkshire Partnership (SYP), who I work for, and Rotherham MBC, who employ me on behalf of these partnerships.
- Yorkshire Forward, who provide funding for the SYCP Strategic Coordinator post, through the Single Regeneration Budget. Part of the fees for the DBA have been paid through the project budget.

Another, more diverse set of stakeholders are the other researchers and practitioners who have an interest in the joining up of public services, and who may wish to support my research claims, or contest them.

All those directly involved or affected by the research I am undertaking bring resources to the research project of different types, eg funding, physical resources (such as places to study, computers) and knowledge. For the DBA, time on the part of the researcher is often one of the most constrained resources. As Professor Richard Butler of the Bradford University School of Management discussed with Wendy Olsen, when discussing barriers to participatory research in an academic context, the main problems with MBA and DBA dissertations for a working person are finding the time to write (Olsen, 2002). The resources put in to the research by those whose work is part of the subject matter for the research are also particularly significant for a DBA, because they are likely to be people who are engaged in the process of managing and/or being managed. If they are going to devote time to providing the raw material for the research they may look to get specific benefit out of the process, to justify the opportunity cost of their involvement. Because of this, the researcher may also feel constrained in terms of the research topic and the possible results. If they are critical of the organisations and/or individuals participating in the research or perhaps even question their ideologies, there may be unpleasant ramifications for the relationship between the researcher and these organisations/individuals. This issue is particularly significant for me, since my role in partnership coordination relies on maintaining good working relationships with all the stakeholders in the South Yorkshire Coalfield Partnership and the South Yorkshire Partnership.

The research design therefore will require me, as the researcher, to take into account the ideologies of the main stakeholders in the thesis, as well as articulate my own ideology, as it applies to the area of study.

The Institutional, Realist Account of the research process in Figure 1.1 is one which has links to other critical meta-theories, in its emphasis on the constrained nature of the research process. For example, critical theory places attention on the implications of funding arrangements for research. Funding bodies and dominating groups within research communities seldom support a critical approach and researchers themselves tend to be easily socialized into the research community and struggle to avoid cultural ethnocentrism (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000:133). The concept of the research community as an arbiter for the plausibility, credibility and relevance of research reports

is one which has been proposed by a number of observers from different backgrounds (Seale, 1999:29). Nevertheless, the model proposed in Figure 1.1 may have something to add to existing conceptions of the research process in the way that it attempts to represent the research process in a theoretically informed way.

The parts of the Institutional, Realist Account of the research process concerned with the research design, researcher/research object relations and thought processes (middle of the diagram) will be discussed in Chapter 3, on Research Methods.

The final part of the Institutional, Realist Account is concerned with the impacts and outputs from the research (bottom of the diagram). The model suggests that the research process affects not only the researcher themselves, but also those involved with the object of the research and the various stakeholders. During the research these impacts feed back to affect the inputs. For example, if one of the key stakeholders was encouraged by the initial findings from the research they might increase their support for it, or conversely, if they were compromised by the emerging findings they might withdraw their resources.

The final research output marks the end of the project, but it may not spell the end of the engagement of the researcher, or the stakeholders, with the object of the research. They will often continue to devote resources to it and develop the work further, albeit in a different context. With a practical management qualification, such as a DBA, the objective of using the studies as a means to an end, to improve subsequent practice, is part of the rationale for participation.

1.6 Who, where, what, why, when and for whom the thesis has been undertaken

Having outlined my conception of the research process, and in particular its constrained nature, I can now go on to address the basic questions about the research – who, where, what, why, when and for whom. To be consistent with the Institutional, Realist Account of the research process, with its emphasis on the preconceptions and interests of the researcher, it is important to address these questions at the beginning of a research paper, in the interests of transparency, objectivity, honesty and reflexivity.

I am white, born in 1959, from a middle class home in North London. Many people from my school went to Oxford or Cambridge Universities, and I studied Geography at

Cambridge. I then did a Masters degree in Town and Regional Planning at Sheffield University, and settled in Sheffield, where I have lived since 1981.

Teaching on the philosophy of the social sciences during my Geography degree from my Director of Studies, Derek Gregory, who was the author of two key books on this theme at the time (Gregory, 1978 and Gregory, 1982) has influenced my approach to my work as a Town Planner and regeneration practitioner. I have always taken a critical, reflective approach to my work, and been interested in drawing out wider lessons and developing theories from practice. The origins of the Operational Dimensions Framework can be traced back to my experiences as a manager of regeneration programmes in the mid 1990's (see Chapter 2).

Throughout my life I have been a practising Christian, and have a strong dose of the Protestant work ethic – essential to complete a DBA while also working full time. My religious beliefs also inform my ready acceptance of a realist philosophical position and the existence of a world separate from an individual's experience of it. My upbringing has given me a strong belief in my academic abilities, but I perceive that I have underperformed in my career so far, and want to make my mark in the area where I feel I excel most, in informing management practice with applied theories. From a number of different options at the end of the second year of the DBA I chose to use the Operational Dimensions Framework as the topic for the thesis because I felt it had the potential to have a major impact on management theory. The DBA course is in many ways a means to an end, and I hope that it will have spin-off benefits, perhaps influencing high level public policy-makers, perhaps resulting a book, perhaps generating material for training courses/consultancy.

1.7 The aims of the thesis and the four theories of truth

The thesis is first and foremost concerned with the ODF as a management tool, and the ways in which it might be considered to be a contribution to knowledge. For a DBA there should be a practical side to the knowledge generated, as well as the academic contribution. This suggests that there should be a number of different aims of the research to cover both the pure and applied social science aspects of the DBA.

In thinking about how to capture the breadth and depth of the aims of the research, I was drawn to the concept of alethic pluralism, which has been promoted in management research by one of my supervisors, John Darwin. Alethic pluralism means

to accept that truth is a multi-faceted concept (Darwin, 2004A:45 and 2004B:51).

Instead of there being one theory of truth, there are a plurality of truths associated with different domains. Truth in ethics is therefore different from truth in mathematics. On this basis, the different theories of truth relevant to management research might be complementary to each other rather than competitive. Darwin identifies validity claims associated with four theories of truth,

- Coherence theory of truth, which is concerned with the consistency between propositions and the degree to which they fit with belief systems and values. It is also concerned with the degree to which theory is an authentic expression of experience and can capture a subjective reality
- Correspondence theory of truth, whereby propositions are true if they match a specific fact or objective state of affairs. Correspondence is the theory of truth most commonly associated with scientific methods of hypothesis testing through observation.
- Consensus theory of truth, based upon a common opinion amongst a scientific community. It is concerned with the shared values, perceptions, worldviews and cultures which bind people together and are expressed through shared languages.
- Pragmatism theory of truth, based upon the practical usefulness of a theory, the extent to which it is a basis for action. The validity of a theory depends on its 'functional fit'. (Darwin, 2004A:45-48, and 2004B:51-53).

It is important to acknowledge that these four theories of truth are not the only ones that have been promoted in philosophy. For example, L Johnson (1992) reviews the origins and significance of the redundancy theory of truth, the performative theory of truth and the semantic conception of truth, as well as offering his own account of truth, based on correlation with referential foci, established through our use of linguistic conventions. However, he ends his book with a plea, that seems to amount to alethic pluralism,

'I suggest, though, that rather than pursue truth theory past the point of diminishing returns, it would be more profitable to investigate different ways of referring and describing, for various purposes, and to investigate different ways of being true' (Johnson, 1992:252).

The attractiveness of the four theories of truth, as promoted by Darwin, was that the early ideas I had for developing the aims of the thesis seemed to make more sense when placed within the framework formed by these four theories.

First, I was interested in some kind of assessment of the internal consistency and completeness of the ODF. I was attracted by a distinction made by Andrew Sayer, derived from Marx, between 'rational abstractions' and 'chaotic conceptions' – whether theories divide up reality logically or illogically (Sayer, 1992:138-139). The coherence theory of truth seemed to link well with these early ideas.

Second, I was concerned to demonstrate that the ODF was able to explain the successes and failures of joined up working. I was proposing to look at Government Policy on 'joining up' in Britain . Can the debates and the decisions made be related back to the ODF and can the ODF explain when and why joined up working has been a priority for governments? Can the ODF explain the successes and failures of joined up working? This particular aim of the DBA was primarily concerned with correspondence.

Third, I felt that the ODF offered something over and above other theories for joined up working. At that time, I was aware of only one other attempt to conceptualise public services using a descriptive theoretical framework similar to the ODF (Challis, 1990), and this work was narrowly focussed upon Social Services. Therefore I felt there was an argument to make that the ODF ought to attain a position in social science theory where its propositions would become commonly accepted, therefore meeting the consensus theory of truth.

Fourth, I felt that the ODF had lots of practical uses, to help improve the joining up of public services. Demonstrating that this is the case would meet the pragmatism theory of truth.

The four theories of truth have been used in an illustrative way by Darwin to explain the success of well known management tools. For example, with regard to Kaplan and Norton's Balanced Scorecard of Performance Measures he suggests that,

'the initial attraction of this lay partly in the Coherent structure it offered for a range of measures extending beyond the financial. Specific elements of it may be assessed by means of their Correspondence to evidence, while the overall framework will be assessed in terms of its Pragmatic value. Finally, it has attained widespread use because there is Consensus that it captures important dimensions of organisational activity' (Darwin, 2004B:58).

In the DBA thesis I will exhaustively assess the ODF against the four theories of truth, in the same way that Darwin suggests can be undertaken for the Balanced Scorecard.

The main difference is that the ODF is new and untested as a management tool, so some of the aims have to be explored in a different way – in particular pragmatism and consensus.

The four aims of the research are therefore

- Aim 1, to assess the coherence of the Operational Dimensions Framework, as a general descriptive theory (coherence theory of truth).
- Aim 2, to assess how well the practice of attempts at joined up working can be understood and the difficulties in achieving it explained through the ODF (correspondence theory of truth)
- Aim 3, to assess whether there are gaps in mainstream public policy theory which could be filled using the Operational Dimensions Framework (consensus theory of truth)
- Aim 4, to assess the usefulness of the ODF to the practice of joining up public services (pragmatism theory of truth)

In the thesis I will be examining the objectives of governments and other public sector organisations to provide effective and efficient services, part of which involves joining up their activities. I will not be extending the analysis to cover theories of the state, to explore why the public sector acts in the way that it does. To incorporate theories of the state would add depth to the analysis, but it would mean that I would not be able to explore as fully the nature of the ODF as a general descriptive theory. It would also divert attention away from the practical management applications of the research, which are a key aspect of the DBA, as opposed to a PhD.

To relate the subject matter of the thesis to theories of the state would therefore be a potential extension of the research. Critical realism has influenced many of the recent theories in this area, in the work of Bob Jessop and others, so there should be scope to extend the arguments in the thesis from a consistent philosophical position.

1.8 Brief outline of the structure of the thesis

The thesis follows a simple structure, based around the ODF as its central subject. In Chapter 2 I will explain the origins of the ODF, how it arose from my work as a manager of regeneration programmes in Barnsley and its initial use in a stakeholder consultation on the restructuring of the team I worked in at the time.

In Chapter 3 I will look at the research methods appropriate to an assessment of the merits of the ODF as a general descriptive theory. In this chapter I will explore the implications of my epistemological and ontological commitments and conceptions of the research process for the methods I employ. I will draw a distinction between the research methods I use to analyse and evaluate the ODF and the methods which might be associated with the ODF itself as a research tool in its own right. I will explore in more detail the research methods for each of the four theories of truth outlined in Section 1.7 above and incorporate them into a six stage model for explanatory research based on critical realism, derived from the work of Danermark et al (2002).

The next five chapters are concerned with the four theories of truth in turn (two chapters are devoted to coherence), within the overall structure provided by the six stage model. The analysis of each theory of truth starts with an outline of its philosophical background and how it might be used as a criterion of truth for the evaluation of the ODF. In each case it will be possible to draw out some key points about the ODF as a general descriptive theory, based on the analysis in the chapter. Chapters 4 and 5, concerned with coherence, end with a reformulation of the ODF. I will strip the dimensions down to a simple statement about human activities, which can then be built back up again, to derive different versions of the ODF for different contexts and subject matter. This reformulation of the ODF informs some of the analysis on the other three theories of truth, although some of the work in Chapters 6-8 was undertaken using the original version. This is because the reformulation of the ODF was still being undertaken up to a point where the thesis as a whole was almost finished.

The final chapter (Chapter 9) is concerned with the contribution to knowledge, as manifested in the ODF itself as a general descriptive theory evaluated during the research and also through the methods developed and used in the thesis. In this chapter, some of the potential implications of the ODF for management theory and practice in the future will be explored.

2. Origins of the Operational Dimensions Framework

The Operational Dimensions Framework arose out of my work as a manager of regeneration programmes in the 1990's. Working in this field requires a broad perspective, ranging across all the dimensions to coordinate different types of regeneration project and programme. 'Joining up' is always a preoccupation of regeneration programmes, because their success relies on how they add value to other activities. In this chapter I will explore in a narrative style how my experience of different regeneration programmes in the 1990's and the tensions in the organisational structures of which I was a part led me to think in a dimensional way. Building on these work experiences, my intellectual preoccupation with the links between theory and practice resulted in the development of the ODF.

The chapter divides up broadly into the following

- a summary of the regeneration programmes I was involved in managing in Barnsley from 1991 to 2002 (Section 2.1)
- an outline of my early work on the Urban Programme and City Challenge and the organisational structures at Barnsley MBC in the early 1990's (Sections 2.2- 2.4)
- my role as manager of Single Regeneration Budget programmes in Barnsley in the late 1990's and the organisational tensions associated with a rapidly growing team (Sections 2.5 and 2.7). Sandwiched in between was my 'escape' for a year's secondment as a Scrutiny Commission Advisor, when I had time to reflect on my main work role (Section 2.6). The ODF first emerges at the end of Section 2.7
- the Special Programmes Development Workshop in July, 2000, when the ODF was used in a consultation exercise with stakeholders about our future organisational structure (Section 2.8) and my disappointment that the final restructuring solution did not utilise the dimensional approach as strongly as it might have (Section 2.9)
- commencing the DBA course at Sheffield Hallam University, and attempts to promote the ODF before I chose it as the subject for the DBA thesis. (Section 2.10)
- a recap on the main thread running through the chapter – the link between working experiences and intellectual interests which resulted in the development of the ODF (Section 2.11).

2.1 My role in Government regeneration programmes

In 1991 I had a change of career direction. Having previously worked as a town planner in local government and the private sector, I obtained a post as Urban Programme Coordinator at Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council. At the time that I was appointed, the City Challenge Round 1 programme for the Dearne Valley was approved, and my responsibilities immediately ranged wider than the Urban Programme. Table 2.1 below summarises the UK Government regeneration programmes in which I was involved in from the early 1990's onwards.

Table 2.1 Government Regeneration Programmes in Barnsley

<i>Programme</i>	<i>Duration</i>
Urban Programme	Rolling Programme, with annual approval process until 1993/4
Dearne Valley City Challenge	1992/3 - 1996/7
Barnsley (North East Corridor) City Challenge	1993/4 - 1997/8
Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) Round 1, 'Sustainable Regeneration for Barnsley'	1995/6 - 2000/1
Barnsley SRB Round 2, 'Developing Stronger Communities'	1996/7 – 2000/1
Barnsley SRB Round 3, 'Highways to Success'	1997/8 – 2002/3
Barnsley SRB Round 4, 'Enterprise and Employment – a New Deal for Barnsley'	1998/9 – 2003/4
South Yorkshire Coalfield SRB5, 'Helping Communities build a Better Future'	1999/2000 – 2003/4
South Yorkshire Coalfield SRB6, 'A New Economy for the 21 st Century'	2001/2 – 2007/8

2.2 Managing the Urban Programme

The Urban Programme operated under very formalised and bureaucratic procedures, with approval mechanisms at both the programme level and the project level, being largely vested in the Government's Regional Office. The Urban Programme Management Initiative in 1985 had laid down broad objectives for the whole programme and standardized measures for evaluating individual projects (Lawless, 1989:53). The Submission Document for each year would identify commitments built up from previous years' approvals, and put forward new projects, based on an anticipated allocation for the next financial year. There was a capital/revenue split to adhere to, and target shares for the proportion of the funding

to be used for each of the three sub-programmes, Economic, Environmental and Social. Financial allocations for the year had to be achieved to the nearest pound – any funds not spent were lost to the programme.

In the 1980's, the eligible area in Barnsley for Urban Programme funding, the Inner Urban Area, covered the whole of the Borough east of the M1. This meant that about 90% of the population of the Borough was included in the eligible area, reflecting the problems suffered by all the coalfield towns and villages in Barnsley. However, at the time that I was appointed in the early 1990's the Government required that Target Areas were identified, within which the Urban Programme expenditure would be concentrated. In Barnsley the selection process was difficult, because of the widespread deprivation in the Borough, but four Target Areas were identified.

The Urban Programme was wound down in the mid 1990's, but I was involved in the annual bidding and management cycle for a couple of years, and hence had to manage a number of different dimensions to the programme, which were tied down to financial targets, covering

- theme (Economic, Environmental and Social Sub-programmes)
- area (Inner Urban Area and then the four Target Areas)
- time (annual allocations and the rolling programme cycle)
- capital/revenue expenditure split
- organisation (whether the project sponsor was from the council, the private sector or the voluntary sector)

These programme targets were built up from management information at the project level, with each project having to complete a standard Project Information Form (PIF), and in the case of large projects, Business Plans as well.

My work as programme manager involved working with targets across different dimensions, and communicating them to a number of stakeholders, including Barnsley MBC Councillors, project managers and partner organisations. The relationships established with staff at the Government's Regional Office in Leeds were critical in ensuring a successful outcome to the programme bidding round and project approvals, most of which went up to Regional Office.

The very formalised, regimented processes associated with the Urban Programme were an introduction for me to some of the characteristics of regeneration

programme management which would be highlighted in my later theorising. The rigid financial management regime meant that I was working with five dimensions from the ODF – theme, space, time, funding type (part of resources) and organisation (stakeholder). As I learnt the skills of regeneration programme management, my thought processes had to incorporate a dimensional approach. After the initial uncertain induction period, I started to enjoy this role and became confident of my ability to handle the complexities of simultaneously managing targets across five dimensions.

2.3 Involvement in City Challenge Programmes

From the outset I was also involved in the Dearne Valley City Challenge programme. In the late 1980's Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham Councils had been collaborating in the Dearne Initiative, which was recognised as an area sub-programme by the Regional Office for Derelict Land Grant and the Urban Programme. The partnership had been extended to include the private sector and a number of Government Departments and a ten year regeneration strategy had been formulated. The bid for City Challenge Round 1 was successful, even though the Dearne Valley covered a much larger area than any other area agreed under either Round 1 or Round 2.

In City Challenge I was part of a group of officers from the three Councils who initially drove the programme forward, and then supported the dedicated team at the Dearne Valley Partnership set up to run the programme. The City Challenge funding of £37.5m over five years would lever in about £100m of other public funding and £260m of private funding to develop and diversify the local economy, improve education and skills levels, build capacity within the community, improve the physical environment and increase and improve the housing stock. The level of resources was far greater than under the Urban Programme, and the combined investment included many major flagship projects. In terms of my own understanding of the management of regeneration programmes, the differences from the Urban Programme were the type of programme (5 years fixed rather than a rolling programme with an annual bidding process), the scale of investment and the range of partners, bought together into a Partnership Board with a sub-structure of thematic groups reporting to it.

I was involved from the initial formulation in 1992 of the bid for 'Access to Opportunity', the Barnsley (North East Corridor) programme, which was successful under Round 2 of City Challenge. This programme had four, broadly thematic, objectives,

- to create a corridor for growth
- to promote enterprise
- to promote a quality environment
- to promote community life.

After the bid was successful, a team working at arms length from Barnsley MBC was appointed to develop and implement the programme. My role, as with Dearne Valley City Challenge, was to support that team and carry out various functions which fell to the Council as the Accountable Body.

Barnsley was the only area to be involved in successful bids under both City Challenge Rounds 1 and 2. It was therefore an incredibly busy, but also an exciting time for those of us involved in the bids and the management of the programmes. The scale of the programmes and the management processes involved were very different from the Urban Programme. There were tensions between the arms length delivery teams set up to manage the City Challenge programmes and the officers, such as myself, whose responsibilities were to Barnsley MBC as an accountable local authority. The Dearne Valley City Challenge programme had the additional complication of three local authorities being involved. My experiences in the City Challenge programmes highlighted the importance of the stakeholder dimension, through the complexities of partnership working.

2.4 Barnsley MBC's Special Programmes Team

When I had been appointed in 1991, the Urban Programme Coordinator and an Assistant constituted a small team within the Management Coordinator's Department at Barnsley Council. There were a few other staff contributing to the Council's work on regeneration programmes within Central Departments, including officers responsible for strategy/research and European Programmes. Service Departments had individuals responsible for their input into regeneration programmes. The preparation of the City Challenge bids and action plans were undertaken without rigid demarcation of roles, on an 'all hands to the pump' basis.

As the workload associated with the programmes grew, a Special Programmes Team was established in 1992 to be responsible for the Council's input to regeneration programmes. The team brought together the officers in Central Departments working in regeneration and included some new posts. The team were located within the Chief Executive's Department, with the Management Coordinator's Department having been abolished under a wider restructuring process. In the new Special Programmes Team there were three dominant dimensions used to separate the roles of different officers.

One of these dimensions was the *type of programme*. Some officers were specialists in European Programmes and others, such as myself, dealt mainly with UK Government programmes. The second dimension related to the *stage in the programme lifecycle*, with responsibility for strategy development being separated from implementation. Thirdly, the *functions* carried out by different officers were used as a structuring principle, with a small administrative team working with the other staff. The responsibilities of individual officers were defined on a combination of these dimensions, with an emphasis on continuing with the tasks people had previously undertaken, unless this seriously upset the coherence of the structure. Other dimensions came into the work as well, particularly the 'themes' into which the regeneration programmes were broken down into. For example, different staff within Special Programmes dealt with the four sub-programmes in Barnsley City Challenge, with responsibilities changing when new staff were appointed, both within Special Programmes and in the arms length City Challenge team.

When a new programme came into being, staff responsibilities would be assigned on a pragmatic basis. For example, when the National Lottery commenced in the mid 1990's, initially I was the member of staff from Special Programmes responsible, on the basis that our programme management role for the Urban Programme and for both City Challenge programmes was reducing at that time.

At this time I did not think over much about organisational structures. I was preoccupied with the difficulty in balancing a number of different tasks and testing out, on a day to day basis, the division of responsibilities with the City Challenge teams. A key concern at this time was constantly trying to work across the organisational divisions which, out of necessity, we created for ourselves. Ensuring that the bid we submitted had realistic targets so it could be delivered and trying to link the funding going into individual projects from different sources was a constant

struggle. These were themes which would re-emerge later when I became more interested in devising organisational structures.

2.5 The Single Regeneration Budget

Also in 1994, the Government announced the creation of the Single Regeneration Budget, which brought together into one programme a number of different Government funds. After their experience with the arms length City Challenge Teams, senior officers at Barnsley MBC wanted to keep the SRB programmes managed within the Special Programmes Team, and other regeneration partners were comfortable with this as well. The bid for SRB Round 1 was led by another officer in Special Programmes, but when it became clear that it would be successful, I became involved in the preparations for its implementation. The post of SRB Manager was advertised in 1995, and I was the successful candidate. This gave me the main responsibility at officer level for programme implementation

Each year from 1995 to 2000 there were new programmes approved under successive SRB bidding rounds. The competitive process each year was initially undertaken through the Government Offices for each region, and then passed to the Regional Development Agencies when these were set up in 1999. Each bid had to stand on its own, so there was a frequent process of negotiation amongst the main regeneration partners on the content of the bid for that year.

Barnsley was successful in every SRB bidding round. SRB1-4 were submitted from the Barnsley Regeneration Forum (reformed in 1999 as the Barnsley Forum Executive), the strategic partnership for the Borough, with Barnsley MBC acting as the Accountable Body. SRB5 and SRB6 were submitted by the South Yorkshire Coalfield Partnership, covering Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham Boroughs, and were implemented on a coalfield-wide basis, with Doncaster MBC being the Accountable Body. As Table 2.1 shows, each SRB scheme ran for between five and seven years. There was a time, in 2000/1, when all six SRB Rounds were active at the same time!

The complexities of the implementation process were exacerbated by the multi-dimensional nature of each SRB programme (see Table 2.2 for SRB1-4). As the content of each bid was negotiated in the Barnsley Regeneration Forum, there were a number of priorities which were championed by different factions, which had to be

brought together into a single programme. Sometimes the selected priorities sat uneasily with each other, such as in SRB2, where the twin themes of disaffected young people and the regeneration of Barnsley Town Centre were difficult to bring together into a single cohesive strategy. While each SRB scheme had to stand alone as a coherent programme, opportunities were taken in Barnsley to introduce some kind of overall structure into the succession of SRB Rounds. Initially, this was manifested in the alphabetical sequence of Themes (or Sub Programmes), and then in the bringing together of different programmes during their implementation into a merged annual Delivery Plan, eventually including all four Barnsley SRB schemes.

Table 2.2 SRB Programmes in Barnsley – strategies and content

<i>SRB Scheme</i>	<i>Strategic Priorities</i>	<i>Themes</i>
SRB1, Sustainable Regeneration for Barnsley (1995/6 - 2000/1)	Borough-wide Economic Development The economic integration of three disadvantaged communities, Athersley, Grimethorpe and Kendray	A1 Infrastructure and Environment (Borough-wide) A2 Business Competitiveness (Borough-wide) B Integrating Disadvantaged Communities (Athersley, Grimethorpe and Kendray) C Safer Communities (mixture of Borough- wide and the three target areas)
SRB2, Developing Stronger Communities (1996/7 – 2000/1)	Young people aged 13-24, especially the 20% in danger of marginalization from mainstream education, training and employment. Viability and vitality of the Town Centre	C Safer Communities (Borough-wide) D Education and Training (Borough-wide) E Barnsley Town Centre F Families and Health (Borough-wide)
SRB3 Highway to Success (1997/8 – 2002/3)	Educational achievement in school Long term unemployment Training managers	G Continuity and progression in school (Borough-wide) H Halting the drift to permanent unemployment J Competitive skills for managers
SRB4 Enterprise and Employment – a New Deal for Barnsley (1998/9 – 2003/4)	Business start ups Embedding inward investment Community enterprise	K Developing small enterprises L Investor development M Strengthening community economies

In the strategic priorities and the themes in the different SRB Rounds can be seen three operational dimensions,

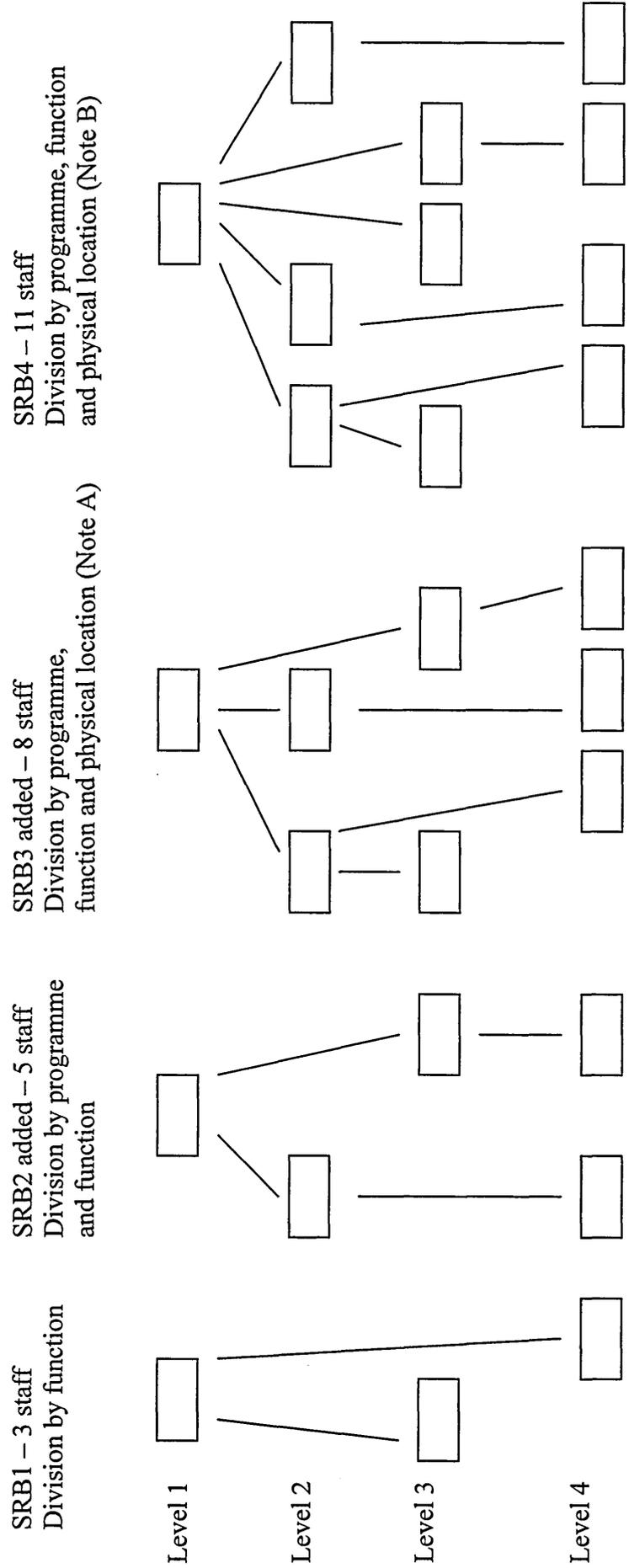
- topics, such as economic development, education, crime prevention
- client groups, such as young people aged 13-24
- small areas, such as Barnsley Town Centre and Grimethorpe

As SRB Manager in Barnsley, I devised implementation structures which took account of different dimensions, albeit in a rudimentary way. This involved both the team who I managed directly and other professional staff who had a hand in managing the SRB programme alongside their other duties.

The evolution of the SRB Management Team is demonstrated in Figure 2.1. When it was set up in 1995 there were three staff, with functional responsibilities, for programme management, monitoring and administration. This threefold functional distinction formed the basis of one of the key organising dimensions as the team grew later on. With the strong sub-programme structure in the SRB1 bid theme managers were designated (not shown on Figure 2.1). These were professional staff with management responsibilities in the theme which formed the sub-programme, who had been involved in the preparation of the bid. For example, the theme manager for Theme A2, Business Competitiveness, was from the Barnsley and Doncaster Training and Enterprise Council. The theme manager for Theme C was the Barnsley Crime Prevention Coordinator.

When SRB2 was approved, the SRB Team was increased from three to five posts, with additional programme coordinator and monitoring assistant posts. The organising structure was still primarily functional. There was an additional informal division of labour at the programme management level for the different SRB programmes and sub-programmes. For example, the 1997/8 Delivery Plan for SRB1 was prepared by myself, the Programme Manager, while the Plan for SRB2 was prepared by the Programme Coordinator. Additional theme coordinators were designated, with the Theme C elements of SRB1 and SRB2 both being covered by the Crime Prevention Coordinator, and being managed as one. An early interim evaluation of SRB1 and SRB2 remarked upon the theme structure as being a strength in the programme management processes employed in Barnsley (PIEDA, 1997:i).

Figure 2.1 SRB Management Team – Changes in structure



Level 1 – Programme Manager – overall management of the team
 Level 2 – Programme Coordinator/Officer – management of individual SRB Programmes
 Level 3 – Monitoring Officer (some with finance or audit specialisms as well)
 Level 4 – Programmes Assistant and Monitoring Assistant

Note A – The additional 3 officers in the SRB3 Team were located in another office Note B – A number of temporary moves took place

The SRB3 scheme was concerned specifically with education and training initiatives, narrower in focus than SRB1 and 2, which both had quite diverse themes, some of them geographically focussed. There were also accommodation problems for our staff team, in that there was no room in Barnsley Town Hall for the SRB Team to expand into. It was therefore decided to set up a separate sub-team to manage SRB3, consisting of a programme coordinator, monitoring officer and administrative assistant, based in another Council building with Local Education Authority staff. The overall structure of the SRB Team was therefore comprised of a mixture of programme (incorporating theme) and functional dimensions.

SRB4 was a small programme with an economic development focus. Three additional staff were recruited to manage this programme and the increasing audit workload across all the SRB programmes. The new posts were grafted onto the existing structure, but it was agreed by all managers and staff that a review of the whole structure was required. Amongst the concerns were a lack of contact between officers doing similar jobs for different programmes and blurred lines of accountability. In late 1998 I was working with the staff team on a restructure which was based on function as the fundamental restructuring principle, instead of officers dealing with individual SRB programmes. The thematic specialisation was incorporated into the duties of officers with the programme coordination function, who would be aligned to the emerging Strategic Goal Group sub-structure of the new Barnsley Forum Executive, the reformed strategic partnership for Barnsley. There would be a Monitoring Team and a Finance and Administration Team. Three options based around this principle but with differences of detail were put forward for staff to consider. A key part of the restructuring process would be that the whole team would be located in one building – in late 1998 we were spread across a number of different offices.

The process of almost constant restructuring forced me to consider in very practical ways the link between the dimensional aspects of the programmes we managed and the options for staff structures. Personally, I felt that staff were placing too great an emphasis on restructuring as a solution to the problems we faced, although I agreed there were some anomalies, which necessitated a review. I felt the underlying problems were the rapid staff turnover (most were on short term contracts) and the physical separation of the team. I felt that replacing programme with function as the primary organisational divide would just swap one set of issues for another. I was also aware that certain officers had personal agendas, hoping to enhance their

position through restructuring in this way. There was a bad working atmosphere, with the staff involving the Trade Union to air grievances. I felt that I was doing as much as I could to address staff concerns, but that some of them, such as the physical separation of the team and short term staff contracts, were outside my control. Ironically, we were still performing well in terms of the quality of the management of the SRB programmes, so the internal stresses and strains were not evident to our partner organisations.

2.6 Secondment to the Regeneration Scrutiny Commission and the formulation of the Stakeholder Model for Assessing Performance

In December 1998 I applied for and was successful in obtaining a twelve month secondment, starting in February, 1999, to a new post, as Advisor to one of the six Scrutiny Commissions set up by Barnsley MBC under its new Modernising Government structure. I worked for the Regeneration Scrutiny Commission, so there were continuing links, and potential tensions with, the team I had temporarily left. I no longer had any responsibility for completing the restructuring of the team, but was to be kept involved as I would be returning in February, 2000, as part of it.

While working for the Scrutiny Commission I had time to reflect on the work I had been involved in over the past eight years and, as a personal initiative, I wanted to bring together a number of distinct areas of work which I was exploring as an extension to my roles at Barnsley MBC. These were

- best practice in regeneration programme management
- the Government's Best Value duty and the tools available to enable performance to be assessed
- critical social theory and its recent application to regeneration programmes
- generic programme management theory.

In late 1999 I prepared an unpublished paper which synthesised insights from all these four areas into 'The Stakeholder Model for Assessing Performance – A Best Value Tool for Regeneration Programme Management and other applications' (Breese, 2000).

From regeneration programme management the areas I concentrated on were the management processes during the lifecycle of a programme and the key stakeholders that a programme manager has to satisfy. As well as the staff actually

managing the programme, I suggested that the key stakeholders, each of whom have different criteria for success, are

- funder
- partnership responsible for the programme
- accountable body for the programme
- employer of the programme management team
- beneficiaries of the programme

More generally, I suggested that these categories of 'key stakeholder' have their parallels in any public service or private business.

I also asserted that public services involve a myriad of overlapping programmes. I illustrated this point by considering the different programmes that a community transport project might be part of, including

- different funding programmes, reflecting the different sources of finance, eg Single Regeneration Budget, European Regional Development Fund, Local Authority Capital Programme
- programmes for different target groups, eg for a specific geographical area, for a specific group, such as the elderly, and as one of a range of transport programmes
- the programmes of different organisations, reflecting the partners in the project, eg local authority, Dial-a-Ride voluntary group and Community Partnership.

As well as the five stakeholders categories for the programme itself, there would also be stakeholders from other overlapping programmes.

The Stakeholder Model for Assessing Performance is based on an assessment of Inputs, Throughput (Processes) and Outputs, in each case using performance data to inform qualitative analysis by the stakeholder groups most interested in that particular aspect of programme management. For example, the employer of the programme management team will be very interested in the human resource inputs to the programme. The funder will probably be most interested in the regeneration outputs from the programme.

The Stakeholder Model for Assessing Performance was never used as a practical management tool, but it was a forerunner of the Operational Dimensions Framework.

There is a common purpose, to establish commonalities in public service management processes in order to develop theoretical frameworks to assist practice. The analysis of overlapping programmes in the Stakeholder Model for Assessing Performance provides a basis for the comprehensive dimensional classification in the Operational Dimensions Framework. The use of input/output concepts in the Stakeholder Model for Assessing Performance also follows through into the ODF.

2.7 Back to managing SRB Programmes and restructuring exercises

Soon after I had completed the Stakeholder Model for Assessing Performance I moved back to the Special Programmes Team, in February, 2000. The restructuring of the SRB Team, which had started before I left for my secondment in early 1999, was still not finalised. In my view, it had gone backwards, in that the finance function had gone back to being aligned with monitoring, rather than where I wanted to see it, with administration! There was also an imminent restructuring due for the wider Special Programmes Team. It was agreed that upon my return I would temporarily have a strategic role, including a central involvement in both these restructuring exercises, leaving the operational management for the SRB programmes with the colleague who had been leading the team during my year away. The restructuring exercise was undertaken within a Business Planning framework for the Council as a whole, which involved the production of a service plan in the summer of 2000.

The structure of the Special Programmes Team in January 2000 is shown in Fig. 2.2. The SRB Team is shown on the separate sheet, Fig. 2.3. At this stage the new structure of that team was almost finalised but having been delayed for so long it would have to be incorporated into the subsequent restructuring of the wider team.

The Special Programmes team structure had evolved in an incremental way since it was formed in 1992. It had grown in response to an increasing workload from 7 posts when it was formed to over 25 in 2000. The structuring principles used initially to divide staff responsibilities (see Section 2.4) had not changed. Under the Head of Special Programmes there were a number of different dimensions used at the next tier down to divide up the work of the team. The most significant one was funding source. The structure suggests a sharp break at the Principal Officer level between

- European Programmes
- Single Regeneration Budget
- Other Government Programmes

Fig. 2.2 Special Programmes Team Staffing Structure, January, 2000

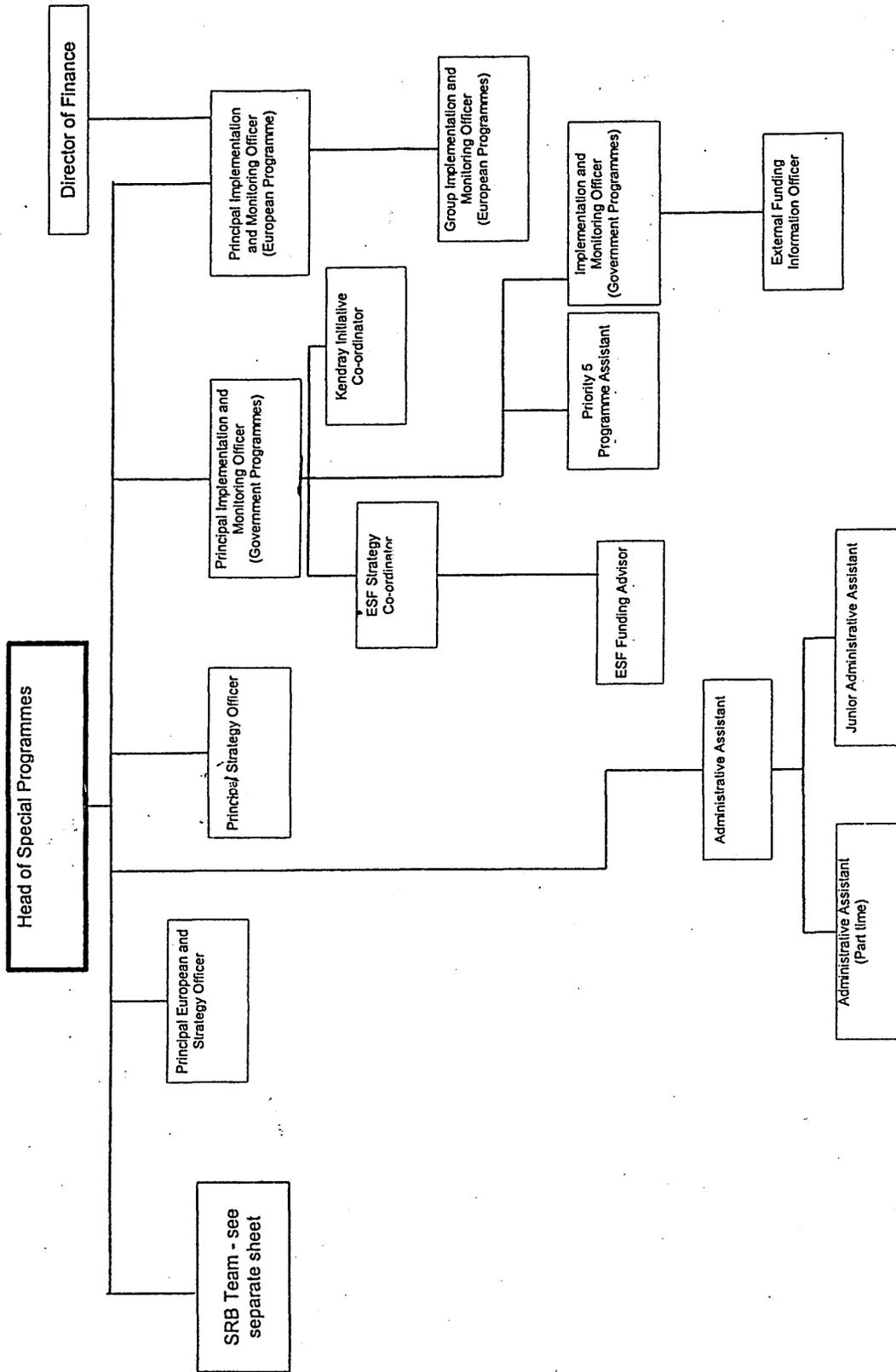
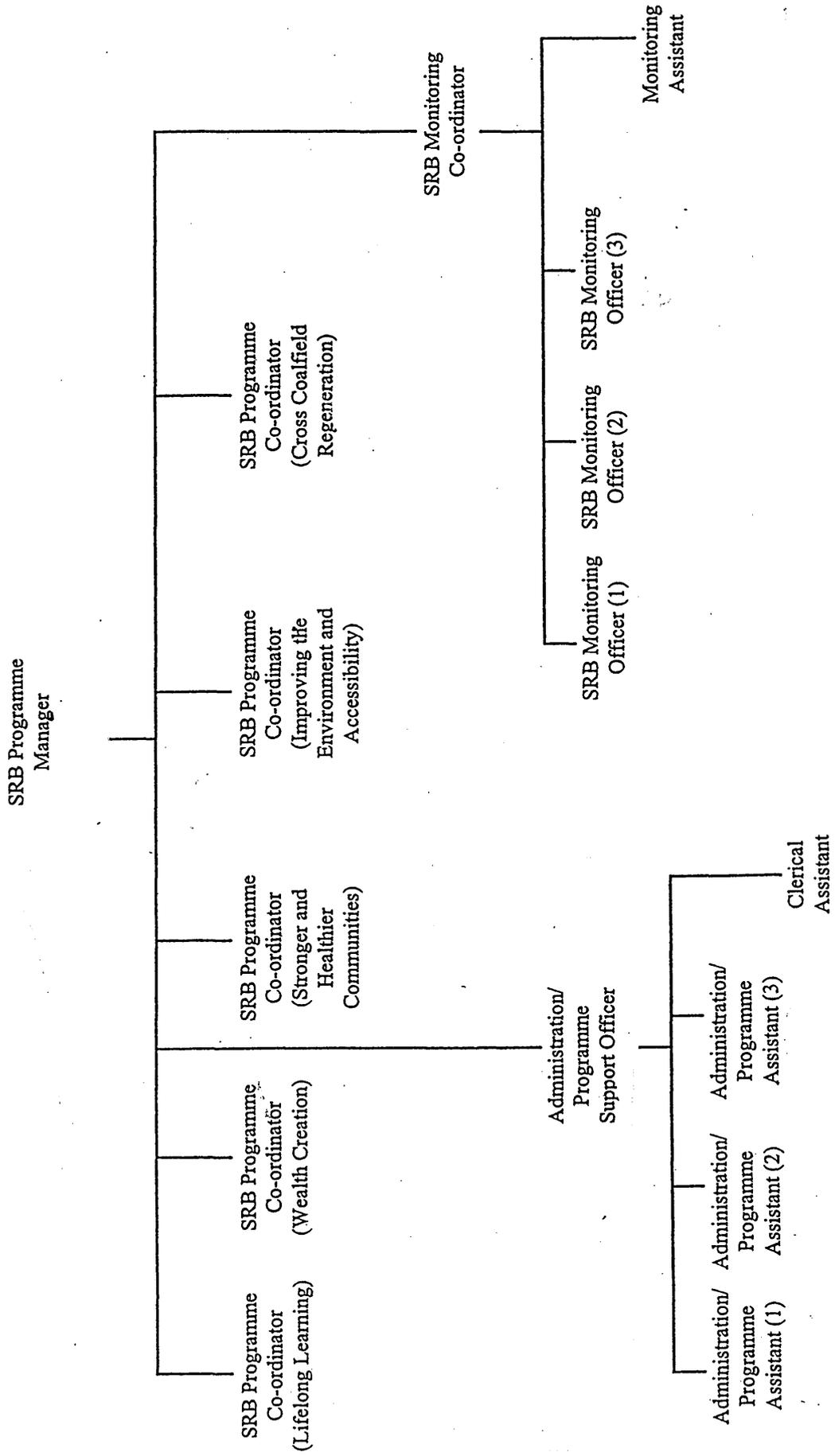


Fig. 2.3 SRB Team – Proposed Staffing Structure, 2000



Also at this tier, there was a division into officers involved in strategy development and those whose focus is on implementation. Therefore there would generally be a 'handover' during the programme lifecycle at the stage where a bid might have been successful. The functional dimension was also found within the structure, in the form of an Administration Team reporting direct to the Head of Special Programmes.

Other dimensions had a less strong, but nevertheless significant impact at the Principal Officer level. The Principal Officer for Government Programmes had a responsibility for the Kendray Initiative, and managed the Kendray Initiative Coordinator. There was also an alignment between funding source and particular themes, eg European Programmes are primarily concerned with economic development and employment, rather than environmental or social purposes.

There were also anomalies within the structure. The Principal Officer for Government Programmes also had some responsibilities for European Programmes, managing staff dealing with ESF Strategy and Objective 2 Priority 5. There were some Principal Officer posts managing large officer teams and others with no staff management responsibilities at all.

Below the Principal Officer level, the defining responsibilities of the officers in the Government Programmes Team were a mix of area (eg Kendray), funding source (eg ESF) and functional divisions (eg External Funding, Information), whereas the SRB Team was divided up according to theme and function, on the basis of the restructuring still to be finalised.

In my short term role looking at the restructuring of the team, I drew attention to the different dimensions and the need for a more rational organisational structure. This was recognised by the Head of Special Programmes and by the wider team. The draft Service Plan for the Special Programmes Team which was prepared during the spring of the year 2000 incorporated the first version of the ODF, entitled 'Operational Dimensions for organisational structures' (see Table 2.3).

Many of the dimensions were identified from the structure of the Special Programmes Team itself. The only two which were not found within the team's existing structure were client group and stakeholder relations. The client group dimension was one that we were familiar with from the structure of other public

Table 2.3 First version of the Operational Dimensions Framework, 2000

Operational Dimension	1. Programme Lifecycle (Time)	2. Geographical Area (Space)	3. Topic Area, eg economy, education	4. Funding Regime, eg SRB, National Lottery	5. Client Group, eg young people, ethnic minorities	6. Function, eg Monitoring, Admin.	7. Stakeholder relations, eg Barnsley MBC, Yorkshire Forward
Current usage in Special Programmes Management structure	Division between bidding and implementation, particularly for SRB programmes	Not used, except for the Kendray Initiative	SRB Programme Coordinators work to specific Strategic Goal Groups	Division between European Programmes, DETR programmes and other funds	Not used, although funding bids often specify particular client groups	Main organising principle for new SRB team structure. Separate Admin. Section for main team	Not used in current structure
Potential future use in new structure	Programme lifecycle will still be an important concept, but Community Planning and Policy Coordination	Link between the Borough-wide Community Plan and the nine Area Plans strengthens	Strategic Goal Groups plus cross cutting themes are a key organising principle in the new	Still important but reduced in significance because of potential for match funding at	Client groups often feature in cross cutting work on policy development, eg young people's issues	Categorising functions is not always easy to do, given the breadth of our work	Could be of use given the number of stakeholders we have

services, eg Local Authority Social Services, and one which is found in the target groups for regeneration programmes, eg gender in European programmes, young people in Barnsley's SRB2 scheme. Stakeholder relations were particularly important to the team in the context of local government modernisation and the consultation requirements included in the service planning process. The Special Programmes Team had many different stakeholders, both within the Council and amongst partner agencies, so it was seen as especially important to take their views into account in the restructuring of the team.

At this stage the ODF was related only to the organisational structure of the Special Programmes Team. The seven different dimensions were listed in no particular order. In later versions of the framework the focus would be much broader and some of the dimensions themselves would be redefined, eg a resources dimension would replace the narrower funding regime dimension.

2.8 The Special Programmes Development Workshop

As the main author of the draft Service Plan and the main protagonist for the operational dimensions approach, I had a major influence on the way that the ODF was incorporated into the service planning work. The emphasis in the service planning model being used in Barnsley upon consultation provided an opportunity to use the processes in the Stakeholder Model for Assessing Performance and the Operational Dimensions Framework as the basis for seeking views on the future structure of the Special Programmes Team. In the draft Service Plan we identified ten main stakeholder groups. By asking stakeholders which of the various operational dimensions were most relevant to them, we would get some pointers as to the dimensions which might be used as the principal determinants of the future structure of the Special Programmes Team. This idea was accepted within the team and a Development Workshop was planned, to take place on 13 July, 2000, at Cannon Hall, near Barnsley.

The Development Workshop was attended by about 25 people, covering the stakeholder groups identified in the draft Service Plan, and used an outside facilitator. Attendees were asked to address three questions

- what do we need from the Special Programmes Team?
- what we can offer to this area of work?

- identify some considerations for a future Special Programmes structure (with the Operational Dimensions model from Table 2.3 used to prompt priorities amongst the different dimensions).

Participants were divided up into small groups based on the type of stakeholder they represented, as follows

- those with a community perspective (including voluntary organisations)
- those with a policy making or funder perspective (eg Barnsley MBC Councillors and senior officers, Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber, Yorkshire Forward)
- participants from Barnsley MBC Departments (including some from Special Programmes)
- those with a Strategic Goal Group or key partner perspective (eg Barnsley Learning Partnership, South Yorkshire Coalfield Health Action Zone).

Within the groups, each question was covered in turn, with comments being made on post-it notes. After the workshop the facilitator grouped together the various comments by group and by 'clustered outcome' into a summary report (Smith, 2000). This was disseminated to the participants. The event was successful in engaging stakeholders and produced some useful, if predictable, results on stakeholder priorities for the future structure of the team.

At this time, the Barnsley Forum Executive had recently been formed, as the overarching partnership for Barnsley, with four thematic Strategic Goal Groups working to it, covering

- wealth creation,
- lifelong learning,
- community safety and health, and
- environment, housing and accessibility.

The Strategic Goal Group representatives were seeking more support from the Special Programmes Team. They were particularly keen to see a thematic staff structure, aligned to the Goal Groups, and this came out as the strongest plea from the workshop. Most stakeholder groups felt that funding regime should not be a strong dimension in the structure, wishing to see staff working across funding regime boundaries.

Some stakeholders wanted a point of contact or a dedicated member of staff to link with them, eg the voluntary and community sector, pointing to a stakeholder dimension in the staffing structure itself. Various comments were made about function as an organising dimension, without a clear conclusion. There was a mixed reaction to the possibility of geographical areas within Barnsley being used as a main organising dimension, with some participants wanting to see it as part of a matrix management approach. Programme Lifecycle and Client Group got no support as organising dimensions.

The Indicative Service Plan produced later in July, 2000 to a corporate template included a reference to the seven dimensions and pointed to the need to decide

- which dimensions to use as the primary determinants of the staff structure
- which dimensions also need to be built in to the structure in a 'matrix management' approach
- how we deal with other dimensions which are not part of our future structure.

The Indicative Service Plan referred to the stakeholder consultation on 13 July as one of the factors to use in devising the new structure. It summarised the stakeholders' conclusions as follows,

'The views expressed emphasised the need for a flexible 'matrix' management approach with multi-skilled multi-function staff. A structure which facilitates partnership working and linkages to key stakeholders was suggested. There was strong support for a Strategic Goal Group focus.' (Barnsley MBC, 2000)

Therefore, even in its first rough-and-ready incarnation, the ODF had been used within a management exercise, and had helped stakeholders to form a view on what they wanted to see from the organisational restructuring exercise.

2.9 Finalising the restructuring exercises

Following this, there were further internal discussions on the team's structure. Personally I was keen to see a structure developed which was based as far as possible on matrix management, incorporating the strongest dimensions from the stakeholder consultation. The final structure which was agreed amongst the team incorporated some of the stakeholder preferences but was based more upon incremental amendments from the previous staffing hierarchy, with few major

changes to the duties of individual staff members. In the new Community Planning and Regeneration Division the main change from the 'old' Special Programmes Team was to form a Social Inclusion Team, taking over from the Government Programmes Team, where there was a vacancy at Principal Officer level. The 'old' SRB Team became the Regeneration Programmes Team and was relocated to its own office. The structure remained as the one shown at Fig. 2.3 except that the staff member involved in monitoring Objective 1 for Barnsley became part of the team. From my point of view, the failure to give explicit consideration as to how each of the seven dimensions would be dealt with in the new structure was an opportunity lost, and one which would lead to lack of clarity in working with stakeholders in the future. However, with the benefit of hindsight, it is significant that the new structure included a Social Inclusion Team, assigning responsibility for the 'client group' (or customer) dimension, which had not been done before.

While the final staffing structure failed, in my view, to follow up the earlier work using the dimensional approach as a basis for the restructuring process, the exercise seemed to demonstrate the practical worth of the dimensional approach as an analytical tool. I turned my attention to the development of the ODF and in particular to ways of refining the basic model.

2.10 Commencing the Doctorate in Business Administration, the formulation of the Programme Life-cycle Management Process and refinements to the Operational Dimensions Framework

It was at this time, in late 2000, that I sought details about the Doctorate in Business Administration course at Sheffield Hallam University, and then enrolled on the course in January, 2001. At this time I prepared a further paper, entitled 'The successful implementation of regeneration strategies – the Programme Life-Cycle Management Process' (Breese and JCF Consultancy Services, 2001). This work built on some of the themes in my earlier Stakeholder Model. More specifically, it sought to adapt the methods from 'Managing Successful Programmes', the Computer and Telecommunications Agency (CCTA) guide to programme management, for use in regeneration contexts. The paper was prepared as a staff training course, with four different sections and questions at the end of each section. The concepts that the Programme Life-cycle Management Process was built around are

- the programme life-cycle
- the dimensions of regeneration practice

- input-process-output models
- a view that any model or method is fallible – there is no ‘best way’
- a reflexive approach to practice.

In the course of this work I built an additional layer into the Operational Dimensions Framework. In the analysis of the operational dimensions impacting on the structure and operations of the Special Programmes Team in Barnsley, the seven dimensions were arbitrarily listed. However, it became clear that by relating them to the stages of a programme the dimensions could be categorised according to an input-process-output model.

The inputs were clearly resources – not just funding – but all the human and physical resources needed to undertake work. The functions category equated to processes, while outcomes would be felt by beneficiaries (sometimes I termed them clients, sometimes customers) in terms of the impact on different aspects of their life (themes). The final three dimensions I coined as being ‘contextual’, in that time, space and stakeholders affect all stages of the input-processes-outcome model.

I also broadened my thinking about the application of the Operational Dimensions Framework. It seemed that it was equally applicable to any public service as it was to regeneration work. Because of the formalised appraisal processes in regeneration work the dimensions are overtly incorporated into the everyday routines of practitioners, but when mainstream services are exposed to scrutiny, for example through Best Value, it is clear that the dimensional approach is equally valid.

In 2001 I was looking for ways to use the models I had formulated to generate some financial pay off, to help fund the DBA course. In November, 2001, I became aware of an opportunity to bid into the Treasury’s Evidence Based Policy Fund. I put together an application entitled ‘The integration of operational dimensions – a model to assist joined up working in public services’ .

For this funding application I incorporated all the recent refinements to the Operational Dimensions Framework into the summary table and put together a case for the relevance of the model to the joining up of public services. The argument can be summarised as follows,

- different services use different operational dimensions as the main determinants of their structure, but all seven dimensions impinge upon any public service. With some of the dimensions having many sub-categories, the operating environment of any service is very complex
- restructuring of public services often just means replacing one dimension with another as the dominant one. Unless the implications of the restructure are taken account of across all seven dimensions, there will be unintended consequences and new problems will emerge.
- there are a number of different ways of dealing with the complexities of delivering public services. Often there are commonalities between dimensions which enable them to be grouped for the purposes of strategy formulation and organisational structures. Another technique is simply to prioritise different dimensions. Then any new strategy or restructuring exercise will be able to take account of all the dimensions and ensure a joined up approach is taken.

The application for funding from the Treasury's Evidence Based Policy Fund was unsuccessful, with the reasons being given as

'it was felt that the aims of your bid were too ambitious for an individual researcher to achieve any results which would have a practical influence over policy formation. Also your ability to disseminate the results of your research across government within your budget of £20,000 was also questioned'.

After the bid for funding to the Evidence Based Policy Fund, the Operational Dimensions Framework did not go through any significant changes before I began the DBA thesis in earnest, in 2003.

2.11 Summary

In this chapter I have used a chronological narrative to explain how the Operational Dimensions Framework came to be formulated. Have described the multi-dimensional administrative rules and constraints on the use of regeneration funding and how they varied amongst the different funding programmes, I hope it is clear how I got used to thinking about public services in a dimensional way. As the staff team dedicated to this work at Barnsley MBC grew, the different dimensions were incorporated into the staff structure, albeit in an opportunistic and piecemeal fashion.

The succession of SRB bidding rounds in the late 1990's involved explicit negotiations about different dimensions, to decide how financial resources were to be deployed. Was the new bid to be based around a particular theme, or focused on a particular geographical area, or maybe a combination of the two? With my interest in generalising from experience to develop theoretical tools to inform practice, it became a small step to reflect on the dimensional nature of regeneration activity and devise the first version of the ODF.

The utility of the ODF as a conceptual tool to underpin a consultative exercise was tested at an early stage in the Stakeholder Workshop in 2000. Practitioners recognised the dimensions as a helpful way of representing the work of the team, and the workshop helped to establish which dimensions should be used to determine our new organisational structure. While some of the main messages did carry through into the restructuring proposals, the other aspects of the ODF were ignored. Thus the proposition that the staff roles needed to take account of all seven dimensions was not incorporated into the final staff structure. Hence it did not provide an opportunity to see if a dimension-based structure could help deliver a more coordinated approach to regeneration issues than a traditional structure.

The initial disappointments over the results of the restructuring exercise at Barnsley MBC and the unsuccessful application to the Treasury's Evidence-based Policy Fund demonstrated to me that I needed to do further intellectual work to underpin the ODF and build up its credibility by undertaking a formal research qualification. There were some unresolved issues in the content of the ODF, which were evident to me at that time. One of the main issues concerned the incorporation of concepts such as 'poverty' and 'class' and 'religion' into the framework – how might they fit and what were the implications for the underlying logic behind the ODF? I needed the opportunity to analyse the ODF in depth.

During the first year of the DBA course I became interested in critical realism, and realised that the ODF might gain by subjecting it to analysis using realist concepts. In this way, my outstanding questions might be resolved and the framework would gain a depth that would underpin future practical uses. Critical realism therefore had a major influence over the research method (see Chapter 3).

3. Research Methods

3.1 Aims of the Research and the development of a research method

In the introductory chapter the four aims of the research were outlined

- Aim 1, to assess the coherence of the Operational Dimensions Framework, as a general descriptive theory (coherence theory of truth).
- Aim 2, to assess how well the practice of attempts at joined up working can be understood and the difficulties in achieving it explained through the ODF (correspondence theory of truth)
- Aim 3, to assess whether there are gaps in mainstream public policy theory which could be filled using the Operational Dimensions Framework (consensus theory of truth)
- Aim 4, to assess the usefulness of the ODF to the practice of joining up public services (pragmatism theory of truth)

This chapter will explain what research tools and techniques are to be used to address each of these four, very different, aims, within an overall research framework. Before explaining the research methods and the philosophical positions which underpin them, I will briefly outline the key influences on me and the learning processes I went through in the first two years of the DBA course. The research methods arise from a broad epistemological and ontological position which I had adopted prior to the DBA, which has been refined and developed further during the course.

3.2 Development of my approach to research

The debates on epistemology in the first year of the DBA course enabled me to locate my own position within the range of epistemological and ontological choices, and focus on the social science theories and research methods arising from this broad philosophical position. I became particularly interested in the theories and methods associated with realist philosophy, and in particular Critical Realism, which has developed from the work of Roy Bhaskar, Andrew Sayer and others over the last thirty years. I established that there are many common themes with the social science theories I had been interested in twenty years ago, but also some significant differences. I became aware of the debates between the different camps, for example with Giddens over the relations between structure and agency (Archer, 1995:93-161).

My own interests lay in developing practical research tools from realist approaches. I developed my own classification of research types based on realist assumptions and attempted to locate 'management research' within this overall classification (see Table 3.3 for a later version of this).

In Year 2 of the DBA course we were concerned with establishing the research methods appropriate for our thesis. I pursued my interest in critical realism to see what practical research methods had been developed from this philosophical base. Once again, Andrew Sayer's books were a rich source of guidance, but I looked more widely across the critical realist literature, helped by attending the annual International Association for Critical Realism conference in Bradford in August 2002 and giving a paper there entitled 'The use of a realist approach to research on strategy and its implementation within public services', which drew heavily on the ODF (Breese, 2002).

The paper reviewed realist approaches to the evaluation of public programmes, focusing particularly on Pawson and Tilley's work and their use of the 'context + mechanism = outcome' formulation (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). I questioned the utility of the 'context' concept, and suggested that my model of research types offered an alternative, based on the levels of scientific enquiry (see Appendix 2). In this paper I linked the ODF to realist theories more explicitly than before. For example, I suggested that realist methods, such as Margaret Archer's morphogenetic approach, might help explain some of the difficulties in the implementation of public policy, in combination within the ODF.

In my work on research methods in Year 2 of the DBA, I was particularly interested in the relations between the researcher and the object of research, in those situations where the researcher is using aspects of their 'day job' as their research object. I suggested that the standard texts on social science and management research methods, even when they cover critical methods (eg Gill and Johnson, 2002, Danermark et al, 2002), are based on a degree of separation between the researcher and the object of research which does not adequately reflect the position of management practitioners carrying out research. I developed a model of the research process, the Institutional, Realist Account, which aims to make no such assumptions about the relationship between the researcher and the object of the research. This model was outlined in Chapter 1.

Using the research tools I developed in the first two years of the DBA course, in conjunction with key realist sources (eg. Sayer, 1994 and Danermark et al, 2002), I was therefore in a position to develop an approach to research methods, which aims to draw the distinction between the Operational Dimensions Framework itself as a research tool and the methods to be used to analyse and evaluate the framework as the principal object of research.

In Years 3 and 4 of the DBA course I developed my understanding of research methods while working intensively on the thesis, in particular relating them to the overall approach to demonstrating a contribution to knowledge through the thesis. During this latter period I have been guided by my supervisors for the DBA at Sheffield Hallam University, Jim Chandler and John Darwin, and have drawn on some of John Darwin's current research work on alethic pluralism in developing my ideas.

3.3 Philosophical positions – epistemological and ontological assumptions

Adapting a diagram representing the philosophical basis for management research used by Johnson and Duberley (2000:180), Table 3.1 attempts to pigeon-hole different philosophical positions into one of the three possible categories,

- Objective ontology/objective epistemology (OOOE)
- Objective ontology/subjective epistemology (OOSE)
- Subjective ontology/subjective epistemology (SOSE)

While this threefold categorisation is useful to illustrate in simple terms the implications of different philosophical positions, obviously it cannot reflect the richness of philosophical debates and the ambiguities in different philosophical positions. For example, Johnson and Duberley's version of Table 3.1 has 'conventionalism' straddling the OOSE and SOSE boxes (2000:180). The usefulness of Table 3.1 in the current context is that it shows on one diagram the broad 'camps' into which some of the key 'isms' fall.

Table 3.1 Philosophical positions – epistemological and ontological assumptions

EPISTEMOLOGY

		<i>The act of observation is value free and accurately reflects reality (Objective)</i>	<i>The act of observation is influenced by concepts and values held by the observer (Subjective)</i>
ONTOLOGY	<i>Reality has meaning independent of the observer (Objective)</i>	Positivism Modernism Foundationalism Naïve objectivism Actualism Atomism Empiricism Empirical Realism	Critical realism Pragmatism Critical theory Fallibilism
	<i>Reality has meaning only through the act of observation (Subjective)</i>		Relativism Idealism Post Modernism Constructivism Interpretivism

Note : many of these philosophical positions are difficult to classify because they are primarily based on an ontological or an epistemological position, rather than addressing both dimensions

My epistemological and ontological commitment is to the philosophies in the objective ontology/subjective epistemology (OOSE) box in Table 3.1. I have a particular interest in adding to the research tools emanating from this particular branch of philosophy.

Amongst the research methods deriving from the OOSE box there are common principles, although the nature of the philosophical position means that the research method is seldom prescribed in great detail. In section 3.7 of this chapter I will look at a model for explanatory research based on critical realism (Danermark et al, 2002). There are many common features between their six stage model and an example of a research method specifically emanating from critical theory, entitled 'Critical Theory research : a meta-methodology' (McLean, 2002). These include

- an emphasis on description and analysis of the research object
- tailoring the research methods to the nature of the real-world issue to be addressed – the prescribed research model is pitched at a very general level
- eschewing traditional empirical research frameworks in favour of a method which owes more to conceptualisation and reflection about the object of research and its relationships with other phenomena
- an iterative approach to the derivation of theory, with frequent referencing back to practice
- theories about causal mechanisms being the main goal of research.

In keeping with the pragmatist overtones associated with branches of the OOSE position, the decision to adopt a critical realist approach owes much to the explicit links between philosophy, social theory and research method already found within critical realism, (Sayer, 1992, Danermark et al., 2002) which provides a ready-made foundation for the DBA research.

3.4 Critical Realism and the nature of scientific enquiry

The core realist belief is the ontological one that the world and the universe exist without any human awareness of this existence being necessary (Connelly, 2000). When combined with an epistemological position that the act of observation is value free and accurately reflects reality (see Table 3.1), this leads to an empirical realist position, which is equivalent to empiricism (Sayer, 2000:11). Critical realism, on the

other hand, draws a distinction between the transitive and intransitive dimensions of knowledge. There are different and rival theories about the world which are constantly changing – the transitive dimension – but the world they are about – the intransitive dimension – does not necessarily change as a result. The world should not therefore be conflated with our experience of it (Sayer, 2000:11).

Realists oppose conventionalist theories of truth, which define truth in relativist fashion as whatever a community, scientific or otherwise, agrees it is (Sayer, 2000:41). Instead, realism is commonly associated with correspondence theories of truth. Sayer's position is that notions of correspondence have to be based on conformability and intelligibility, mediated through discourse (Sayer, 2000:42). He then refers to his previous use of the term 'practical adequacy' whereby truth is interpreted as the extent to which expectations about the world and the results of actions are realised. Johnson and Duberley (2000:157-163) argue that Sayer's position is implicitly based on the traditions of pragmatism, which is deeply fallibilistic. Collier (1994:239-240) refers to coherence and pragmatic theories of truth as being potentially associated with realism, although they are more plausible as criteria of truth, because of the circularity of their claims to define truth. I would suggest that a realist position allows all theories of truth consistent with the underlying realist philosophy to be viewed as legitimate, if they are viewed as criteria for truth, rather than definitions of truth. From this perspective, the consensus theory of truth should be one of the criteria for truth – this is very different from defining truth as whatever a scientific community says it is.

Bhaskar's critical realism distinguishes between the domains of the real, the actual and the empirical, which establish a depth to reality (Collier, 1994:42-45). The *real* refers to the structures and powers of objects, the *actual* refers to what happens if and when those powers are activated, while the *empirical* refers to what we experience (Sayer, 2000:11-12). Table 3.2 illustrates how this formulation provides depth to scientific enquiry. The key to explanation lies in identifying mechanisms, which can be conceptualised as the laws of science in operation, which bring about events which can be observed. In social sciences, the objects of research are open systems, in which a multiplicity of mechanisms are working conjointly to bring about many events.

Table 3.2 Layers of Scientific Enquiry (adapted from Collier, 1989, P45)

<i>Scientific Level</i>	<i>Science</i>
Higher	?
	psychological and semiological sciences
	social sciences
	biological sciences
	molecular sciences
Lower	?

Realism attempts to pin down causal relationships by drawing the distinction between necessary relations and contingent (neither necessary nor impossible) relations (Sayer, 2000:16-17). Combining this distinction with the theoretical constructs mentioned previously leads to a realist structure of causal explanation (Figure 3.1, reproduced from Sayer, 1992:109).

A central tenet of critical realism is the existence of different layers or strata within nature. Higher strata are emergent from, but not reducible to, lower strata. Different branches of science are concerned with different strata. Collier has attempted to place different sciences in order, according to their role in what critical realists call vertical explanation, the explanation of mechanisms at one stratum by mechanisms at a lower stratum, without replacing the higher layer mechanism (Collier, 1994:48-49 and 130-134). Table 3.2 summarises these relationships.

Although in his 1989 book Collier places the psychological and semiological sciences above the social sciences, later he indicates that the relative position of the psychological and semiological sciences and the social sciences cannot be definitively resolved (Collier, 1994:132-134).

Holland (2005:2) argues that from a critical realist standpoint the differentiation of the natural sciences reflects differences between the layers of scientific enquiry, whereas in the social sciences it reflects differentiation of objects lying at one particular level. Natural structures and mechanisms emerge at different levels of reality, but social structures and mechanisms emerge at the same level. The implications for Table 3.2 would be that the social sciences and psychological/semiological sciences should be alongside each other.

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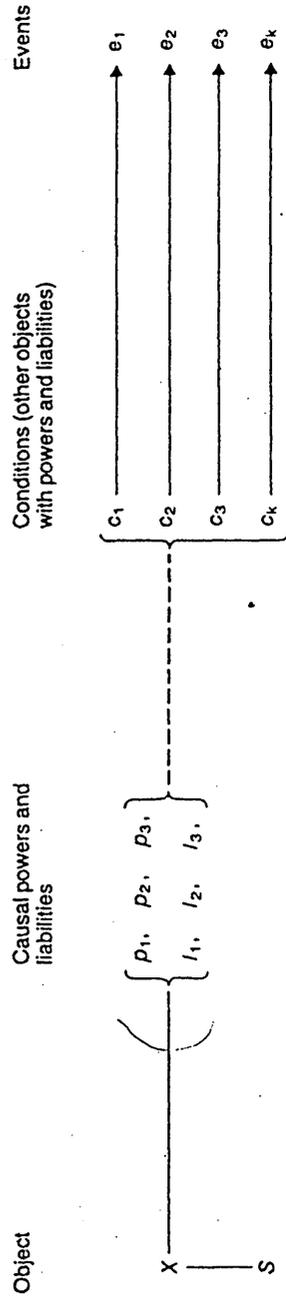
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Figure 3.1 The structures of causal explanation
(reproduced from Sayer, 1992)



Object X, having structure S

..... necessarily possessing causal powers (p) and liabilities (l).....

..... under specific conditions (c)

will:

- (c₁) not be activated, hence producing no change — e₁
- (c₂) produce change of type e₂
- (c₃) produce change of type e₃, etc.

———— = necessary relation

- - - - - = contingent relation

3.5 The nature of management and management research

Using Collier's concept of ordering different scientific groupings, I developed Table 3.3, also incorporating another dimension, the nature of the research function. Table 3.3 distinguishes only between the natural sciences, the social sciences, within which I would for this purpose include psychological and semiological sciences, and the arts/built environment. At each scientific level there are management processes, which can themselves be the *object of research*. Most management research is concerned with the control of social processes (Row 2a in Table 3.3), where the research takes as its object the purposive attempts of individuals and/or organisations in a position of power to influence social processes. Management research covers both the private sector, where more and more control of both internal processes and the external business environment is attempted, and the public sector, where increasingly all services are managed to seek to achieve social outcomes. This conceptualisation of management invokes the overtly critical approach promoted by Alvesson and Wilmott (1996). The distinction I make between management and social processes is just a useful research device, in Holland's terms differentiating objects of enquiry from within the social science level.

Other types of management include activities which are aiming to manage nature (Row 1a in Table 3.3) and activities which are managing inanimate objects produced by people, eg the built environment or an art collection (Row 3a), although in practice these management processes occur in conjunction with the management of social processes (Row 2a). Foot and mouth disease has been chosen as the example to illustrate the different types of research because it is easy to see how the full range of management activities, and associated research, would apply.

I see the regeneration initiatives in which I have had personal involvement (see Chapter 2) as an attempt, orchestrated through Government, to combine the resources of public, private, voluntary and community sectors in the management of change in a defined geographical area, amongst particular client groups and over specific aspects of people's lives. Therefore regeneration is one of the most extreme examples of management of social processes, being a concerted attempt to influence them to achieve particular social outcomes.

Table 3.3 Forms of Research

Type of Research	Primary Object	Secondary Object	Example	Comments
Processes as Primary Object				
1. <i>Natural Science</i>	'Natural' Processes	-	Research into nature and incidence of foot and mouth disease	Natural Sciences break down into different strata in Bhaskar's work
1a Management of the Natural Environment	Management processes	'Natural' processes	Research into the management of the spread of foot and mouth disease	
1b Meta-management of the Natural Environment	Meta-management processes	Management processes	Research into the coordination of management of the spread of foot and mouth disease with other management processes	
2. <i>Social Science</i>	Social Processes	'Natural' Processes	Research into the social effects of foot and mouth disease	Researcher studying people -- therefore there is a 'double hermeneutic'
2a. Management of Social Processes	Management Processes	Social Processes	Research into management of the social effects of foot and mouth disease	Suggestions of a 'triple hermeneutic'
2b Meta-management of social processes	Meta-management processes	Management processes	Research into the co-ordination of the management of the social effects of foot and mouth disease with other management processes	
3. <i>Arts and the built environment</i>	Artefact of Social Processes	Social Processes	Research into poetry or paintings inspired by foot and mouth disease	This category could be broadened to include other human creations, such as IT systems
3a Management of the arts and the built environment	Management processes	Artefacts	Research into the management of poetry or paintings inspired by foot and mouth disease	
3b Meta-management of the arts and the built environment	Meta-management processes	Management processes	Research into the coordination of the management of poetry or paintings inspired by foot and mouth disease with other management processes	

Table 3.3 Forms of Research
Continued

Type of Research	Primary Object	Secondary Object	Example	Comments
Other research as Primary Object (critique)				
4i. Specific Critique	Another's research output	Object of the research which is subject to critique	Review of Government reports into the management of foot and mouth disease	The primary object could be any of categories 1-3 above
4ii General Critique	Totality of research in a particular field	Object of research in the field subject to critique	Review of all research into the management of foot and mouth outbreaks	The scope of the research will follow from its purpose
4a Management of research critiques	Management processes	Research	Review of how research into foot and mouth disease has been managed	
4b Meta-management of research critiques	Meta-management processes	Management processes	Review of how the management of research into foot and mouth disease has been coordinated with the management of other research	

The conceptualisation of research is a broad one. I accept the distinction between a 'subject', the researcher, and an 'object', which is being researched, but aim to focus on the relations between the two, in order to avoid the 'dualism' trap (Giddens, 1979:4-5). As well as the 'primary object' and 'secondary object' columns in Table 3.3, I suggest that for 'higher' strata one could trace a path to tertiary and quaternary processes, going deeper into the scientific layers. Therefore, social processes are underlain by biological processes, which in turn are underlain by molecular processes (see Table 3.2). In undertaking research on social processes there may be investigation of the biological processes underlying them (for example, the physiological processes taking place in an individual when committing a crime). Mechanisms at the biological level would deepen the explanation but would not replace the explanation taking place at the social level. For social science research it would rarely be the case that the explanatory framework needed to reach further down from the biological sciences to the molecular sciences.

I suggest that management research can be distinguished from other types of social scientific research because it is focussed specifically on processes of purposive management, whereas in other types of research management processes are just one of a number of different variables. So in the example given in Table 3.3, research into the social effects of foot and mouth disease would take account of the ways in which the effects of the disease were managed, along with all the other implications of the disease. This is different from a research design specifically aiming to evaluate how the effects of the disease were managed by those with the powers and duties to undertake management functions. However, I would also suggest that any research into management processes is likely to take as its 'secondary object' the underlying natural or social processes at work. Hence, if one wished to evaluate the attempts of Government to ameliorate the effects of foot and mouth on agricultural businesses it would be necessary for the researcher to have some understanding of how those businesses operate.

In the case of the management of social processes, management must be viewed as a relationship between the manager and the managed. In the case of 'self-management' the two categories are the same but in all other cases both 'the manager' and 'the managed' will be subject to a much wider range of social processes than the management processes which form the primary research object. Research into the management processes will need to take these contextual factors into account.

The 'types of research' listed in Table 3.3 are just one of the many different ways in which research activities can be categorised. Sayer related different approaches to research to critical realism's structures of causal explanation (Sayer, 1992:237). While there are many different types of research, they all ultimately have to take 'concrete objects' as their starting point and raw material (Sayer, 1992:239). This would be consistent with Table 3.3, where all research can be related to the levels of scientific strata. In Table 3.3 I label the forms of research which do not take as their *primary object* concrete objects as 'critiques'. At one end of the spectrum, the primary object for the critique would be very specific, ie the research output of another individual or organisation. At the other extreme, the grand purpose might be to undertake a critique of the totality of research outputs in a given field. I would suggest that in all research of this nature, the researcher also draws on their own experience and views about the objects of the research which they are subjecting to critique, in the form of a secondary object.

The nature of the primary research object from Table 3.3 has an impact on the nature of scientific enquiry and hence on claims to have contributed to knowledge through research. As far as research into management of social processes is concerned, there are important implications arising from the distinction I have made between the primary research object, management processes, and the secondary research object, wider social processes. A distinction is drawn between the interpretation of meaning in the natural sciences, where a 'single hermeneutic' applies, and the social sciences, where it is necessary to address meanings constituted both by oneself, as 'subject' and meanings constituted by those who form the object of the research. Hence in the social sciences there is a 'double hermeneutic', (Sayer, 1992:35).

When the researcher is engaged in critique, the multiplicity of actors at different strata increases still further – as well as the meanings of the researcher undertaking the critique there are the meanings of those who undertook the prior research.

I have also identified a further layer beyond management of a specific natural process, social process or artefacts, which is concerned with 'meta-management', or coordination with other management processes. Research types 1b, 2b and 3b give examples of this meta-management level. Meta-management is also relevant to situations where it is the management of research which is the primary object (Research type 4b).

Meta-management is particularly associated with the joining up of public services, where we are concerned with the coordination of management processes. Within government there are now various kinds and levels of meta-management process taking place to try to coordinate the complex and fragmented state apparatus.

3.6 The role of researcher and relations with the object of research

Although the Operational Dimensions Framework features as an object of research throughout, the four aims of the research project involve different 'types of research' from Table 3.3. There is a broad distinction between

- Aims 1 and 3, where the primary object is the ODF itself and which are examples of Research Type 4, Critique.
- Aims 2 and 4, where the primary object will be associated in some way with joined up working in public services, and which will be examples of Research Type 2a, Management of Social Processes or 2b, Meta-management of Social Processes

Aim 1, to assess the coherence of the Operational Dimensions Framework as a general descriptive theory involves analysis of the ODF as a 'research output'. This aim therefore involves a form of Research Type 4i, Specific Critique, in the terms of Table 3.3. However, it will be an unusual example, in that it is my own 'research output' which I am subjecting to critique, rather than someone else's!

Aim 2, to assess how well the practice of attempts at joined up working can be understood and the difficulties in achieving it explained through the ODF (correspondence theory of truth) involves research into the management of public services. There are choices to be made about the levels of management that are chosen as being the primary object of the research – it could be management processes (Research Type 2a) or meta-management processes (Research Type 2b) or a combination of the two.

Aim 3, to assess whether there are gaps in mainstream public policy theory which could be filled using the Operational Dimensions Framework (consensus theory of truth) is concerned with the analysis of a broad corpus of theory. It therefore involves Research Type 4ii, General Critique, in the terms of Table 3.3.

Aim 4, to assess the usefulness of the ODF to the practice of joining up public services (pragmatism theory of truth) is another example of Research Type 2a, Management of Social Processes and/or Research Type 2b Meta-management of Social Processes. I will be looking at how the Operational Dimensions Framework is being used or might be used to improve management practice in some way. As with Aim 2, there are choices to be made on the extent to which I focus on the meta-management level.

The relationships involved in the different research tasks are affected by the fact that I am both the researcher and the principal author of the object of the research, which makes this thesis unusual. In a doctoral research project, the researcher will often apply someone else's theories to a particular research context. In a DBA, the researcher might be asked to address a particular problem within their organisation, creating an artificial distance between researcher and research object, for the sake of the project. This kind of role is what texts on research methods for managers tend to be promoting, albeit from a position that research is a pervasive characteristic of reflective management in practice. Thus Gill and Johnson (2002:203) conclude their book with the statement,

'It is our belief that managers, and especially those on part-time Masters and Doctoral programmes, may be readily equipped to act as researchers in their own organisations, by building on what effective managers actually do in practice. If in some way we have facilitated this, particularly by suggesting a broader range of research strategies, our work will have been worthwhile'.

In my case, I am evaluating a management tool I have devised myself, and include an explicit promotional element within the research, in Aim 4, to assess the usefulness of the ODF. I would suggest that the relations between the researcher and the object of research fall outside the usual range of options considered in management research texts. For example, Gill and Johnson's methodological continuum moves from experimental approaches to surveys, then on to action research and finally ethnography, as the distance between the researcher and the object of research becomes less and less and the methods move from nomothetic to ideographic (Gill and Johnson, 2002:44). While the methodological continuum may be useful in contrasting nomothetic and ideographic methods, I would suggest that it does not adequately capture the kind of researcher-object of research relationship involved in my thesis.

My position could be characterised as being 'beyond ethnography', in that there is no organisational distance between the researcher and the object of research. While the 'field roles' under ethnography might often involve participant observation, either as

'participant-as-observer or complete participant (Gill and Johnson, 2002:149) the researcher would not usually have been in the same management environment as those being studied before the research was commissioned. Even in ethnographic studies where the researcher obtains a job in the organisation to be researched, eg for Porter's critical realist ethnographic study of racism in a medical setting (in Ackroyd and Fleetwood, 2000:141-160), there is still a distance between the participant observer and their work environment, by virtue of their status as a researcher. In my case, the object of the research has arisen out of the 'day job' and the intention is to apply it there as well.

The nature of the researcher-object of research relationship has implications for both the *philosophical underpinnings* for the research and the *stakeholder allegiances* bound up with the research.

It will be clear already that from my own ontological and epistemological position, the concept of an objective, neutral assessment of a research tool such as the ODF is highly problematic. All the philosophies in the 'OOSE' box in Table 3.1 would propose that theory-neutral evaluation is impossible and the potential for bias would be especially strong when critiquing one's own work. There are also issues of consistency between the methods I would use to evaluate the ODF and the philosophical and methodological underpinnings of the ODF itself.

I would consider that the ODF is underpinned by philosophies from the objective ontology/subjective epistemology 'box', even though at the time it was devised I was unaware of some of them. Thus, it proposes that all attempts to understand reality (which does exist independent of the observer) have to be located within the seven dimensions – there is no value free knowledge extending across time and space and different stakeholders will have different perspectives on any management issue. Because I am both the researcher and the author of the principal object of the research, the methods used to undertake research on the ODF ought to draw from the same philosophical underpinnings for the sake of consistency.

The second area where the researcher-object of research relationship has implications for the research method, concerns the stakeholder allegiances. The 'realist, institutionalist' account of the research process in the social sciences, which was introduced in Chapter 1, aims to give full recognition of the role of stakeholders, especially at particular stages where their influence on the research is most obvious.

One of the stages is at the assembly of the inputs into the research process. In my case, the stakeholders providing the resources for the DBA have a weaker allegiance to the research study than might often be the case.

As outlined in Chapter 2, the ODF was essentially my creation, with some help from colleagues at Barnsley MBC. While my role as Strategic Coordinator for the South Yorkshire Coalfield Partnership includes Barnsley, I am now employed by Rotherham MBC where approval for the part financing of the course fees was made. Yorkshire Forward fund my post and its supporting budget, through the South Yorkshire Coalfields Single Regeneration Budget scheme, so they have a strong funding stake as well. However, none of these organisations have a particular affinity with the ODF – at various points influential individuals in these organisations have expressed interest in it, but they have not followed that through to say that it should be utilised in the corporate affairs of the organisation. While I have shown the ODF to many other contacts of mine, including many within the other main stakeholder, Sheffield Hallam University, no one has 'adopted it for themselves'. Therefore, the promotional aspect of the research still rests almost entirely with me.

This means that choices about the research method are almost totally within my control, but that I have to orientate the research to ensure that key stakeholders and any other organisations and individuals who are brought into the research work will obtain specific benefits from their involvement, at the 'impacts and outputs' stage in Figure 1.1. This has particular relevance to Aim 4, to demonstrate the usefulness of the ODF in practical terms. I need to choose examples which will provide benefits for the participating organisations, without criticising their organisational ideologies and practices in a way which they would find unhelpful. I need to integrate the examples with my own work with the South Yorkshire Coalfield Partnership where I can, to avoid an impossible burden upon my time. For the longer term promotional aim of the research, the examples need to be ones with the potential to influence key decision makers. These are factors which will influence the choices I make about whether to focus on the management or meta-management level.

My own interest in promoting the ODF also affects the similar choices I need to make on the research under Aim 2. The more convincing the explanation of the correspondence between events in the real world and the insights from the ODF the more highly the ODF is likely to be regarded.

3.7 Realist research methods

It is in keeping with realism as a philosophy that there is no single, all-encompassing realist research method. However, much debate centres on the consistency of different research tools with a critical realist approach. For example, Sayer analyses in some detail whether quantitative methods have any role to play within the causal explanation research framework he espouses (Sayer, 1992:175-203).

'Explaining Society – Critical Realism in the Social Sciences' by Danermark, Ekstrom, Jakobsen and Karlsson (2002), is centrally about the methodological implications of a critical realist approach to social science. Although critical realism is not a homogenous movement, these authors argue that the basic ideas of critical realism have methodological implications for issues such as generalisation, scientific inferences, explanations and the role of theory (Danermark et al. 2002:1).

For Danermark et al., the fundamental traits of critical realism are summed up by Archer et al, (1998:xi) in the following 'critical realism claims to be able to combine and reconcile ontological realism, epistemological relativism and judgemental rationality'. Danermark et al. (2002:73) therefore see critical realism as a meta-theory, concerning the foundational assumptions and preconditions of science. They refer to three fundamental methodological arguments

1. All science should have generalising claims. They refer to two ways in which something can be general, a generally occurring empirical phenomenon or event or as a fundamental property or structure. Critical realism is particularly concerned with the latter, and about the transfactual conditions by which something is what it is and not something different (P77-78)
2. Scientific methods rely upon various modes of inference. For critical realist science, there are four modes, deduction, induction, abduction and retroduction. What makes critical realism different from most other meta-theories is the explicit use of abduction and retroduction (P79-106). Table 3.4 includes the definitions of the four modes of inference used by Danermark et al.
3. An overall aim of social science research is to explain events and processes. Danermark et al. refer to a model for explanatory research drawn from Bhaskar's work which they contrast with the Popper-Hempel explanatory model (P106-112). The critical realist model has 6 stages, to be viewed as a guideline and not a template. They are

Stage 1, Description

Stage 2, Analytical resolution

Stage 3, Abduction/theoretical redescription

Stage 4, Retroduction

Stage 5, Comparison between different theories and abstractions

Stage 6, Concretization and contextualisation

It is noteworthy that the model starts and ends in the 'concrete', the world as we find it. However, it also includes much emphasis upon different modes of inference and reflects the critical realist preoccupation with conceptualisation and the role of theory.

Danermark et al. then look in more detail at theory in the methodology of social science, and the need to deal with theory and research method together, rather than separately. They describe how scientific knowledge builds on systematic development of theory, working at different levels of abstraction. They demonstrate how general theory can be used in research practice and they argue that there is an empirical bias where the role of general theory is underestimated, eg in grounded theory and middle range theory (Danermark et al., 2002:148, 149).

It is clear that Danermark et al. see a wide range of criteria as being relevant to the validity of a theory (P148). The questions which they suggest should be asked of any theory can be related to the various theories of truth. Thus a question such as 'Are there aspects/dimensions of the research object that cannot be conceptualised from the theory in question?' is concerned with the coherence of the theory and 'To what extent can we, starting in the theory, understand and explain connections and processes...' is concerned with correspondence. 'Does the theory promote a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of interest' has links to the consensus theory of truth. Later on in their book Danermark et al. have a chapter devoted to social science and practice, illustrating their commitment to the pragmatism theory of truth. They use the example of the relocation of elderly people to argue that 'practitioners must make use of social scientific theories which specify the structures and mechanisms that are relevant to the field' (P192). Thus it can be argued that they have an interest in all four theories of truth.

Table 3.4 Four modes of inference and their relevance to the research method

	<i>Deduction</i>	<i>Induction</i>	<i>Abduction</i>	<i>Retroduction</i>
Fundamental structure/ thought operations	To derive logically valid conclusions from given premises. To derive knowledge of individual phenomena from universal laws.	From a number of observations to draw universally valid conclusions about a whole population. To see similarities in a number of observations and draw the conclusion that these similarities also apply to non-studied cases. From observed co-variants to draw conclusions about law-like relations.	To interpret and recontextualize individual phenomena within a conceptual framework or set of ideas. To be able to understand something in a new way by observing and interpreting this something in a new conceptual framework	From a description and analysis of concrete phenomena to reconstruct the basic conditions for these phenomena to be what they are. By way of thought operations and counterfactual thinking to argue towards transfactual conditions
The central issue	What are the logical conclusions of the premises?	What is the element common for a number of observed entities and is it true also of a larger population?	What meaning is given to something interpreted within a particular conceptual framework?	What qualities must exist for something to be possible?
Relevance to the research method for this thesis	As a general descriptive theory, the ODF has law-like claims, in relation to the nature of reality, assuming an objective ontology. Therefore it can be used in a deductive way to interpret individual phenomena and to critique other attempts to theorise about social processes	The original formulation of the Operational Dimensions Framework was informed by experience of a number of different regeneration programmes. It involved looking at common elements which would also be found in a wider context, wherever public services are delivered	When originally devising the ODF, abduction was used to place the individual elements into the wider framework. It is also useful in placing the ODF within other theoretical frameworks, and hence refining & recontextualising it. Finally, abduction provides the means by which social processes can be located within the ODF, and understood in a new way. In this sense, the value of the ODF is as a way of thinking about the world.	Retroduction provides a means of checking the validity of the ODF, thinking about the individual dimensions and also about their relationships with each other.

continued

Table 3.4 Four modes of inference and their relevance to the research method continued

	<i>Deduction</i>	<i>Induction</i>	<i>Abduction</i>	<i>Retroduction</i>
Main contribution to the aims of the thesis	Important part of Aims 1 and 3 which are concerned with the status of the ODF as a general descriptive theory	Main contribution was in the original formulation of the ODF, there is also an element of induction in Aims 2 and 4, which are relating the ODF to the 'real world'.	Abduction is a fundamental process for achieving all four aims, but is particularly important for Aim 1.	Important for Aim 1, To demonstrate the coherence of the ODF as a general descriptive theory.

Danermark et al. advocate a critical methodological pluralism, using Sayer's distinction between intensive and extensive research design (Sayer, 1992:243). So long as the critical realist meta-theory is used to define the limits of different methods, there is no reason to rule out the use of any method (Danermark et al., 2002:175). Intensive and extensive research designs complement each other. As referred to above, Danermark et al. also follow Sayer in arguing for closer relationships between social science and practice, from a critical realist understanding of the relationship between structure and agency, as originally developed by Bhaskar in the transformational model of the connection between social structure and agency and by Archer in the morphogenetic approach (Danermark et al, 2002:177-197).

Danermark et al.'s six stage model seems not to have been applied very often. Although the example they use to illustrate its usage, to a study of gender segregation in the Swedish labour market, dates from 1994, there do not seem to be other published examples where it has been used (Karlsson, 2006, private correspondence). By using it as a guide to the current research project an extra dimension to the thesis is added – to see how well the six stage model assists in providing coherence and shape to the research process. In order to do this, it is necessary first to go into more depth on the relevance of the six stage model, and then see how it links in with the other methodological tools and models introduced earlier in the chapter.

3.8 The critical realist six stage explanatory research model

Table 3.5 sets out the six stages in Danermark et al.'s model, summarised from the description of them in Pages 109-111 of 'Explaining Society'. Alongside each stage is a commentary on its relevance for the research method to be used for this thesis. Stage 1 and aspects of Stage 2 have already been covered in first chapter of the thesis.

Danermark et al. emphasize that the six stage model is a guideline, not a template (2002:109). The six stages need not necessarily follow each other in the same order, and different types of research will focus more on some stages than others. They also say that, in practice, much social science research follows this model, although it is not explicitly based on it.

Table 3.5 Relevance of the six stage model of explanatory research based on critical realism

<i>Stage</i>	<i>Relevance</i>
<p>1. Description of the event or situation we intend to study, making use of everyday concepts. Includes the interpretations of the people involved. An explanatory social science usually starts in the concrete.</p>	Chapter 2 describes how the ODF came to be formulated. The starting point for the work is my response to practical management issues and the object of the research has to be fully explained in order to decide on the appropriate research method.
<p>2. Analytical resolution, separating or dissolving the composite and the complex, by distinguishing the various components, aspects or dimensions¹. Decisions on which components to study – it is never possible to study anything in all its different components.</p>	Because the aim of the ODF is to capture the different dimensions which make up the full complexity of reality, the approach is different from most research. Chapter 1 distinguishes the dimensions, but the research aims require looking at the whole framework, with less attention to individual dimensions than would be the case in a more narrowly focused research study.
<p>3. Abduction/theoretical resolution, interpreting and redescribing the different components from hypothetical conceptual frameworks and theories about structures and relations. The object of study is further developed when placed in new ‘contexts of ideas’.</p>	While abduction as a mode of inference was used extensively in devising the ODF, at this stage it involves relating the ODF to other theories and conceptual frameworks. This would help to confirm the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of the ODF, and relates mainly to Aim 1, to demonstrate the coherence of the ODF as a general descriptive theory.
<p>4. Retrodution, focusing on the different components being studied and asking questions like</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - how are the structures and relations involving that component possible? - What properties underpin them? - What causal mechanisms are involved? <p>In practice Stages 3 and 4 are closely linked.</p>	<p>Retrodution as a mode of inference is a tool that can contribute to the work to confirm the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of the ODF. As referred to in Table 3.4, retrodution will be an important process for Aim 1, to demonstrate the coherence of the ODF.</p> <p>As suggested by Danermark et al., Stages 3 and 4 will be closely linked, both being covered in Chapters 4 and 5, (Coherence).</p>
<p>5. Comparison between different theories and abstractions, in which the relative explanatory power of the various mechanisms and structures hitherto developed is assessed. In some cases theories are competitive, and one theory describes the necessary conditions for what has been explained, so has more explanatory power. In other cases theories are complementary, both focusing on different necessary conditions.</p>	A key issue for the thesis is how to link the discussion of different theories (Aim 3) to the analysis of concrete events (Aim 2). The approach to be taken in this research will be to consider the explanatory power of the ODF in relation to Government attempts to join up public services first (Aim 2), and then compare the ODF with other theories (Aim 3). How far the ODF can be said to be a superior theory on the basis of its explanatory power, will be explored in these chapters, together with other criteria for distinguishing between theories.
<p>6. Concretization/contextualization, examining how different structures and mechanisms are manifested in different contexts. The aims are to interpret the meanings of the mechanisms and contribute to explanations of concrete events and processes</p>	By applying the ODF to different work situations, its explanatory power will be explored. However, the objective is not primarily to generate explanatory power, but to demonstrate the usefulness of the ODF in practical terms – a very pragmatic aim.

¹ It is interesting that this stage involves words like ‘dimensions’ and ‘components’, because it suggests that the ODF could be one of the tools that might be used in Analytical Resolution.

Key characteristics of the model include the emphasis on careful description and analysis of the object of the research. Therefore, as is the case in my work, if a meta-theoretical framework is the object of the research much attention will need to be paid to analysis of that framework using the four modes of inference. The use of abduction and retrodution as research processes to complement the more commonly used induction and deduction should therefore be particularly appropriate in this case.

There is less emphasis than in most research models on empirical research. There is no stage entitled 'data collection and analysis'. Instead, the research model begins and ends in the 'concrete', and the whole research method involves moving constantly between the abstract and the everyday world, in the use of the different modes of inference. The relative explanatory power of the theories generated in the research is the main criterion of their success, as opposed to the hypothesis-testing Popper-Hempel approach, where conformity to universal laws or law-like regularities is aspired to (Danermark et al., 2002:106). Use of Danermark et al.'s model would suggest that the ODF needs to be related to the practice of joining up public services and to the other theories which are used to help join them up, to draw conclusions about its explanatory power. Given the methodological pluralism espoused by Danermark et al., there are many different ways in which this might be done. As referred to in the comments about Stage 5 of the model, the most effective approach will be one which links practical and theoretical analysis most effectively.

Referring back to the four aims of the research and the different theories of truth they cover, a potential limitation of Danermark et al.'s model is its seemingly exclusive focus on explanatory power, which links most closely to the correspondence theory of truth. However, in applying the six stage model in practice other theories of truth will be covered. For example, Stage 2, Analytical Resolution, incorporates elements of the coherence theory of truth, by focusing on the internal structure of the object of the study. The six stage model does not prevent a wider focus, so, for example, Stage 6, *Concretization and Contextualisation*, can incorporate assessment of the ODF against pragmatism as a theory of truth. Finally, as referred to in Section 3.7, when Danermark et al. discuss the validity criteria for theories they make links to all four theories of truth.

The six stage model is, therefore, another useful tool for building up the research method for the thesis. Particularly useful is the explicit reference to abduction and retrodution, modes of inference which are very appropriate to this type of research. By using the six stage model as a guide rather than a template and in particular taking a

wider view on the criteria for assessing the worth of the research than just explanatory power, it can help in the process of formulating the research method.

3.9 Research methods

In the chapter so far a number of pointers have been set out on the research methods appropriate for the thesis, stemming from its philosophical underpinnings and methodological tools I have developed from them. They include,

- the classification of research types in Table 3.3, which specifies the type of research likely to be most appropriate for addressing each of the four research aims and the choices open to me at this stage
- the need to ensure that the philosophical underpinnings for the research methods for the thesis are consistent with those upon which the ODF itself, as a potential research tool, is based
- the need to take into account the relationship between myself as the researcher and the main object of the research, the ODF, and in particular the promotional role I naturally pursue because it is 'mine'.
- the potential of Danermark et al.'s six stage explanatory research model to help structure the thesis, with guidance on the modes of inference useful for exploring each aim
- the methodological pluralism associated with the Danermark et al. branch of critical realism, which gives me a wide choice in terms of the potential research methods I could use
- the concern as to whether there is too much emphasis on explanation in Danermark et al.'s research methods, given that critical realism espouses a concern for all the four theories of truth which the aims of the thesis address.

I will now cover the detailed research method for each of the four theories of truth.

Research methods for Aim 1, to assess the coherence of the Operational Dimensions Framework, as a general descriptive theory (coherence theory of truth).

This aim involves a 'Specific Critique' type of research, in the terms of Table 3.3. It will cover aspects of Stages 2-4 in Danermark et al.'s six stage model. Using the six stage model to guide the order in which the aims are covered within the text of the thesis, this is the first aim to be explored.

While this aim is internal to the ODF, it is one of the fundamental tenets of a critical realist social science that all theory is ultimately rooted in experience. In Chapter 2 it was apparent how the ODF arose out of everyday working experience. It is therefore necessary to continue to move constantly between the abstract and the concrete, or in terms of theories of truth, between correspondence and coherence. To put it another way, in terms of Table 3.3, the primary object of the research is a potential research tool, the ODF, but it cannot satisfactorily be subjected to critique without considering secondary and tertiary research objects, which in this case are meta-management/management processes and social processes.

It is also a maxim associated with the research approach developed earlier in the chapter that no theory can be viewed in isolation from the wider corpus of theory of which it is a part. This maxim is incorporated into the definition of coherence. The fit with the wider corpus of theory is a key part of assessing how coherent a theory is (see Section 4.1). Therefore, to address the coherence of the ODF involves elements of 'General Critique', in the terms of Table 3.3, and elements of *Stage 5, Comparison between different theories and abstractions*, from the Danermark et al. six stage model. To cover this aspect of coherence, I will look at two theories which bear the closest fit with the ODF that I have found – Gulick's Systems of Organisation and Challis' work on the organisation of Social Services Departments.

Aim 1 involves exploring the concepts contained in the seven dimensions of the ODF and the relationships between them. The thought processes appropriate to such a task include abduction and retroduction, so having identified and described these modes of inference in Section 3.7 and 3.8, they will be used as part of the research process in Chapter 4.

Ways of assessing the coherence of a theory will be invoked, such as consistency and elegance (Darwin, 2004A:47). Notions of theories as rational abstractions or chaotic conceptions will also be used (Sayer, 1992:138-139). Initially I will use these criteria to evaluate the ODF as a whole, for example, analysing the robustness of the seven dimensional model and the relationships between the different dimensions. This will be covered in Chapter 4, and will lead to groupings of dimensions, which will be used to structure the finer-grained analysis which follows in Chapter 5.

Each of the seven dimensions needs to be analysed to draw out the fundamental nature of the dimension and, in some cases, the sub-categories within the dimension.

As well as using the different modes of inference there will be a need to refer to the bodies of literature which pertain to each dimension. This work could easily be a complete thesis in its own right, but for present purposes I need only to establish the basic ontological and epistemological status of each dimension. The standing of each dimension has long been established through the recording of everyday experience and by prior theorising.

Chapter 5 will be concerned with the conceptualisation of the dimensions and the sub-categories behind them. To do this I will draw on relevant theories, including areas of contention within the social sciences, such as the structure/agency and nature/nurture debates.

Chapter 5 will end with an overall review of the implications for the ODF of the discussion of coherence. Have the individual elements and the framework as a whole stood up to the in-depth evaluation to which they have been subjected? Are there any changes needed to the ODF or different ways of representing it which would add to its coherence?

Aim 2, to assess how well the practice of attempts at joined up working can be understood and the difficulties in achieving it explained through the ODF (correspondence theory of truth)

This aim involves research into the management and meta-management of social processes, in the terms of Table 3.3 (Research Types 2a and 2b). Although Danermark et al's six stage model is very much concerned with explanation as the purpose of research, there is no one stage which addresses correspondence – it is more a general theme throughout. However, there are parts of Stages 5 and 6 in the model which are particularly concerned with correspondence. My approach is to have a specific research aim which is devoted to correspondence, while recognising that correspondence features in many different parts of the thesis. Insofar as this aim can be related to the six stage model, it would suggest that it might be the second aim to be covered within the chapters focused on different theories of truth. However, correspondence has already featured in the origins of the ODF (see Chapter 2), and links closely with the exploration of coherence in Chapters 4 and 5. An assessment of correspondence in Chapter 6 will also help to inform the subsequent chapters on consensus and pragmatism theories of truth.

Aim 2 clearly has to be approached on a case study basis. Even within the limits established by focussing on the delivery of public services, there is a huge amount of experience to draw on, in different parts of the world, at different times and by different organisations. Many criteria could be invoked to help in the choice of case study. They include

- the availability of relevant information
- selection of cases which have been most proactive in seeking to work in a joined up way
- selection of cases where the link with theories of joined up working is closest
- covering both management and meta-management of social processes
- opportunities to explore specific examples with organisations who are stakeholders in the thesis (linking to Aim 4, on the usefulness in practice of the ODF)
- timespan over which the analysis might take place
- empirical research or desk-based analysis?
- additional value of the case study in assessing correspondence
- value of the case study in opening up future opportunities to promote the use of the ODF

Within critical realism there is a contrast drawn between intensive and extensive research designs, arising from Andrew Sayer's work (Sayer, 1992:243). While the full range of distinctions between the two types of research do not necessarily fit into the current context, it would seem to be appropriate to include both broad-brush general commentaries on joined up working at the scale of a national government (extensive) and more fine grained analysis of specific policy instruments or localities (intensive) relating respectively to research into meta-management levels (Research Type 2b) and into management levels (Research Type 2a).

For research of this nature, potentially productive case studies arise where an organisation invites the researcher in to help them make sense of a management problem or opportunity. Although I have been pro-active in promoting the ODF with colleagues and acquaintances, there have been no prompts from stakeholders to use the ODF to explore their organisation's experience of joined up working. As explored in Sections 1.5 and 3.5, there are reasons why I need to be particularly careful about the contexts in which I apply the ODF to avoid possible conflict, because it is my own theory. Hence, the choice of case study needs to be made on the other criteria.

For a fine-grained, intensive case study, I already have my experience of regeneration programme management in Barnsley in the 1990's, which gave rise to the formulation of the ODF (Chapter 2). This example has already demonstrated how the ODF mirrors the experience of practitioners in making sense of choices about policy priorities and organisational structures. There are questions of be asked about the extent to which a further case study of management or meta-management at the local level would be able to contribute additional insights.

For a broad-brush extensive case study, the experience of attempts at the national level to join up Government in Great Britain would seem to meet the criteria well. This case study would concentrate on the period since 1997, since the term 'joining up' was introduced and popularised by the Labour Government that came into power in 1997. There have been some strong links between the way that the Government has attempted to implement joined up working and the development of theory on the subject. Furthermore, by relating the ODF to Central Government policy in Britain, there might be opportunities opened up to promote the ODF at this level in the future. This was something I had originally tried to do through my bid to the Treasury's Evidence-based Policy Fund (see Section 2.9).

Analysing national government policy means that the main source of information will be commentaries on Government policy, as far as possible going back to primary sources and texts written by people who were involved at the time.

While concentrating on national Government policy means that I will not be researching 'on the ground' delivery of public services, there are examples from other chapters, especially in Chapter 7, which will deal with theories on joining up public services, which will cover examples of this type.

Research methods for Aim 3, to assess whether there are gaps in mainstream public policy theory which could be filled using the Operational Dimensions Framework (consensus theory of truth)

This aim involves a 'General Critique' type of research, in the terms of Table 3.3. It will mainly cover *Stage 5, Comparison between different theories and abstractions* in Danermark et al.'s six stage model. Using the six stage model to guide the order in which the aims are covered within the text of the thesis, this one would therefore come

somewhere in the middle. The analysis for this aim is focussed on the comparison of the ODF with other theories and will cover the following questions,

- to what extent and where are there common underpinning ideas and concepts with the ODF and to what extent is common language used?
- to what extent and where are there gaps or shortcomings in existing theory, which could be plugged by the ODF
- to what extent and where there are complementarities which mean that the theories could be further developed in conjunction with the ODF.

There is an overlap with the work under Aim 1, in that some of the theories invoked to help place the ODF in other 'contexts of ideas' to help establish its coherence are also relevant to the assessment of the ODF under the consensus theory of truth. The difference, broadly, is that under Aim 1 the focus is on theory that might challenge or confirm the coherence of the ODF 1 whereas under Aim 3, the objective is to identify how far the ODF is already part of mainstream public policy theory or might enrich and enhance complementary theories to become part of the consensus view.

There will be three areas of investigation on different aspects of consensus. The first one will be concerned with existing theories which take a dimensional approach. The aim here will be to see how far the concepts underlying the ODF are already part of the consensus in an area of social science theory (Section 7.4).

The second area of investigation is concerned with the development of a new corpus of theory or a Scientific Research Programme incorporating the ODF in a deeper sense than in the first area of investigation (Section 7.5). Fusing together a number of branches of theory, the Scientific Research Programme will be

- in the field of public policy
- using critical realism as the underpinning philosophy
- taking a holistic approach.

The third area of investigation will be concerned with a number of areas of practice for which the theoretical base could be enhanced using the ODF (Section 7.6). This part of the chapter will link to Chapter 6, as since the term 'joining up' was introduced in 1997 there have been a number of theorists and practitioners seeking to provide answers to the challenges of making it work in the delivery of services. Some of the theorists have formal or informal connections with Government policy, for example Tom Ling from the University Polytechnic of East Anglia who also works for the National Audit Office and

Perri 6 from the University of Birmingham, who has previously worked for the Think Tank 'Demos'. Therefore there is a degree to which the practice on joined up working has been theory-driven.

Aim 4, to assess the usefulness of the ODF to the practice of joining up public services (pragmatism theory of truth)

This aim involves research into the meta-management and management of social processes, in the terms of Table 3.3. It relates mainly to *Stage 6, Concretisation and Contextualisation*, the final stage in Danermark et al.'s model, although the model is concerned more with explanation rather than practical application. Using the six stage model to guide the order in which the aims are covered within the text of the thesis, this would be the final aim to be covered. This accords with the nature of the relationships between the four aims – if a theory is to be useful in practice it is first important to establish that it is coherent, it can explain events in the 'real world' and it covers a gap in the theoretical tools available to practitioners.

As explained in Chapter 2, an early version of the ODF was used in Barnsley in 2000 as a means of exploring different options for organisational structures. This experience will followed up as part of the analysis for Aim 4. As well as helping to demonstrate the correspondence of the ODF to 'real world' management contexts, this is also an example of the practical usage of the ODF.

Some of the difficulties in undertaking Aim 4 have been raised under Section 3.5, on the promotional role I naturally adopt for the ODF. The lack of external interest so far in applying it to a specific organisational context, means that I am having to look for opportunities related to my own work to apply it. Because my own work is concerned with strategic analysis and partnership working, rather than management of services to the public, this limits the extent to which the ODF can be applied to the direct delivery of public services. Potential case studies are therefore more likely to be concerned with Research Type 2b, meta-management than with Research Type 2a, management of social processes.

As with Aim 2, I need to adopt a case study approach, because the potential uses of the ODF are vast – it could be applied to any public service context. The criteria that I need to use to decide on case studies include

- the availability of relevant information

- selection of cases where there is most to gain in working in a joined up way
- selection of cases where the organisations with responsibility for that area of work are likely to be receptive to the potential benefits of using the ODF
- picking a selection of case studies to illustrate the potential uses of the ODF in different circumstances
- achieving links with case studies under Aim 2, on the explanatory power of the ODF.

In Chapter 8 I will identify the potential uses of the ODF as an analytical tool

1. to use in analytical tasks, for use in the initiation, development and review of strategies, business plans, programmes, projects and organisational structures.
2. to use in management tasks, providing assistance in changes to organisational or working structures, and helping to structure events and exercises, eg change management, consultations, research studies.

The chapter will therefore be concerned with examples of these uses. Using the criteria outlined above, I have selected three main case studies, all of which would be best categorised as being concerned with the meta-management level (Research Type 2b).

These are

- an extension of the original use of the ODF in analysing organisational structures in Barnsley, to see how the ODF has influenced subsequent changes
- work with colleagues in the Yorkshire and Humber Investment Planning Advisory Group, to identify how the ODF might assist with Investment Planning in the region.
- Use of the ODF to develop a general management tool for assessing sustainability, which has been successfully applied to Sheffield Hallam University's outline Estates Vision.

To undertake this research I will be tape recording meetings and one-to-one discussions, where I will use semi-structured interviews. I will be preparing reports and papers in connection with the case studies and seeking the views of colleagues, ideally in written or tape-recorded form.

3.10 Summary

This exploration of research methods has expanded on the Institutional Realist model of the research process set out in Chapter 1 to set out the overall approach to the research and a more detailed exposition of the research methods for each of the four aims of the thesis. The Institutional Realist model of research helps to explain the opportunities and constraints inherent in my position as the promoter of the ODF. After a 'flying start' in which the ODF was used in practical management situations in 2000, I initially found it difficult to interest others in using the ODF, affecting the pragmatism theory of truth, and have had to be careful about how my DBA research relates to my work positions.

I have set out from first principles my epistemological and ontological position and the research methods derived from it by critical realists such as Sayer and Danermark et al. The chapter develops new models of 'research types' based on critical realism. It also uses the Danermark et al six stage model of explanatory research based on critical realism as the basis for the research method. One of the features of this model is its broad conceptualisation of what constitutes research, which fits well with my model of research types. Using the six stage model, the methods I will use in subsequent chapters will be based more upon reflection on experience and connecting different ideas, rather than collection and interpretation of vast amounts of new data.

4. Assessing the coherence of the Operational Dimensions Framework, as a general descriptive theory (coherence theory of truth) – the ODF as a whole

If the Operational Dimensions Framework is to provide a way of thinking to guide the provision of public services, an ambitious aspiration set out in the first chapter of the thesis, it is critical that the framework is coherent. If, for example, a vital ingredient is missed out, it could confuse and mislead. Equally well, if exaggerated claims are made for the power of the ODF as a social theory, it will soon lose credibility. This chapter, and the next one, are concerned with assessing in as an objective way as possible how coherent the ODF is.

First, it is necessary to describe the coherence theory of truth and see how a key tool for testing it – the ‘rational abstractions’ concept, can be seen as a way of operationalising coherence in this context (Section 4.1). At the end of this section a number of criteria for assessing the coherence of the ODF are set out, some concerned with the framework as a whole and some about the individual components. In this chapter we will assess the ODF as a whole against these criteria, while Chapter 5 will look in turn at each dimension, and the categories within them.

Section 4.2 will be concerned with definitions and the completeness of the ODF, aiming to make clear what the ODF is, its scope and what is not covered within it. The underpinning realist philosophy behind the ODF helps to demonstrate the coherence of the ODF on these criteria.

Then the consistency with other related theoretical frameworks will be addressed in Section 4.3. I have found two similar frameworks, both formulated in an attempt to establish principles of organisation. In each case the context for development of the theoretical framework bears some similarities to the origins of the ODF, as a tool to establish options for organisational restructuring (described for the ODF in Chapter 2). The two theoretical frameworks are found in,

- classical organisation theory, developed by Luther Gulick in the US in the 1930’s
- Linda Challis’ analysis of options for organising Social Services Departments in the UK, in the late 1980’s

The chapter ends with some interim conclusions on the coherence of the ODF, including a rationale for the coverage of the seven dimensions in three groups in the following chapter.

In the six stage model for explanatory research introduced in Chapter 3 (Table 3.5), *Stage 3, Abduction/theoretical resolution* and *Stage 4, Retroduction*, are closely linked with issues of coherence. During this chapter and the next one there will be a focus on the concepts in the ODF, placing them in various contexts and relating them to different theories relevant to the ODF as a whole or to particular dimensions. Counterfactual arguments will inform insights into the coherence or incoherence of the ODF. The use of the different modes of inference will not always be highlighted in the text, because it would hinder the smooth flow of the narrative.

4.1. Coherence theory of truth and rational abstractions

In Section 1.7 the coherence theory of truth was introduced and described as being concerned with the consistency and elegance of propositions and how well they represent a subjective reality, L Johnson (1992:15-38) provides a commentary on the philosophical allegiances of those who promote this theory, and evaluates its strengths and weaknesses. Because the coherence theory of truth is concerned with whether a proposition fits in with a wider body of beliefs, it is often associated with idealists, who hold that reality, insofar as we can be aware of it, is of an inherently mental nature. As such, it might be considered to be antithetical to the realist philosophy which underpins the thesis. However, a version of the coherence theory of truth has been developed from an 'immanent realist' standpoint (Martin Alcott, 2001:159-181).

Johnson suggests that in practice coherence is often used as a criterion of truth, without claiming that it constitutes the nature of truth (Johnson, 1992:19, 25). It is as a criterion for truth that I am interested in coherence in the present context. As Johnson points out, there are objections made against the coherence theory of truth, that more than one coherent set of beliefs and systems may exist, and it is necessary to link them with experience of reality in order to judge between them (Johnson, 1992:27-33). Lynch suggests that these objections are not completely answered by the more recent non-idealist proponents of the coherence theory of truth, so it is as well to link coherence to other theories of truth (Lynch 2001). I would suggest that, in the social sciences where we are focussing on people, the coherence of a theory cannot be

considered in isolation from experience of the world. Hence in looking at the coherence of the ODF, the reference points that I will use have to come, ultimately, from experience.

To assess the coherence of the ODF it is necessary to focus on the concepts behind the seven dimensions. In this chapter and Chapter 5 I will look at them individually and in relation to each other, using the various modes of inference introduced in Chapter 3. I will look at counterfactual propositions to test the ODF for completeness and consistency and I will seek to set the ODF within wider sets of beliefs and values, to make claims about its universality and potency. As indicated in section 3.6, a difficulty for me in this task is the obvious bias which stems from my dual position as the originator of the ODF and the evaluator of it. There is no escaping from this, but the more I can use tools and techniques to make the analysis as objective as possible, the better.

In Sections 1.7 and 3.9, I have signalled my intention to use the distinction between 'rational' abstractions and bad abstractions (also referred to as 'chaotic conceptions') to operationalise coherence as a criterion for truth. These concepts are used by Sayer (1992), as part of his realist approach to theory and method in the social sciences. According to Sayer

'A rational abstraction is one which isolates a significant element of the world which has some unity and autonomous force, such as a structure. A bad abstraction arbitrarily divides the indivisible and/or lumps together the unrelated and the inessential, thereby 'carving up' the object of study with little or no regard for its structure and form' (Sayer, 1992:138).

I have used the definition of the coherence theory of truth and the distinction between rational and bad abstractions to derive some detailed criteria for coherence to apply to the ODF (see Table 4.1 below). As well as completeness and consistency as two measures of coherence, I have added an initial column on definition, on the basis that all the concepts used should be rational abstractions, at all levels within the ODF, whether it be in the definitions of the dimensions or in the categories found within some of the dimensions. The more subjective measure of elegance runs through all the criteria set out in Table 4.1, and will be assessed in the conclusions to chapters 4 and 5.

Table 4.1 Criteria for assessing the coherence of the Operational Dimensions Framework

	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Completeness</i>	<i>Consistency</i>
<i>Categories within a dimension (where this applies)</i>	Clear explanation of what each category covers. Each category is conceptually differentiated from all other categories.	Categories exhaust all possibilities within the dimension	Any causal relationships between categories, both within dimensions and across dimensions, are identified and are consistent with the conceptual basis of the framework
<i>Dimensions within the overall framework</i>	Clear explanation of what each dimension covers. Each dimension is conceptually differentiated from all other dimensions	Within the coverage of the overall framework, all dimensions are covered	Causal relationships between dimensions are identified and are consistent with the conceptual basis of the framework
<i>The Operational Dimensions Framework as a whole</i>	The framework is clearly set within an underpinning philosophical and theoretical context. What the framework is, and what it is not, should be clear.	What is not covered within the framework is clearly articulated	Other related theoretical frameworks are identified and are consistent with the Operational Dimensions Framework

In this chapter I am going to be concerned with the bottom row of Table 4.1, assessing the coherence of the ODF as a whole, looking first at its definition and completeness and then at the consistency with other related conceptual frameworks. As outlined earlier, Chapter 5 will be concerned with the upper two rows of Table 4.1.

I have already made reference to the links between coherence and experience in the social sciences, which inevitably links to the correspondence theory of truth. While correspondence is mainly addressed in Chapter 6, some of the discussion in this chapter is concerned with how the ODF fits with experience of the world, at the areas of overlap between coherence and correspondence. Some of the criteria for

coherence I have set out below also link to the material used to assess the ODF against the consensus theory of truth in Chapter 7, especially in relation to the criteria for the consistency of the ODF as a whole, where the position of similar conceptual frameworks to the ODF within mainstream management theory is an area of overlap between the chapters.

4.2 Coherence of the ODF as a whole – definitions and completeness

While the claims made for the ODF are mainly concerned with the organisation and delivery of public services, at its essence it is a way of conceptualising any kind of activity undertaken with a purpose in mind. While the ODF arose from thinking about a practical problem – how to restructure the Special Programmes Team at Barnsley MBC - wherever there is an activity undertaken by humans with an objective in mind, that activity can be expressed in terms of the seven dimensions. It. In thinking about how to express the ODF in a more generic way, it seems to me that the ODF has to be applied to some practical context to be explained. The general concept lies at a high level of abstraction, which makes it relevant to any kind of purposeful activity, anywhere and anytime, but also means that the 'version' of the ODF used has to be tailored to the nature of the activity and the reasons for which it is being undertaken.

The other introductory point which needs to be made concerns the underpinning philosophy and theoretical context. In Section 3.3, I referred to the realist philosophical position which underpins both the methods used in the thesis and the ODF itself. From a realist standpoint, the world exists independently of the observer and attempts to understand reality start with experience. This fundamental proposition suggests that the coherence of any realist theory is bound up with the ways in which it makes the links between the world out there and the internal 'thinking' processes involved in theorising. The realist underpinnings of the ODF help to explain why it needs to be applied to 'the real world' to make sense. In this chapter I will be exploring these links through reference to general characteristics of the world rather than the interpretation of historical events, which will be the subject matter of Chapter 6, on the correspondence theory of truth.

4.2.1 The ODF and an example of a simple purposeful activity

A simple example is therefore required to explain the essence of the ODF. I will use a description of a journey from A to B, expressed in terms of the seven different

dimensions of the ODF. From a realist standpoint, the experience is unique to that individual, but there are elements held in common with anyone also undertaking a similar journey because the sights and sounds experienced during the journey have an objective reality beyond the traveller's perceptions of them. The journey can be 'explained' as a combination of the seven dimensions of the ODF.

Resources (Dimension 1) such as the mode of transport, a source of energy, specific skills and national laws and conventions combine to allow a specific function, the journey (Dimension 2) to take place. An individual customer (Dimension 3) undertakes the journey, which is associated with a particular aspect of life, or theme (Dimension 4), in this case transport. Other aspects of the person's life may also change as a result of the journey, depending on the reasons for which it has been undertaken and what happens during the journey. There are a variety of other stakeholders (Dimension 7) in the journey, with whom the customer inter-relates in different ways, such as fellow travellers in this journey, people making other journeys which intersect with the route taken and organisations responsible for the transport infrastructure. The journey takes place over a specific route through 3-dimensional space (Dimension 5) and over time (Dimension 6).

I would argue that this general description would hold true wherever one was in the world at whatever time in human history. Furthermore, I would suggest that, within its terms of reference, the description of a journey is complete, consistent and elegant. So what are the terms of reference for the ODF, why can I claim it is complete, consistent and elegant and what could upset its completeness, consistency and elegance?

4.2.2 Coverage of the ODF and what lies outside its scope

In Chapter 1, I outlined the nature of a general descriptive theory, within Danermark et al's typology of theories (2002:118-119), and the reasons why I think it is an appropriate label to give the ODF. The ODF provides a typology of different dimensions, all of which have to be taken into account when delivering public services. In itself it makes no presumptions about the relationships between dimensions in any given real world situation (although, as I shall explore in Chapter 5, there are logical connections between different dimensions in some cases). The ODF is a tool to be used to help develop dynamic theories that capture the complexity of the world. Theories which concentrate on one or more dimensions at the expense of

others are likely to be flawed in their attempt at producing knowledge useful outside the context in which it was generated. In practice the author might draw on knowledge about these other parts of the jigsaw in applying their own theory, but when others use the theory any dimensions not specifically referred to could be neglected.

Translating the example of a journey into a public service context, we could consider the development of a theory about encouraging changes from car use to other modes of transport. I would suggest that such a theory needs to take into account all the dimensions. If it neglects any dimension – for example the diverse characteristics of different people travelling or the time taken to complete journeys under different modes – it will omit factors of significance in any given situation.

The scope of the ODF is limited to 'outward appearances', to the external manifestations of the inter-relationships between the individual person and the world around them, including other people. It does not capture what goes on inside that person, or the mechanisms by which they connect to the world so, for example, it does not include any specific dimensions or other references to emotions. This is an important divide, and one which we will return to later in the chapter, in looking at the relationship between the ODF and different levels of scientific explanation, using Collier's layers of scientific enquiry, from Chapter 3.

Because the ODF does not cover the key factors at the level of the individual person in a management context, many of the qualities which are essential to effective performance, such as leadership, communications and team work, have no specific mention. However, the ODF provides a comprehensive picture of the context within which management qualities are played out in public services. Thus, a theory on how public agencies might encourage modal changes in transport usage might be centrally about the management qualities referred to above, and the resulting behavioural response from members of the public. Although these factors are not covered by the ODF, it would still be a useful contextual tool to help in the design and application of effective approaches.

Another limit to the scope of the ODF has already been outlined in Section 1.3, where it was made clear that the ODF deliberately steers clear of any presumptions about what the world ought to be like. Instead, it constitutes a tool to incorporate into normative theories which have this aim. In the example referred to above on transport choices there are many different factors to weigh up in deciding on the policies to

adopt. The ODF can help to structure the decision making process and link policy making to implementation, but the origins of moral and ethical choices do not emanate from the ODF.

The ODF therefore has a specific, limited role within the development of theory in applied social sciences, as one would expect from a 'general descriptive theory'. As such, a key aspect of the ODF is the claim that it is universally valid anywhere, any time. This needs to be examined critically. From a critical realist position, there would seem to be two potential challenges to this claim. One would be that the world 'out there' could change in some way so that it does not correspond to the claim (ontology). The other is that the way that people think about the world does not accord with the conceptual framework in the ODF (epistemology). These two issues will now be dealt with in turn.

4.2.3 Changes to the world and the ODF

This section is concerned with hypothetical changes which might invalidate the ODF at some point in the future. It deals with issues of overlap between the coherence and correspondence theories of truth. The fit between the real world and the ODF is a matter of correspondence, but in this case it extends out of the theoretical structure of the framework, and is hence linked to matters of coherence. This section complements Chapter 6, where the fit between actual events in the world and the ODF will be explored.

Any fundamental changes of this nature would seem to require some technological change. Within the ODF as a general descriptive theory, technology influences the resources and function dimensions and their relationships with other dimensions. The nature of the functions and the choices between different ways of carrying them out are determined by technology. This affects the resources to be used, not only in terms of materials and equipment, but also the workforce skills required and the legislative influences which will be relevant.

Some theorists claim that recent technological change in the late Twentieth Century has already had a fundamental impact on the nature of space and time as dimensions. In Chapter 5 I will evaluate, and ultimately reject, the theories promoted by Manuel Castells around 'timeless time' and the 'space of flows', where he claims that the two dimensions have taken on new forms. Instead, I would contend that no

technological change thus far in the history of civilisation has fundamentally altered the nature of the dimensions themselves. Even fundamental transformations such as the Industrial Revolution which radically altered the whole basis of economic and social life did not change the fundamental nature of the dimensions in any way. The description of a journey in Section 4.2.1 in terms of seven dimensions applies before or after the Industrial Revolution. The mode of transport and the experience of travel might change but there are still seven dimensions related to each other in the same way.

However, it is possible that the very nature of one or more of the dimensions might be altered at some point in the future, which in turn would affect the relationships between dimensions. This would be entirely consistent with the realist underpinnings of the ODF, on the basis that any theory must ultimately be grounded in experience. Could there be some form of technological breakthrough which might change the fundamental character of one or more of the dimensions? Counterfactual thinking might reveal potential situations where this might be the case.

An example of such a change which might occur in the foreseeable future is human cloning. The customer dimension is constructed around the presumption that each person is unique and experiences the world in different ways. If that difference was to be eroded through genetic manipulation, the relationships between the dimensions would change and the ODF would need to be reformulated.

A more far-fetched example would be if it became possible to travel backwards and forwards in time. The time dimension would be different in nature and would have the potential to become the dominant dimension, especially if moves back and forwards in time could be controlled to enable lessons for the improvement of life, including lessons on the effectiveness of public services, to be learnt.

These examples therefore suggest the correspondence between the world and the ODF is specific to a particular level of technological development. However, any changes which might alter the fundamental nature of the seven dimensional framework would be so major as to revolutionise the whole context for human existence. No such changes have occurred thus far in human history.

Perceptions of the world are bound up with philosophical and cultural perspectives. As indicated in Section 3.6, the ODF itself is underpinned by a specific philosophy, realism, and would not be recognised as valid by those philosophical positions holding to a subjective ontology (see Table 3.1). The very notion of a general descriptive theory of the world is called into question when there is no basis for evaluating one theory against another. More significantly in terms of the practical relevance of the ODF, there may be areas of the world where mainstream culture would challenge the western influences and thought processes inherent in the ODF. Would another culture dispute the existence of any of the dimensions?

Some of the dimensions seem to be robust in the face of different cultural influences. In Section 5.3.3 I will refer to Robert Sack's book, 'Conceptions of Space in Social Thought' (1980), which is concerned with culture and notions of space and time. While Sack identifies many different cultural conceptions of space and time, none of them include a notion that space and time do not exist, or that the two concepts are indistinguishable from each other.

However, other dimensions are more dependent on cultural factors. An area where the ODF might be challenged from different cultural standpoints is in its assertion that selfhood exists. If this were not to be the cultural norm, the notion of a customer dimension and of a theme dimension representing different aspects of being human might be inadmissible. Billington, Hockey and Strawbridge (1998) explored the notion of personal identity, using a historical perspective. They stated that 'there is some agreement among scholars that the notion and experience of the self as an autonomous self-contained individual is the outcome of an historical process' (Billington et al, 1998:42). Thus early Greek texts of 900-800 BC have no word equivalent to our 'person', although there are many words referring to a 'community of being'. Many aspects of human existence are portrayed very differently, such as

- the human body is presented as an articulated combination of limbs rather than a unified whole
- many actions are depicted as products of external forces, rather than under the control of agents
- various components of social life, such as dreams, are perceived as objective and external realities.

Notions of the individual are attributed to factors such as the development of Christianity in the eleventh century, seventeenth century political thought and the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century (Billington et al, 1998:42-44).

Today, different cultures have very different conceptions of the relationships between the individual and society. Often, in countries such as Japan, the individual is defined to a greater degree in terms of their relationships with society than is the case in the west (Billington et al., 1998:45-48). Along with these different notions of the individual and society would be different conceptions of the role of the state and different rationales for the provision of public services.

Therefore, the ODF is very much a product of western values and preconceptions. All the dimensions can be recognised anywhere in the world when viewed through the lens of the ODF. However, the conceptualisation of the seven dimensional framework and the roles of public services are very specific to western culture. Any attempt to use the ODF where other cultural forces prevail would need to take careful account of different ways of thinking which would affect the relevance of the dimensional framework.

4.2.5 The ODF and layers of scientific enquiry

One of the main features of critical realism as developed over the last 25 years has been the stratification of scientific enquiry into different layers. In Section 3.4 the critical realist conception of the relationships between different strata was outlined, with Collier's attempt to order the different layers of scientific enquiry being reproduced as Table 3.2. My own model of forms of research, developing this work further, was included as Table 3.3.

Collier distinguished between 'social sciences' and 'psychological and semiological sciences' as constituting different strata (Collier, 1994:132). Psychological and semiological sciences, such as psychology, psychoanalysis, linguistics and semiotics, are concerned with behaviour and emotions and other phenomena observed at the level of the individual person. They correspond with the aspects of the human sciences which are not directly covered by the ODF (see Section 4.2.2). By contrast, disciplines which take societies as their primary subject matter have parallels in one or more of the ODF dimensions (see Table 4.2 below). Therefore Collier's tree of sciences would seem to help to define the scope of the ODF. The ODF does not

cover what happens within each individual, but it is concerned with differences between individuals and the combined effect of individual choices

Table 4.2 Operational dimensions and social science disciplines

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Social Science Discipline</i>
1. Resources	Economics, Finance, Law, Human Resource Management
2. Function	Management/Public Administration, including Project and Programme Management. Built environment professions, such as architecture, town planning, surveying, engineering
3. Customers	Sociology, Anthropology
4. Themes	Economics, Sociology, Anthropology, applied subject areas, such as criminology, environmental management
5. Space	Geography, Built environment professions
6. Time	History
7. Stakeholders	Sociology, Politics, Anthropology, Management

While the ODF aligns with the social sciences, it is still relevant to the psychological and semiological sciences, reflecting the ways in which the ODF provides a context for analysis of behaviour and emotions. The ODF is a useful contextual tool to studies in, for example, linguistics, which need to be sensitive to the impact of the different dimensions upon language.

Collier identified three ways in which the layers of scientific enquiry are related, as follows

- ontological presupposition, whereby a stratum could not exist without the other one existing
- vertical explanation, whereby mechanisms at one stratum explain those at another (generally mechanisms at the lower level explaining ones at the higher level)
- composition, illustrated by the fact that living organisms (biological level) are composed of chemical compounds (molecular level)

There has been a debate within critical realism as to the order of the two strata – psychological and semiological sciences and social sciences - which lie above

biological sciences (see Table 3.2). Collier's reason for placing the psychological and semiological sciences above the social sciences was that he considered that some psychological and semiological mechanisms are explained by social ones, but not vice-versa (order of vertical explanation). On the other hand, he acknowledged that society is composed of people, which would imply that social sciences might be the higher level (order of composition). Collier concluded that the issue remains unresolved, and that any tree of sciences is likely to be untidy, and perhaps not representable in two dimensions (Collier, 1994:131-134).

As indicated in section 3.4, the uncertainty on the order of the two human sciences may reflect the different nature of natural and human sciences, as theorised by Holland (2005). Holland's version of scientific layers would have psychological and semiological sciences and social sciences side-by-side (Holland, 2006, private correspondence).

The exercise of linking social science disciplines to operational dimensions, which is represented in Table 4.2, cannot be undertaken in an exact and systematic manner. Indeed one of the implications of the ODF is that there are no rigid disciplinary divisions in the social sciences. Different disciplines will vary on the basis of the relative attention they give to different dimensions, but ultimately any social science enquiry needs to take all dimensions into account. Therefore Table 4.2 merely reflects the weighting of particular disciplines towards different dimensions. It also helps to identify the commonalities and differences between dimensions in the ODF. The most straightforward relationships that might be claimed are those for space and geography and for time and history. This arises because the definitions of these two disciplines are based around the notions of space and time respectively. Another observation from Table 4.2 is that sociology and anthropology both have a common concern for customers, themes and stakeholders, which are all dimensions that have people as their primary subject matter. The other two dimensions, resources and function, include many disciplines associated with professions and management tasks.

4.2.6 Integral Theory (Wilber's 'A Theory of Everything')

Ken Wilber is a prolific contemporary American writer. As the ambitiously titled 'A Theory of Everything: An Integral Vision for Business, Politics, Science and Spirituality' (2001) would suggest, he takes a cross-disciplinary approach, but some of his main sources are taken from consciousness studies and evolutionary theory. 'A

Theory of Everything' is a summary of his work up to 2001, aimed at a more general audience than many of his previous publications.

Wilber's theories are one of the influences behind Darwin's alethic pluralism, which is the basis for identifying the four theories of truth against which the ODF is being assessed. A cornerstone of Wilbur's integral vision is his four quadrant model. Table 4.3 summarises the nature of each quadrant and their relationships to each other. Relating the ODF to the different quadrants helps to place it within the overall framework provided by Integral Theory.

Table 4.3 Wilber's four quadrant model

<p>'Left hand' paths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpretive • Hermeneutic • Consciousness 	<p>'Right hand' paths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monological • Empirical, positivistic • Form
<p>Upper left Interior – Individual</p> <p>I Self and consciousness</p> <p>Intentional (subjective)</p> <p>Representative theorists – Freud, C G Jung, Piaget</p>	<p>Upper right Exterior – Individual</p> <p>IT Brain and organism</p> <p>Behavioural (objective)</p> <p>Representative theorists – B F Skinner, John Locke</p>
<p>Lower left Interior – Collective</p> <p>WE Culture and worldview</p> <p>Cultural (intersubjective)</p> <p>Representative theorists – Kuhn, Max Weber</p>	<p>Lower right Exterior – Collective</p> <p>ITS Social system and environment</p> <p>Social (interobjective)</p> <p>Representative theorists – Talcott Parsons, Comte, Marx</p>

Sources Wilber, 2001:43, 51, 70, 71
Darwin 2004A:45

Much of Wilber's analysis in 'A Theory of Everything' concerns examples of theories which fail to take an integral approach. In particular, he refers to 'flatland' – a climate of scientific materialism where claims to truth are confined to the right hand domain (Wilber, 2001). Amongst the examples of 'flatland' referenced by Wilbur are political

liberalism (P86), UNICEF's development programmes (P101) and the current dangers with unfettered technological development (P104).

The ODF explicitly confines itself to the right hand quadrants. It is a general descriptive theory, concerned with the relationship between individuals and society, but not venturing into the territory of what happens 'inside' people. The branches of theory with which the ODF exhibits commonalities tend to be concerned with the right hand domain too, eg systems theory, network theory (see Chapter 7). Because the ODF claims only to be a general descriptive theory, this limitation is not a cause for concern in itself, so long as uses of the ODF are undertaken with thought as to whether a complementary theoretical input from the 'left hand' side is required.

4.3 Coherence of the ODF as a whole – consistency with other similar theoretical frameworks

This section will be concerned with theoretical frameworks which bear a close resemblance to the ODF, either explicitly or implicitly taking a dimensional approach to capture the complexity of working practices. Like the ODF, such theoretical frameworks have arisen out of analysis of organisational structures and the roles of workers within them. I have found just two bodies of theory which are close enough to the ODF to qualify as similar theoretical frameworks. The first is the 'principles of organisation' which originated in American classical organisational theory in the 1930's, in particular through the work of Luther Gulick. The second is the analysis of Social Services departmental structures in the UK undertaken by Linda Challis in the late 1980's. There are many other areas of work where a dimensional approach has had some impact or might complement existing theory, which will be covered in Chapter 7 on the consensus theory of truth. However, none of these areas of work are comparable enough to the ODF to be viewed as a similar theoretical framework.

It is noteworthy that both the two examples of similar theoretical frameworks are concerned with the structure of organisations. While the ODF arose out of a quest for organisational restructuring options, which helps when comparing it to the other examples, there are many other potential applications. In the next chapter I will be using it to model the delivery of public services, and there are many other fields where it could be applied, for example in stakeholder analysis.

The ODF arose out of an organisational design problem. It came as no great surprise to me to find that there was a similar theoretical framework which made up one of the 'principles of organisation' in early administrative theory. I had to go back to the inter war period, to 'Notes on the theory of organisation' by Luther Gulick, which is part of a collection of essays in 'Papers on the Science of Administration', edited by Gulick and Urwick and published in 1937. Gulick was a Member of the 'Brownlow Commission', which had been appointed to make recommendations for reorganising the federal executive branch in the United States (Hammond, 1990:143). His essay was written to assist the commission in this task.

Gulick's principles of organisation were strongly influenced by the work of the pioneers of the British Philosophy of Administration in the early twentieth century, including Lord Haldane, whose influence over the development of Government machinery in Britain in the inter-war period is covered in Appendix 1. The work of Gulick and his contemporaries has been viewed as the first attempt at a rational and comprehensive approach to organisational theory (Sharp and Housel, 2004:22). The classical administrative principles Gulick developed were challenged in the immediate post war period, notably by one of the most influential figures in public organisation theory, Herbert A Simon (Simon, 1976:20-44). The arguments put forward in this debate are of relevance to my thesis in two ways. First, my own commentary on the debate from the perspective of the ODF can help in the analysis of the coherence of the ODF itself. Second, the result of this intellectual encounter set the stage for the subsequent development of organisational theory (Hammond, 1990:144), and thus has relevance to the chapter on the consensus theory of truth.

My coverage of the classical administrative principles will be highly selective – I will concentrate solely on those aspects which are directly relevant to the ODF. Other commentators have taken a wider look at the relevance of the 'principles of organisation' to public management issues (Thomas, 1978, Hammond, 1990, Sharp and Housel, 2004).

The 'administrative principle' which relates most closely to the ODF is introduced by Gulick under the sub-heading of 'Aggregating the work roles'. His proposition is that the role of any worker in an organisation must be characterised by:

1. The major *purpose* he is serving, such as furnishing water, controlling crime, or conducting education;
2. The *process* he is using, such as engineering, medicine, carpentry, stenography, statistics, accounting;
3. The *persons or things* dealt with or served, such as immigrants, veterans, Indians, forests, mines, parks, orphans, farmers, automobiles, or the poor;
4. The *place* where he renders his service, such as Hawaii, Boston, Washington, the Dust Bowl, Alabama, or Central High School' (Gulick, 1937:15).

Having listed these four characteristics of any work role, Gulick went on to discuss the implications for administrative structures. He illustrated how the organisation of a city administration might incorporate the four 'systems of organisation' in different ways. He then outlined the possible advantages and disadvantages of using each one as the basis for organisational structures (Gulick, 1937:15-30). The correspondence between my operational dimensions and Gulick's concepts is outlined in Table 4.4. I have drawn on extracts from other administrative principles in Gulick's paper, where there is a correspondence with operational dimensions.

While Gulick analysed the strengths and weaknesses of each system of organisation for establishing staff hierarchies, he was clear as to the limits of such an exercise. His conception of the nature of work was in line with my approach to the Operational Dimensions – that they are all present in working practices. Gulick expressed it this way,

'Each of the four basic systems of organisation is intimately related with the other three, because in any enterprise all four elements are present in the doing of work and are embodied in every individual workman. Each member of the enterprise is working for some major purpose, uses some process, deals with some persons, and serves or works at one place' (Gulick, 1937:31).

Gulick proposed that if one of the four characteristics of work is used as the primary division within the organisation, the other characteristics need to come in at the secondary and tertiary level. He also suggested that the four systems of organisation had to be taken account of in coordination across the organisation. The need for coordination is generally greatest for those characteristics of work which are not used as the basis for departmental structures (Gulick, 1937:31-33).

Table 4.4 Operational Dimensions and Gulick's Principles of Administration

<i>Operational Dimension</i>	<i>Gulick's characteristics of work roles</i> (all page number references are from Gulick, 1937)
1. Resources	The subject matter of his principles is one of the key resources – staffing. 'Things' (also sometimes called materiel) can correspond to the resource dimension. For example, Gulick states that the Forest Service is based on materiel – in this case trees, for its organisation (P25).
2. Function	Equates to the 'process' system of organisation. Gulick also referred to technological development as a key variable in determining the structure of an organisation, which has a particular influence on function (P32).
3. Customer	Equates to the 'persons' system of organisation (also called clientele).
4. Theme	In Gulick's examples, the 'purpose' system of organisation tends to be defined in terms of theme, eg Health Department, Education Department, although the term is not equivalent.
5. Space	Equates to the 'place' system of organisation
6. Time	Not included in the section on work roles, but, elsewhere in the paper, it is seen as a key determinant of the 'span of control' principle. Gulick suggests that where an organisation is stable over time a chief executive can deal with more immediate subordinates than in a new or changing organisation (P8).
7. Stakeholders	Not explicitly included. In his emphasis on the size of work units and coordination across administrative structures, Gulick was appreciative of the influence of different actors, but it can be argued that he did not fully incorporate this dimension.

In his response to Gulick, Simon was critical of the principles of organisation, arguing that they could be no more than 'proverbs' (Simon, 1976:44). Hammond suggests that in fact a lot of Simon's criticisms failed to take account of the subtlety and depth of Gulick's arguments (Hammond, 1990:145). For example, Simon criticised Gulick for not giving guidelines as to which of the four competing bases for specialisation are applicable in any given situation (Simon, 1976:33). This ignores the section on the

potential advantages and disadvantages of each system of organisation, which is prefaced by a plea for more empirical research (Gulick, 1937:21-30).

Other parts of Simon's critique were concerned with the definition of the terms 'purpose', 'process', 'clientele' and 'place'. He argued that 'purpose' could not be satisfactorily distinguished from the other three terms. First he claimed that

'There is, then, no essential difference between a 'purpose' and a 'process', but only a distinction of degree. A 'process' is an activity whose immediate purpose is at a low level in the hierarchy of means and ends, while a 'purpose' is a collection of activities whose orienting value or aim is at a high level in the means-end hierarchy (Simon, 1976:32).

He then claimed that 'clientele' and 'place' could not satisfactorily be separated from 'purpose', because they are necessarily part of an organisation's objectives (Simon, 1976:32).

Hammond agrees with the logic of Simon's argument, but suggests that it does not invalidate the fundamental point that dividing work in a particular way has consequences which are different from dividing it in a different way (Hammond, 1990:163). While this is, of course, the case, I would claim that Simon has hit upon a fundamental flaw in Gulick's conceptualisation of the characteristics of work, which Hammond cannot effectively explain away.

In Table 4.4 I referred to the correspondence between the theme dimension and Gulick's examples of 'purpose'. The point made by Simon, that 'purpose' cannot be logically separated from the other systems of organisation is one that I would agree with. In the ODF the purpose of an organisation would be defined according to the dominant dimension in its terms of reference. Therefore one would expect that the purpose of a Police Force would be defined in thematic terms – dealing with crime and increasing community safety – but that of a Children's Trust would be defined in terms of meeting the needs of a customer group – children. Other dimensions may come into the definition of purpose as well in a subsidiary capacity. However, the point is that purpose as a concept is associated with all of the dimensions. It is noteworthy that Simon actually uses the term 'dimensions' in referring to the multi-faceted nature of 'purpose' (Simon, 1976:32). It is, perhaps, symptomatic of Gulick's confusion that he reduces 'purpose' to what I would call 'theme' in his diagrammatic examples (Gulick, 1937:17-19).

In my view, Gulick also makes a conceptual error in his inclusion of 'things' (also called 'materiel') alongside persons (also called clientele). He refers to the Forest Service as an organisation based on 'materiel', in this case trees (Gulick, 1937:25). I would argue that this is not the case. The Forest Service is unlikely to be organised on the basis of a sub-division of tree type. The focus is likely to be on the organisational structure which reflects the economic, environmental and social value of trees in different locations to different customer groups. Trees are a natural resource, which are managed by a Forest Service to meet organisational objectives.

Gulick also has no place for 'time' in his systems of organisation, although elsewhere he refers to its importance. Simon picks up on this in his dissection of 'purpose', referring to time as another dimension of purpose, to add to 'service', 'area' and 'clientele' (Simon, 1976:32)

In summary, Gulick's 'systems of organisation' can be viewed as an early attempt to conceptualise work tasks in terms of a dimensional framework. Some of his concepts correspond closely with the concepts in the ODF. However, Gulick made some errors in the terminology and logic he used, which were identified by Simon. From my perspective, the errors made by Gulick are corrected in the ODF.

The exchange between Gulick and Simon over the four 'systems of organisation' has subsequently been elaborated on by other authors, such as Mintzberg in his overview of the design of organisational structures (1979:113).

In the US, Gulick's systems of organisation has continued to influence organisational development in both the public and the private sector (Heffron, 1989:37). This is largely because no one has come up with a better framework. Heffron commented that

'Although those bases were debunked by Herbert Simon, they continue to resurface in business textbooks on organisation design and in political reorganisation studies. Their survival and dominance may have less to do with their theoretical precision than with the reality that no one, including Herbert Simon, has come up with a better, more practical set of terms or concepts for designing organisations.' (Heffron, 1989:35).

One of the ways in which Gulick's principles have been developed in US political theory is in looking at the tensions between different administrative principles. Any

features that might be viewed as desirable in a bureaucracy, such as authority and expertise, contain inherent conflicts (Hammond, 1990:169). Another research area has been investigating the ways in which dominance of different systems of organisation affects decision making (Hammond, 1990:170). In a broader context, Sharp and Housel have explained the collapse and recovery of the Oklahoma Health Department by reference to the neglect and subsequent reintroduction of Gulick and Fayol's principles of administration (Sharp and Housel, 2004:20-35).

While the principles of administration, and in particular Gulick's systems of organisation, are by no means a dominant force in management theory in the US, it is clear that there is an intellectual lineage and practical usage of these ideas extending up to the present day. By contrast, in the UK, Gulick's work seems to have had minimal impact.

4.3.2 *The ODF and Linda Challis' 'Organising Public Social Services'*

The best example I have found of a dimensional approach being taken to develop theories about the delivery of specific services is 'Organising Public Social Services' by Linda Challis (1990). In this book Challis reviewed the ways in which Social Services Departments in England and Wales had been organised and frequently reorganised in the twenty years since they had been created in 1971. She asked why Social Services had been so prone to reorganisation over this period and why there were so many tensions between different organisational principles, which somehow never seemed to get resolved (Challis, 1990:vii-viii). The three main organisational principles used by Challis relate to dimensions in the ODF (Table 4.5).

Table 4.5 Operational Dimensions and Challis' Organisational Principles

<i>Operational Dimension</i>	<i>Challis' Organisational Principles (1990:11-18)</i>
Function	function (basic distinction between field work, residential, day care, but also including specialist roles such as alcohol/drug misuse support, therapeutic interventions, housing liaison etc)
Space	geographic
Customer/Theme	client (basic distinction between children and adults, sometimes more finely disaggregated into mental health, learning difficulties, older people etc.)

In attempting to classify Social Service Departments Challis used both 'top down' and 'bottom up' approaches. From a top down perspective she classified the Departments into broad categories based on the order in which they used the dimensions in their hierarchical structures (Table 4.6)

Table 4.6 Six types of organisational structures used in Social Service Departments (from Challis, 1990:19)

<i>Type of structure</i>	<i>First sub-division</i>	<i>Second sub-division</i>	<i>Third sub-division</i>
Authority	Function	Geographic	Client
Service	Function	Client	Geographic
Locality	Geographic	Function	Client
Community	Geographic	Client	Function
Consumer	Client	Geographic	Function
Specialist	Client	Function	Geographic

The bottom up approach complemented this simplistic typology, by focusing on how social work teams were organised 'on the ground'. Challis also identified another key differentiating factor, in the way that support functions such as finance and administration were organised (Challis, 1990:20-22).

In her survey Challis found that most Social Services Departments had used geography or client as the first sub-division for their structure, but some had adopted matrix organisational structures, eg with development groups working across the geographic sub-divisions used for generic social workers. Many Social Service Departments had reorganised recently, The main driving force for this was the aspiration to achieve integrated local management and delivery, although the organisational structures felt to give the best chance of attaining this aim varied from Department to Department (Challis, 1990:23-25).

Challis recognised that the three dimensions which produced the six types of organisational structure could easily be augmented with other dimensions. She gave two examples – centralised or devolved management responsibilities and regulation of non-public provision (P37). Another area of much debate reflected in differing organisational structures in the 1980's revolved around the choices involving generic and specialist services. Despite attempts through the Seebohm Report to introduce generic, family-orientated services, specialisms based often on client group remained very common. Challis identified many different bases for specialism in the work of a Social Services Department, which would relate to different Operational Dimensions

from my framework (Table 4.7). In so far as these specialisms would be reflected in the work roles they would relate to the staffing element of the resources dimension.

Table 4.7 Bases for specialisation in Social Services Departments (from Challis, 1990:41-42)

<i>Basis for specialisation</i>	<i>Operational Dimension</i>
Age of clientele	Client
Problem, eg mental health, child abuse	Theme/Client
Method, eg group work, counselling	Function
Locus, ie domiciliary, residential	Function
Duration, ie anticipated length of intervention	Time
Intensity of the intervention	Function
Legislative basis, eg adoption and fostering	Resources
Substantive, eg welfare rights, HIV/AIDS	Theme
Process, eg project development, evaluation	Function

Challis ended her book with a number of questions for Social Services practitioners on the issues raised and a restatement of three principles,

- that no reorganisation is going to solve all the problems of Social Services Departments
- the search for the desirable must be tempered with an understanding of what is probable, rather than possible
- whatever we do will have unintended consequences (Challis, 1990:148).

There are some very striking parallels between Challis' work and the starting point for the thesis, in that a dimensional approach evolved out of an attempt to understand the complexity of the influences over organisational structures. In practical terms, Challis' theoretical framework enabled her to pull out similar issues for organisational structures to those that the ODF would focus on. There are, however, parts of her analysis which might have been stronger if she had been using the more complete theoretical structure of the ODF.

The main omission in terms of the coverage of dimensions was the stakeholder dimension. Relationships with other public organisations did feature within the book and 'external relationships' were included in the list of specific Social Service Department features at the end of the book (Challis, 1990:147), but stakeholders were not incorporated into the analysis of organisation structure. Partly this might be because Challis was writing before partnership working became so ingrained in local service delivery. In the twenty-first century it would be more difficult to justify seeing other local authority departments and NHS organisations as 'external'. It might also be

explained by the fact that Challis looked more at organisational structures rather than at the act of delivery of services, where the relationships with other organisations come into play. Whatever the reasons, it seems reasonable to say that a general framework for analysing organisational structure needs to incorporate a stakeholder dimension, and that Challis' approach would not translate well into other contexts because of this omission.

All the other six dimensions are included in some way in Challis' matrices and lists of issues influencing organisational structures. The least well developed one is resources, although this is partially explained by the fact that it is a key resource, staffing, which is the subject of the analysis.

One of the themes in Challis' book was the complexity of Social Service Departments. There are points in the book where it would have been helpful if her theoretical framework had been more comprehensive, to give order to lists of issues. An example is the bases for specialisation in Social Service Departments (see Table 4.7 above) where the list of specialisms might benefit from being categorised in terms of the seven ODF dimensions, to group like with like and recognise the common elements between different specialisations. For example, the four bases for specialisation which relate to 'function' could usefully be analysed together.

Challis' work also identifies issues about the ODF which need to be explored further in the next chapter. In particular her 'client' organisational principle includes concepts, such as mental health, which are difficult to divide neatly between the 'customer' and 'theme' operational dimensions.

In conclusion, Challis' work was a rigorous attempt to develop a dimensional understanding of Social Services Departments. From the perspective of the ODF, it does, however, have some flaws. Given the conceptual clarity of Challis' book, it is unfortunate that no one else seems to have picked up on it and extended her approach, either within Social Services or in other fields.

4.4 Coherence of the ODF as a whole and grouping the dimensions for further analysis

This chapter has been concerned with the coherence of the ODF as a whole, using criteria developed using Sayer's rational abstraction/ chaotic conception distinction to

assess the definition, completeness and consistency of the ODF. This is, of course, only part of the picture - there is only a degree to which the coherence of the ODF can be assessed without the more detailed analysis of each dimension which will follow in Chapter 5. However, some interim views can be formed.

The ODF is underpinned by a realist philosophy that recognises a difference between the real world and the perceptions that different individuals have of it. Using different modes of inference, including retrodution, the ODF is considered to be robust as a description of the 'world out there'. Unparalleled technological breakthroughs would be required to alter the nature of the dimensions or the relationships between them.

Not only is the ODF rooted in a realist philosophy but it is also laden with western cultural influences. People with different philosophical beliefs and cultural backgrounds may find it unhelpful and would use different ways of making sense of the world.

The essence of the ODF is a dimensional framework, but to have meaning it needs to be applied to a practical context, which affects the form of the ODF. Often it is applied to organisational structures, where one part of the resource dimension – staffing – becomes the subject of the analysis. The ODF would look slightly different if applied to another practical management issue, such as the modelling of service delivery.

As a general descriptive theory, the ODF has a limited scope. In exploring its boundaries, a parallel with the scope of the social sciences in the realist 'tree of sciences' has been identified. The ODF fits within the social sciences stratum in the tree of sciences, although in accord with the realist conception of the relationships between different layers, its explanatory power is not limited to that stratum. It can help to explain phenomena in psychological and semiological sciences which sit alongside the social sciences in the conception of the layers of scientific enquiry currently being developed by Holland (2006, private correspondence). Another way of defining the scope of the ODF is that it covers the right hand side of Wilber's four quadrant model.

In management theory I have found two similar theoretical frameworks developed for analysing organisational structures. Most significantly, classical organisation theory, developed by Luther Gulick in the USA contains 'principles of organisation', which cover similar ground. This work has been subsequently used and refined by many

management theorists in the USA. While there are many parallels with this branch of theory, the ODF would seem to be more coherent, because it deals with the legitimate criticisms made of classical organisation theory. Most tellingly, classical organisation theory has a 'purpose' dimension which overlaps in conceptual terms with other dimensions, while the ODF elevates 'purpose' to a higher level than the dimensions themselves.

The other main example I have found comes from the UK, where the structure of Social Service Departments has been analysed by Linda Challis in a similar way to the ODF. The main shortcomings in Challis' work for my purposes stem from her pre-occupation with a single local authority department at a particular stage in the development of local authority services. This means that, for example, she underplays the role of stakeholders.

At first sight, the ODF seems to be a more coherent theoretical framework than either of these two examples, although it would be wise to wait until after the analysis of individual dimensions in Chapter 5 before making any firm claims about this.

Because of the nature of the ODF it is vital that when delving into the dimensions, the grouping of dimensions follows coherent principles. In the original formulation of the ODF, the seven dimensions were divided into four groups,

- input (resources)
- process (function)
- outputs (customer, theme)
- contextual (space, time, stakeholder)

This initial grouping could be improved, in the light of the analysis in this chapter.

Based on the nature of each dimension revealed through the main links to different social science disciplines, it is possible to divide the dimensions into three groups

- the dimensions concerned with management process, ie 'resources' and 'function'
- the dimensions concerned with people and society, ie 'customer', 'theme' and 'stakeholder'
- contextual dimensions, ie 'space' and 'time'.

Compared with the development of the ODF up to this point, there is one particularly significant difference in alignment. Previously, the stakeholder dimension was seen as

a contextual one, similar to space and time. This has been replaced by grouping it together with customer and theme dimensions. The implications of this will be explored in Chapter 5.

5. Assessing the coherence of the Operational Dimensions Framework, as a general descriptive theory (coherence theory of truth- Aim 1) – individual dimensions and conclusions

Following on from the previous chapter, which concentrated on the coherence of the ODF as a whole, in Chapter 5 the focus of attention will be individual dimensions and the categories within them. This is a major task, given the breadth of the coverage of each dimension. Each dimension, or in some cases each category within the dimension, could be the subject of a thesis in their own right.

In some cases, the concepts underpinning a particular dimension have been the subject of debate over many years, with a vast literature devoted to different theories and methods of study. The 'customer dimension' is a good example where this is the case. Other dimensions which are equally important for the provision of public services have had less in-depth study. For example, although themes are often fundamental to the division of work and organisational structures, there is not a large literature concerned with the definition and differentiation of themes. The division into economic, environmental and social issues is much used in government policy, but the conceptual issues involved in such a classification have had little attention. Where such matters have not been explored in detail in the literature, the thesis has a particular role to play in demonstrating the implications of the way that public policy issues are conceptualised.

The approach to coherence as a criterion of truth was set out in detail in Section 4.1. Table 4.1 identified criteria for assessing clarity of definition, completeness and consistency, at different levels. This chapter is concerned with the criteria as they apply to individual dimensions and categories within the dimension. At the end of Chapter 4, proposals were made for dividing the seven dimensions up into three groups,

- resources and function
- customers, theme and stakeholders
- space and time

The three groupings of dimensions will be analysed in very different ways. The *resources and function* grouping concerns the mechanisms of delivery of services. It therefore make use of some general theories about how activities take place and

draw some conclusions about the common elements which can help us to conceptualise these dimensions in consistent, elegant and complete ways.

The key issue for the *customer, theme and stakeholder* grouping is about the relationships between the three dimensions, and whether the threefold division stands up to detailed scrutiny. This requires an in-depth look at many of the sub-categories in order to draw conclusions about the coherence of the dimensions themselves.

The *space and time* grouping is conceptually contentious in astrophysics and in quantum physics, but generally not in other natural sciences or the social sciences. I will therefore look briefly at the implications of theories of the universe for social theory, and then dwell on those social commentators who have claimed that the nature of space and time has been fundamentally changed by recent technological developments.

While this threefold categorisation is a useful one for analytical purposes, it also needs to be borne in mind that there are some logical relationships across dimensions, involving specific categories. Two examples of this are

- the time dimension is an integral part of both the function dimension, where processes take place over time, and the age category within the customer dimension
- the space dimension has a bearing on ethnicity, which is linked to the place of birth of the ancestors of the individual.

Where appropriate I will try to incorporate the connections which cut across the dimensions into the analysis, but there will not be the opportunity to investigate all the inter-relationships in as much depth as I would ideally like. However, the instances where dimensions intersect will be of significance in the conclusions from the chapter on the nature of the ODF.

The conclusion will incorporate the key points from both the chapters concerned with coherence. It will include a reformulation of the ODF which aims to identify the essence of the dimensional framework and the reasons why there are different versions of the ODF depending on the subject matter, for example, whether it is describing the process of service delivery or an organisational structure.

5.1 Resources and Function dimensions

These two dimensions are concerned with what actually happens when a service is delivered. It involves the coming together of a number of different types of *resources* to carry out a number of inter-related *functions*, which in combination constitute the delivery of a public service. So, for example, a housing repair service involves workers with specific areas of expertise and with different roles to play drawing upon other types of 'resource' to carry out a number of inter-related functions which constitute an activity rectifying defects in the fabric of dwellinghouses.

5.1.1 Input-output models and systems thinking

In the ODF just the resources and function dimensions are specifically about the activity of delivery, but all seven dimensions are an essential part of the overall process. It is noteworthy that there is no dimension in the ODF specifically about the 'output' of a public service. We need to consider the implications of this, and compare the ODF with other conceptualisations which do include an outputs category. As is the case throughout the chapter, we need to use the different modes of inference outlined in Chapter 3 to subject the different parts of the ODF to critique.

The input-output mode of thinking is not only a key part of branches of management theory, as I will outline later on in this section. There are also theories which suggest that it is fundamental to human development. From a background in psychology and psychiatry, Baron Cohen distinguishes between male and female brains on the basis that,

'The female brain is predominantly hard-wired for empathy. The male brain is hard-wired for understanding and building systems' (Baron Cohen, 2004:1).

Systems can be as varied as a pond, a vehicle, a plant, a library catalogue, a musical composition or an army unit. The common characteristic is that they all operate on inputs and deliver outputs, using 'if-then' correlation rules. The male brain is orientated towards *systemising* – analysing, exploring and constructing systems – while the female brain is driven to *empathising* – identifying another person's emotions and thoughts and responding appropriately (Baron Cohen, 2004:2-3). I will return to Baron Cohen's theories in Section 5.2.2 in the context of differences between genders, but for now the significant point is that input-output thinking is

deeply rooted in human consciousness and behaviour and is fundamental to human existence (and not just for males).

The 'input-output model' is a key building block for systems thinking and for project management. It is also fundamental to Marx's political economy and many other macro-economic theories. Before we explore some of these theories and their links to the resource and function dimensions, it is worth dwelling on the implications of 'male' and 'female' brains. The ODF as a whole can be seen as a manifestation of the 'male' brain approach – breaking down public service delivery into neat categories and consciously excluding human emotions and behaviour. There are other ways of conceptualising of public services using the 'female brain', for example as human encounters using a hermeneutic approach, which could be as valid, and could complement, the approach taken in the ODF. Relating this idea to Wilber's Integral Theory (see Section 4.2.6), the ODF covers the right half of the four quadrant model, while the hermeneutic approach would cover the left half.

While there are strong links between the ODF and systems thinking, the ODF has a different purpose from systems modelling. According to Clegg and Walsh (1998:217), systems thinking represents an over-arching meta-theory for examining and understanding the behaviour of complex entities. The underlying notion is that a system is composed of parts or elements which are themselves interrelated and interconnected to form some whole. The ODF is concerned with modelling the dimensional aspects of human activities, or ways of organising to undertake activities, rather than trying to establish the boundaries of a system in order to understand and regulate change within that system.

Despite the difference in objectives, the common ground between the ODF and systems approaches is not confined to the 'input-output' concept. Human system theories, such as Checkland's Soft Systems Methodology and Whole Systems approaches build in dimensions in a similar way to the ODF, for example in emphasising the roles of different stakeholders, who are conceptualised as actors participating in a system. We will return to human system theories in Chapter 7, when looking at theories which might complement the ODF within a Scientific Research Programme. However, for now it is more useful to look at how the ODF compares to models for project management, where the focus is on the act of delivery, when looking in detail at the resources and functions dimensions.

5.1.2 Categorising resources

The Association for Project Management has a concise 'Body of Knowledge' (fifth edition published in 2006) which aims to incorporate all the generic topics in which project management professionals should be knowledgeable and competent. These topics are then expanded upon in the much longer Project Management Pathways, first published in 2002. Resource Management is one of the topics, under the 'control' heading. The Glossary of Terms in Project Management Pathways, refers to the BS 6079 definition of a resource as 'any variable capable of definition that is required for the completion of an activity and may constrain the project' (APM, 2002, xxxiii). Resources are divided into storable and non-storable. Dennis Lock provides the chapter in Project Management Pathways on Resource Management, and includes a more detailed typology of resource categories (Table 5.1)

Table 5.1 Resources for Project Management

<i>Resource Category</i>	<i>Resource Types</i>
Exhaustible Resources – consumed by a project and drawn from a non-renewable source	Natural Mineral Deposits Time
Replenishable Resources – consumed entirely by the project but for which new supplies can be obtained	Special Purchases of Components and Equipment Bulk Purchase Materials Money
Re-usable Resources – employed in the course of project activities but they themselves remain substantially unchanged by the work. When the project finishes they are freed up for another use.	People Plant and Machinery Accommodation Space

(from APM, 2002:32, 3-6)

This typology is perhaps based on experience of large capital projects, where the aim is to use plant/machinery and components/equipment to create a product, and labour is less of a creative force than it is in other types of project. In a wider context, some of the assumptions of this typology seem misleading. For example, where projects are based more on human expertise it seems strange to suggest that people are substantially unchanged by the work. In a public service context, activities are often aiming to change the behaviour of the service recipients, who themselves put resources in, otherwise they would not be able to take advantage of the service. Furthermore, the people who deliver the service are themselves changed in the process of providing it. The categorisation of time within the typology as a non-

renewable resource is also questionable – an argument could be made for putting it in either of the other categories.

Therefore, this categorisation of resources is a useful starting point, but for the purposes of the ODF it is a 'chaotic conception'. The categorisation of resources can be undertaken in many different ways, which might better fit the criteria for a 'rational abstraction'. For example, an alternative categorisation, which includes some additional elements to the one above, and changes the basis for distinguishing between categories to fit better with the ODF as a whole, is illustrated in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2 An alternative categorisation of resources based on the ODF

<i>Category</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
People	represented by the stakeholder, theme and customer dimensions, and including the resources brought by the service deliverer
Capital items	such as land and property, plant and machinery, computer hardware, which last for a relatively long time
Revenue items	such as stationery, computer print cartridges, which are quickly used up
Energy supplies	required for many of the capital and revenue items to operate
Intellectual property	including knowledge to be utilised and legal/financial rules and regulations, that guide and constrain delivery of the activity
Money	as a means to buy other resources
Space and time	which have the status of separate dimensions, providing the context for the deployment of resources

Note: the distinction between capital and revenue is taken from local authority accounting conventions

The relationships between the different resources can be complex. For example, capital assets might be used as collateral to obtain money, which is used to buy other resources, to undertake activities which change people, but also generate money and new intellectual property.

It is noteworthy that the three 'people' dimensions plus space and time are found in the list of resources in Table 5.2. However, this does not compromise the coherence of the ODF, so long as they are conceptualised in a way which is consistent with the dimensional approach. People comprise a sub-group of resources which can be

contrasted with non-human resources, while space and time are contextual dimensions for any kind of activity.

The combination of resources to generate functions which constitute the delivery of a public service brings us into the field of economic theory. We can view function as being essentially an economic activity and then relate the ODF to the central concept in economics, the scarcity of resources (Maunder, Myers, Wall and Miller, 1995:3).

The classification of resources used by Maunder et al is as follows

- Natural resources - Land
- Human resources - Labour and entrepreneurship
- Manufactured resources - Physical capital

If we relate this simple classification to the list outlined above, it is apparent that, amongst the different ways of aggregating and disaggregating resources there is a consistency which relates to the seven dimensions, which is illustrated in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3 Resource categories in the ODF and in economics

<i>Operational Dimensions Framework (from Table 4.2)</i>	<i>Maunder et al. (1995)</i>
Energy	Natural resources
Capital items	
Revenue items	Manufactured resources
Money	
Intellect	
People (customer, theme, stakeholder, service deliverer)	Human resources
Space	-
Time	

Thus all the items from energy to money constitute resources not covered by other dimensions, intellect is part of the three people dimensions and space and time are separate dimensions, not recognised by Maunder et al. (1995).

5.1.3 Conceptualising functions as economic activities, and the implications for the resources dimension

Even if the primary purpose of a function is not an economic one, such as caring for the elderly (social) or protecting wildlife habitats (environmental), the activity is still

part of the economy. As theorists have pondered over the mechanisms through which the many activities take place which constitute 'the economy' they have looked at the relationships between resources, and placed different interpretations upon what they have observed. Thus for Marx, the key economic concepts of commodity, value and capital are woven together into theories of economic activity, under different modes of production (Howard and King, 1975:34). In Marx's theories, under capitalism public services are part of the state apparatus to enable capital accumulation, but also constrain its worst excesses in terms of labour exploitation (Howard and King, 1975:30).

5.1.4 Further issues in conceptualising the resources and functions dimensions

Although the ODF has nothing to offer in terms of determining the credibility of different economic theories and ways of conceptualising the resource dimension, it is useful as a checklist to ensure that no dimensions are neglected. Although the conceptualisation of resources and functions depends upon the economic theory which is deployed, there are some issues arising from the structure of the ODF, which give rise to common problems, no matter which economic theory is favoured.

The first of these problems is concerned with how time fits in to an input-output model. In project management models outputs are often viewed as coming at the end of the project. In reality, however, outputs are being generated all the time, and in the delivery of a public service there is a constant stream of end results, as different service recipients engage with the service for finite periods. In practice, service delivery is punctuated with milestones which determine the timeframe for delivery, based on accounting periods or the timing of review and evaluation exercises. Building in time periods also leads naturally into project cycles, which incorporate review and feedback loops into a circular process. The ODF incorporates a time dimension, but the cyclical pattern is not explicitly built in to it. This creates problems in trying to represent the logical relationships between dimensions diagrammatically (see Figure 5.1, towards the end of the chapter), although it is of little concern in practical applications, when time is able to be split up into periods.

The other issue is conceptually unproblematic but creates practical difficulties for the application of the ODF. It concerns the fact that in real life services are never delivered in isolation from one another. It may be easy to define an activity for the

purposes of the ODF, but in practice it will be related to other activities which compete for resources and may often muddy the waters with the regard to the boundaries between the activity being modelled and other services. Indeed, the objectives of 'joining up' public services demands that activities be viewed as part of a range of services meeting different customer needs.

These issues do not invalidate the ODF but they point to the need to use it appropriately and to incorporate the insights from other theories, depending on the context in which it is to be used.

5.1.5 Summary of the section

The resources and function dimensions are at the heart of the ODF, because they represent the preparation for the delivery of public services and the act of delivery itself. The input-output model these dimensions are derived from is not only fundamental to economics as a discipline but also the 'male brain', as defined by Baron Cohen (see Section 5.1.1).

In the ODF all the remaining five dimensions contribute to the inputs for the resources dimension, to enable functions to take place. In the rest of this chapter we will look at the respective roles of the three people dimensions, together with space and time, and see how inputs are mirrored in the outputs arising from service delivery.

It is also necessary within the 'people dimensions' to take account of the resources brought by the service deliverer, which are not specifically included in the original form of the ODF. This difference from the original version can be explained by the fact that the analysis was identifying options for the structure of a staff team, so the 'service deliverer' element of resources was separated out from the analytical process.

5.2 Customer, Theme and Stakeholder Dimensions

5.2.1 The concepts behind the three dimensions

The common element shared by these dimensions is their concern with people, and the relations between individuals and the society they are a part of. Before looking at the relationships between these three dimensions and how they fit into wider

theoretical frameworks it is necessary to be concerned briefly with the concepts associated with each of these three dimensions, as preparation for the detailed analysis.

The ODF refers to a '*customer*' dimension, as a term which encapsulates both the focus on service recipients and the social group differences between people which have become the focus for equal opportunity and managing diversity policies. Alternative terms which capture both of these two concepts to a greater or lesser degree are 'clients', 'clientele', 'service users', 'communities of interest' and 'beneficiaries'. In health services, the traditional term has been 'patient', whereas in the 1918 Haldane Report into the structure of the Civil Service the phrase used was 'class of persons dealt with' (see Appendix 1). There is scope for confusion because of the different uses of some of the terms in different circumstances. For example, 'client' can sometimes refer to the user of a service but in other situations be the term for the institution commissioning the service.

Many of the inequalities suffered throughout history have a social group component to them, eg slavery, selective voting rights. The progression to democratic government has seen landmark victories enshrined in the law for those campaigning against injustice. However, legislation specifically concerned with the comparative treatment of different social groupings is comparatively recent. In the UK the first Acts were passed in the 1970's, after joining the European Union, in the form of the Sex Discrimination Act, 1975 and the Race Relations Act, 1976. 'Equal opportunities' and, more recently, 'managing diversity', have been the overarching concepts providing the context for debates about the nature of social groups and the implications for social policy (Liff, 1997).

Service recipients not only belong to a number of social groupings, but also have needs of different types. '*Theme*' ultimately refers back to some basic human need, such as for shelter or social interaction, which is manifested in a thematic policy area, such as housing or community development. My initial assumption is that it can be contrasted with the '*customer*' dimension, on the strength that '*theme*' deals with needs which may change over time according to individual circumstances, whereas '*customer*' refers to innate human characteristics (see Section 1.1).

The theme dimension is often contrasted with the geographical and customer dimensions as being alternatives for the main focus of regeneration programmes.

The theme might be educational attainment across a whole Borough rather than comprehensive regeneration across all themes in a particular neighbourhood or across all themes for a particular social grouping, such as black and minority ethnic groups.

'Theme' can be divided into a small or a large number of sub-categories. In the Urban Programme in the early 1990's there were three sub-programmes – economic, environmental and social. This threefold categorisation has been used again many times, most importantly in the general power for local authorities under the Local Government Act, 2000.

For policy-making purposes, the theme dimension is usually broken down into a much greater number of categories, which can include employment, education, training, community, health, sport, arts, housing, and transport. Economy, environment and social themes are sometimes used as overarching concepts and sometimes as being on the same level as the other categories.

There is nothing sacrosanct about these categories and much overlap in their usage. For example, 'community' and 'social' are sometimes given different meanings and sometimes used interchangeably. The categories are often broken further for developing social science theory and applying it to practical problems, eg by mode of transport or by tenure of housing.

While the theme categories are in everyday usage, it is important to consider exactly what is meant by the various terms. For example, 'housing' is ultimately about the need for shelter from the elements. In Western Civilization people generally eat and sleep in their 'homes', but they often work somewhere else. While most people have a home, there are a small minority who do not, and the lack of a home is seen as one of the main social problems requiring public sector intervention, because of the hardship arising from this situation.

For the purposes of the ODF, the term '*stakeholder*' refers to any individual, group or organisation which affects or is affected by delivery of the service. Stakeholder identification and analysis is a branch of management theory, and this literature will be drawn upon in Section 5.2.4 to explore issues of definition in more detail and to help identify key stakeholders from those whose significance is marginal.

From this brief overview, it is clear that there are major issues of definition for the customer and theme dimensions, and complex inter-relationships between the three dimensions. It is necessary to look in detail at the three dimensions, to make sense of the connections between them and any fuzzy boundaries in defining them. Greater attention needs to be paid to the 'people' dimensions than the other two groups (resources/function and space/time) because of the complexity of the concepts and relationships involved.

5.2.2 Diversity and the nature of the customer dimension

The coverage of definitions of diversity can usefully provide a starting point for debates on the nature of social difference and therefore, for the purposes of the ODF, exploring the nature of sub-categories under the 'customer' dimension and the relationships with the 'theme' dimension. Some social differences are included in every definition of diversity, whereas others are included in some, but not all definitions.

Using definitions of diversity reviewed by Kandola and Fullerton (1998:7-8), there is a long list of social group characteristics which different authors have suggested are part of a definition of diversity. These characteristics need to be examined to see how far they constitute innate human characteristics rather than transient conditions.

Grouping together similar terms, the list is

- sex, gender
- age
- race, ethnic origin, skin colour
- disability, physical ability, mental capacity
- sexual orientation
- background, economic class,
- culture
- personality, workstyle, education, values
- experience, work experience, military experience
- religious affiliation.

For each term in the list it is possible to analyse to what extent there is an underlying characteristic which is unchanging throughout someone's life, or, in the case of age, changes systematically and predictably over time. This is not to say that any innate characteristic determines identity in a deterministic way. Kirton and Green (2000:9),

make the point that identity is always socially constructed – the importance of what they call ‘social group membership’ is that it influences how individuals perceive themselves and how others perceive them. I can agree with this statement while still maintaining that social identity is underpinned by objective factors, some of which are fixed points throughout someone’s lifetime, such as where and when they were born.

It is immediately apparent that some of the social group characteristics represent innate human characteristics, and hence would be part of the ‘customer’ dimension while others are closer to ever-changing human needs, and hence would be part of the ‘theme’ dimension. The list has been ordered to reflect the continuum from one type to another. At the top of the list are some social differences which are clearly innate human characteristics, such as sex and age. These would be part of the customer dimension. In policy terms they represent underlying features which translate into different needs to be taken account of in planning and delivering public services on a theme by theme basis. Thus employment policies need to be sensitive to sex and age differences. Such policies might well try to address the implications of being a woman or being aged sixty and seeking work, but they would not try to change a person’s sex or age!

At the bottom of the table are some features which clearly represent human needs rather than innate characteristics and, in the terms of the Operational Dimensions Framework, constitute ‘themes’ – aspects of life to be addressed by policy. Education is an example of a theme which appears in the list of social differences.

In between these two extremes there are a number of social differences which less clearly fall into either the ‘customer’ or the ‘theme’ dimension. In lay terms these social differences are often assumed to translate into discrete and coherent sub groups within the human population. Even where there is no foundation for such a view in biological or sociological terms, the socially-constructed nature of social groupings and the existence of public policies predicated upon popular lay preconceptions means that all these social groupings should be analysed on an individual basis to see how far they fit with the ‘customer’ definition in the ODF.

To analyse the conceptual basis of each of the social differences listed in the definitions of diversity is beyond the scope of this thesis. It would unbalance the analysis of the seven dimensions and, in terms of the whole thesis, reduce the depth of the work on the other three theories of truth in favour of the coherence theory.

Therefore, I will concentrate on just two of the social groupings, to illustrate the main issues arising. First, I will look at sex and gender, where social groupings into males and females are manifestly underpinned by biological differences and hence there is a sociological category which is definitely part of the 'customer' dimension. Second, I will be concerned with the linked areas of race, ethnic origin and skin colour, where the conceptual status of commonly used lay definitions of social difference have been challenged by social scientists.

Conceptualisation of social difference : sex and gender

The social policy implications of the physiological differences between males and females have been the subject of much contention in recent times. Should they be viewed as hurdles to be overcome to dissolve differences or should they be accommodated and utilized within the organisation (Liff, 1997)? Those who argue for dissolving differences can point to the distinction between sex and gender. While the biological distinction into different sexes is usually a clear cut one (except for transsexuals), gender is seen as being socially constructed, with the potential for individuals to display both masculine and feminine characteristics, in an infinite number of variations. Examination of other cultures bears out the claim that there are no simple relationships between anatomy and social roles (Bilton et al., 2002:134-135). On the other hand, those who argue for accommodating differences between men and women can point to the seeming strength of these forces in over-riding some of the attempts in western society to negate them.

One of the main areas of debate has been the extent to which men and women have different brains. Are there in-built distinctions between boys and girls which lead them to behave differently, or are any systematic differences in behaviour and roles purely the result of social pressures? The nature-nurture debate has often been conducted in the past as a choice between two extremes – either everything is pre-programmed or everything is due to how children are brought up. In 'The Blank Slate – the modern denial of human nature', Steven Pinker describes how one of these extremes, the idea that character and behaviour are totally responsive to environmental factors, still holds sway in many social policies, even though in scientific terms there is a growing consensus that both heredity and environment are important and behaviour arises from the interaction between them (Pinker, 2002:vii-ix). In terms of gender, Pinker asserts that the 'Blank Slate' agenda is represented by 'gender feminism', which is based on three claims

- that differences between men and women are entirely socially constructed
- that power is the dominating social motive
- that human interactions arise from group motives, in this case the male gender dominating the female gender (Pinker, 2002:341).

Gender feminism is contrasted with 'equity feminism', which makes no commitments regarding psychological or biological differences but opposes sex discrimination and other forms of unfairness to women.

One of the areas in which gender feminism is seen as ignoring scientific evidence is in the claim that males and females are born with indistinguishable minds (Pinker, 2002:371). As initially referred to in Section 5.1.1, in 'The Essential Difference' Simon Baron Cohen refers to male and female brains. The male brain is driven by 'systemising' – analysing, exploring and constructing systems, while the female brain is driven by 'empathising' – identifying another person's emotions and thoughts and responding appropriately (Baron Cohen, 2004:1-3). Baron Cohen is at pains to point out that the titles 'male' and 'female' brain types are based on predispositions borne out by statistical averages, so, for example, an individual man might buck the trend and have an empathising brain type. Some people display an extreme brain type, and a pre-disposition to autism is the result of an extreme male brain (Baron Cohen, 2004:133-154).

One might quibble with the terminology used by Baron Cohen (is it misleading to call the two types of brain 'male' and 'female'?), but it adds weight to the argument for building on the respective strengths of men and women in developing policies on gender. In overall terms, the key point is Pinker's one, that nature and nurture both have a role to play, and it is the interaction between them which determines the development of the individual. Furthermore, in aggregate terms, the evolution of society as a whole is affected by this myriad of interactions at the individual level.

Conceptualisation of social difference: race, ethnic origin and skin colour

While race is a concept which features strongly in popular culture, many sociologists have many reservations about the use of the term, and view it as a cultural construction rather than having any scientific validity (Billington, Hockey and Strawbridge, 1998:189). In 'Realism and Racism – concepts of race in sociological

research' (2000), Bob Carter addresses the difficulties sociologists have had in defining a theoretical concept of race.

From the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when races were held to be biological categories which described and identified discrete groupings of the human species, a consensus emerged in the twentieth century that the 'differences between so called races were literally only skin deep' (Carter, 2000:2). In genetic terms, the differences between 'racial categories', however defined, turn out to be insignificant in comparison with the variations between individuals, except on superficial characteristics, such as skin colour. The implications of these conceptual difficulties have been that much research in the field has been flawed. Bhopal (1997:175) contests that, 'With hindsight, we can see that much race-oriented science in the past was unethical, invalid, racist and inhumane though it was perceived to be of great importance'.

Carter asks whether a concept of race is worth preserving within the social sciences, and uses this question to consider wider issues surrounding the abilities of social sciences to generate privileged knowledge, that is somehow more objective than the assertions made in everyday life which are not rooted in social theory and research (Carter, 2000:8).

Carter suggests that because race concepts are used in everyday life and therefore have a social reality they need to be addressed in social theory and research. However, the way to do this is not to try to formulate a new definition of race. Instead, Carter suggests that social theories deriving from critical realism can be used to translate the everyday use of race concepts into a form of privileged knowledge generated by social scientific research. Using Archer's morphogenetic perspective and Layder's domain theory, Carter identifies specific properties of race concepts, ideas and propositions, namely that

- they are the products of sociocultural interaction and are generated by social actors
- over time, they acquire a degree of autonomy within the cultural system from those responsible for them, so these concepts, ideas and propositions constrain and influence subsequent social actors (Carter, 2000:5).

Carter then uses an example, that of policies on Trans Racial Adoption, to highlight the problems when a debate about social policy is conducted in race terms, because of the inevitable ambiguities in definitions. Carter suggests that it would be much more appropriate to use other regularities, such as skin colour or social class, placed within a theoretical discourse, if the task of research is to attempt to establish causal relationships (Carter, 2000:156).

Returning to the original list of diversity issues, it is clear that the grouped concepts of race, ethnic origin and skin colour are, in fact, of different standing in conceptual terms. Race is about perceptions of identity and the interplay between the individual and cultural influences, and is deeply influenced by public policy. Ethnic origin and skin colour are two of the factors which have a bearing on race concepts, ideas and propositions, and can be viewed as innate characteristics – where someone is born cannot change after the birth has taken place and skin colour generally changes only within narrow bands over time. However, as soon as one tries to categorise place of birth and skin colour, complications arise. Is the unit of measurement for place of birth the nation state, or should it go down to region, town or even village? What skin colour categories should be used? There is a further difficulty in that classificatory systems based on skin colour bring with them the danger of once again relating moral worth to physical appearance (Bradby, 2003:6). She concludes that 'A universal conceptualisation of ethnicity may be a theoretical concept that is impossible to operationalise' (Bradby, 2003:11), the implications being that any research has to define ethnicity in culturally and historically-specific contexts.

Summary of Section 5.2.2

The foregoing analysis of the customer dimension has demonstrated the difficulty in viewing particular characteristics of 'the customer' as inherent attributes not subject to policy intervention and contrasting those with thematic interests which are the concern of public policy. There are specific characteristics which can almost always be taken as given for policy-orientated research, such as

- biological sex (except for public policies around sex change)
- skin colour (except for policies on diseases affecting the skin and the ways in which people try to change skin colour)

There are also particular characteristics associated with the life-cycle, which can be taken as given, such as place of birth and age.

However, public policies must always be concerned about how people's lives are affected by these inherent characteristics and the socially constructed attitudes and perceptions which they and other people have on the combination of attributes which make up each individual.

Beyond these fundamental human attributes there are other 'composite' concepts used to define social difference, which have a less certain ontological status, such as gender, race and social class (class was one of the terms which I originally found it difficult to fit into the ODF). These 'composite' concepts are themselves social constructions and are very definitely the domain of social policy. Each type of social difference has its own conceptual peculiarities, and needs to be analysed in depth in a contextually-specific way, if the complexities of definition and application are to be rigorously assessed.

5.2.3 Themes and different human needs

The section on customers has demonstrated that despite the fuzziness of social differences, there is still a distinction that can be made between customer groupings and the themes or aspects of life. Policies orientated towards different social groupings, based on ethnic identity or occupational class, for example, need to be concerned with the range of themes – employment, education, transport, housing, health, leisure etc. From this point of view, there is still a practical need to maintain the distinction between the customer and the theme dimensions, even if the division into inherent characteristics and aspects of life for policy intervention is unclear and potentially misleading.

Of particular significance are the macro-categories into which the theme dimension is divided up. As referred to in Section 5.2.1, in UK public policy the main macro-categorisation has been into economic, environmental and social. However, there are many other ways in which the different aspects of life might be broken down to provide the building blocks for public policy. There is a varying degree of consistency in the categories used in different contexts. Thus 'housing' is a term which almost always appears in a longer list of themes, while terms like 'culture', 'leisure', 'arts' and 'sport' are not easy to demarcate from each other, and appear more sporadically. Sometimes sport might be part of culture, sometimes it might be a separate theme.

On a conceptual level, there are questions as to whether the categories used are consistent with each other. Thus 'social' always refers to collective experiences of people, whereas 'environmental' sometimes refers to human experience and sometimes to the effects on planet Earth. 'Sport' refers to activities, which in themselves have economic, environmental and social effects, whereas 'culture' does not necessarily imply 'doing' something. Furthermore, the categories change over time, as new terms become fashionable. Thus 'transport' is replaced by 'accessibility' and then by 'connectivity'. In accord with the conceptualisation of themes as aspects of being human, it might be helpful to look at theories which aim to capture and categorise the diversity of human needs.

I will use two examples, which come from different sources and which are used in very different ways to inform social theory. In using these examples I will aim to provide some options as to how the theme dimension might be differentiated in a more structured way than the usual division into economic, environmental and social.

The first example comes from Margaret Archer's 'Being Human: the problem of agency', published in 2000. In this book she develops theories about the emergence of human consciousness, personal identity and social identity from a realist philosophical standpoint. She refers to three orders of reality – natural, practical and social – with which every person is engaged with simultaneously. During their lives, people develop 'emotional commentaries' relating to

- our physical well-being in the natural order
- our performative achievements in the practical order
- our self worth in the social order (Archer, 2000:9).

People constantly face dilemmas as to the priority they give to the three orders. Archer gives the example that responding to physical fear may be justified in terms of physical well-being but could have a negative effect on performative achievements and self worth (Archer, 2000:10). Archer claims that the balance we strike between the three orders gives us our personal identity.

The second example comes from 'A better choice of choice: Quality of life, consumption and economic growth', a Fabian Society publication in 2003, written by Levett, with Christie, Jacobs and Therivel. They challenge the assumptions made in mainstream economics about consumption and well-being and the implications for

sustainable development. They put forward a model of consumption in which the quality of life benefits from the use of goods arise in four areas,

- subsistence (basic life support)
- experience, for example the sensory pleasure of comfort or eating
- belonging (expression of a group or collective identity or affiliation)
- self actualisation (expression of individual identity)

(Levett et al., 2003:21-22)

Levett et al make the point that these quality of life benefits do not only arise from the consumption of goods. The latter two are mainly about relationships with other people. Furthermore, the connections between spending, consumption and well being are complex. Sometimes greater consumption has negative implications for quality of life, for example when over-eating leads to obesity and then to poor health (Levett et al. 2003:23-26). Public policies guide consumers in different directions, and Levett et al argue for more sophisticated approaches to policy options which better reflect sustainability implications (2003:70-82).

There are some common attributes in these two typologies, which have implications for the dimension in conceptual terms. The first point is that both Archer's and Levett et al's typologies have a category for the basic requirements of human existence – the subsistence category in Levett et al's formulation and the natural order in Archer's. Taking a global perspective, there are now and will always be huge numbers of people for whom the basic requirements of human existence are a constant struggle and there are marginalized groups and individuals in affluent societies to whom this also sometimes applies. The term 'poverty' is often used as indicating a lack of the basic requirements of human existence (poverty was one of the terms which I originally found it difficult to fit into the ODF) . Where people are living in poverty, there is a clear rationale for public policy interventions, to try to improve their circumstances.

For most people in affluent western societies the subsistence category might be seen as being able to be taken for granted, enabling a concentration on broader economic, environmental and social concerns. However, subsistence is a constant requirement of human existence. In the attempts to satisfy other human needs, sometimes the basic requirements of human existence are compromised, and consequently survival becomes prejudiced. The current problem in the UK with obesity and the consequences for health are an example. Levett et al point out that the potential to

eat far more than nutritionally necessary has been there in the UK for many decades, but suggest for a long time there were social and physiological factors which prevented this. However, these checks have now been broken down by 'a malign combination of sedentary and immobile lifestyles, a culture of glorification of excess which has abolished the old social restraints on greed, and a food and marketing industry able to make the best profits from nutritionally poor and fattening processed foods' (Levett et al, 2003:26). Many of those affected are in danger of early death. Public services have to deal with the consequences of poor diet and at the same time to attack the root causes.

Although people are susceptible to actions likely to prejudice their survival, they are aware of their vulnerability and prioritise public services which are concerned with basic needs. Therefore the state of the health service is put towards the top of the list of public policy priorities.

The second point to make concerns the relationship between public services and the range of themes. Services are generally designed primarily to deliver outcomes under one policy, corresponding to one of the themes. There are health services and employment services, for example, and branches of public policy that inform the nature of these services. However, the delivery of any public service always has impacts on all themes, to a greater or lesser degree. For example, a service to maintain social housing has effects on the economy and employment, effects on the built environment, on social interaction, on transport patterns, on crime and anti-social behaviour etc. One of the fundamental properties of the ODF is that it incorporates this inter-connectedness.

The understanding that all human activities have impacts across the range of themes is acknowledged by Holland, who suggests that terms such as 'economic' and 'political' refer to different dimensions or aspects of social activity. He quotes Tony Lawson, who claims that all types of human activity have an economic aspect, while at the same time very few, if any activities have merely an economic aspect (Holland, 2005:14),

There are many tools which are applied to public policies to take account of the inter-related nature of different themes, such as sustainability assessments, social auditing, and cross cutting themes, which we will look at in other chapters. However,

these tools are often an 'add on' to the policy design process, rather than being a fundamental part of the underlying conceptual framework, as is the case in the ODF.

This approach would apply however the themes are defined within that dimension in the ODF. Therefore public services have implications across the range of human needs, whether they are categorised using Archer's orders of reality, by Levett et al.'s types of human consumption, by the economic, environmental and social effects or by one of the longer list of themes used in public policy. In policy terms, the key requirement is to isolate those implications which are significant from those which are less important, because it is so time consuming, and hence counterproductive to effective delivery, to measure every public service against every theme, however the themes are defined.

5.2.4 Stakeholders

In management literature, the term 'stakeholder' has been defined in many different ways, reviewed by Mitchell, Agle and Wood, (1997:853-863). They distinguish between broad and narrow definitions. Within the 'broad' camp is the classic definition by Freeman in 1984 that 'A stakeholder in an organisation is (by definition) any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation's objectives' quoted in Mitchell et al., (1997:856). Narrow definitions try to distinguish between the vast number of individuals, groups and institutional interests covered in broad definitions, in order to identify those critical for the purposes of the development of management theory.

Mitchell et al.'s contribution is to develop a theory of stakeholder identification and salience, based on the attributes of power, legitimacy and urgency. The definitions of the key concepts they used are set out in Table 5.4 below. They identify some additional features of stakeholder relations that reflect their dynamism. Stakeholder attributes vary over time, they are socially constructed and the stakeholder may or may not be aware of their potential for influence.

By combining the three attributes of power, legitimacy and urgency, Mitchell et al. develop a typology of stakeholders. For a particular firm, the strongest claims for attention would come from stakeholders who rank high on at least one of these attributes. The strongest claims of all arise where all three attributes are present.

Table 5.4 Key constructs in the theory of stakeholder identification and salience (adapted from Mitchell et al., (1997:869))

<i>Construct</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Bases</i>
Stakeholder	Any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation's objectives	
Power	A relationship among social actors in which one (A) can get another (B) to do something (B) would not otherwise have done	Coercive – force, threat Utilitarian – incentives Normative – symbolic influences
Legitimacy	A generalised perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, definitions	Individual Organisational Social
Urgency	The degree to which stakeholder claims call for immediate attention	Time sensitivity Criticality to the stakeholder
Salience	The degree to which managers give priority to competing stakeholder claims	

Clearly the concept of the stakeholder, as defined by Mitchell et al. applies to the delivery of any public service. They describe how stakeholder theories arose out of the appreciation that the firm needs to have a wider vision of its roles and responsibilities beyond those 'stockholding groups' who own the firm and are looking to see a return on their investment (Mitchell et al. 1997:855-856). In a similar way, for a deliverer of public services the focus of attention has widened, beyond the organisation providing the service and the people to whom it is being delivered, to include a much wider range of stakeholding interests. In public services in the UK the widening of the approach has gone hand in hand with changes to the services themselves, now subject to a range of partnership structures and initiatives designed to ensure a more collaborative approach (Skelcher and Sullivan, 2002, Huxham and Vangan, 2005).

As with theories of the firm, it is important in public service delivery to distinguish those stakeholders whose input is significant from those whose role is more peripheral. In my unpublished work on the Stakeholder Model for Assessing Performance, I identified five key stakeholder interests to whom officer teams managing regeneration programmes are answerable (some of which are often vested in the same organisation). These are

- funding body
- accountable organisation
- employer
- partnership body
- beneficiaries (Breese, 2000)

There will generally be many different stakeholder groups and institutions, and Mitchell et al's criteria of power, legitimacy and urgency could provide one way of identifying them and determining the salience of their interests. Another way of determining which stakeholders are significant, which is implicit in Mitchell et al's typology, would be simply to look at the role which different stakeholder groups play in service delivery, along the lines of my paper in 2000. The key stakeholder interests I identified in that paper are those with the most important hold over the delivery of the service, eg employer, funder. These five groups will often score highly on all three of Mitchell et al's salience criteria, of power, legitimacy and urgency. Other partners may not have such a direct involvement but might, for example, contribute to a multi-agency steering group overseeing project delivery. Therefore, by looking at the stakeholder dimension in conjunction with the 'resources' dimension, stakeholders can be categorised in terms of their role in delivery of the service.

Service deliverer

As referred to in Section 5.1, the service delivery organisation did not appear within the original ODF table because the ODF as a tool was devised as a means of enabling the organisation to make choices about its future structure (see Chapter 2). However, it is clear that from a conceptual basis, the service delivery organisation must be included if the ODF is to take a comprehensive approach. The service delivery function may not necessarily be undertaken by a single organisation, for example if it is being provided by a multi-disciplinary team. The specification of what

the service is will be very important in circumscribing the type of activities and defining who is taking the main responsibility for delivery.

Service recipient

In the explanation of the 'customer' dimension in Section 5.2.1, I identified two different uses for that dimension, first the focus on service recipients and second the social group differences between people, which are reflected in equal opportunities and managing diversity policies. In the first usage, customers might be viewed as being just one of the main stakeholder groups. Is there any basis for maintaining a separate dimension for customers or should it be amalgamated into the stakeholder dimension?

The rationale for maintaining a separate 'customer' dimension, would need to be based on the *raison d'être* for public services. By definition they are there to meet perceived needs of the people who receive the services. In the delivery of public services, meeting customer needs should be the end in itself, rather than, as it is for private firms, a means to an end, in ensuring the continuance and success of the firm. Therefore, for public services, there is a qualitative difference in the status of service recipients, compared to all the other stakeholders and customers constitute a special subset of the stakeholder dimension.

It is not, however, always straightforward to separate out customers from other stakeholder groups when public services are delivered. Take, for example, a police operation to reduce burglary. Are the service recipients

- the households burgled, who get redress for the losses sustained
- the households who might otherwise have been burgled
- the burglars who are caught in the operation
- the potential burglars who might be dissuaded from stealing from people's homes?

I suggest that all these groups might be viewed as service recipients in some way. Therefore, stakeholder analysis needs to be aware of the ambiguities in simple term such as 'the customer'.

When we consider the second attribute of the customer dimension, the categorisation of social difference, the interdependence of the customer and the stakeholder

dimensions (and also the theme dimension) becomes clear. Other stakeholders have the same social group and thematic interests as service recipients, both when viewed as a group and through the individuals who represent and activate institutional and other group stakeholder interests. Therefore it would be advisable to try to separate out the two different attributes of the customer dimension in reformulating the ODF.

Other stakeholder groups

There are qualitative differences in the roles of different stakeholders in service delivery. A fundamental distinction for the purposes of the ODF is between those stakeholders who put resources into service delivery, for example through a direct staff involvement in delivering the service, provision of materials and/or funding or representation on an overseeing steering group, and those stakeholders who do not put resources into delivery. The latter group qualify as a stakeholder because the outcomes from service delivery affect them. An example would be residents in a neighbouring area to one where there is a blitz on burglary, who may suffer from displacement of crime. Another might be a Government Department who are interested in the service as an example of best practice.

As with the terms 'service deliverer' and 'service recipient', other stakeholder categories are often more difficult to pin down than might initially be expected. For example, the term 'funder' is more complicated than it might appear, because there is a hierarchical chain of transactions which eventually result in public expenditure. However, even if there are a number of different categories of funder, the process of identifying them and tracing the lines of accountability can be useful for effective planning of service delivery.

Individuals and stakeholder interests

A further issue concerns the role of individuals within stakeholder interests. The stakeholder might be defined as the institution or group itself, eg 'the local authority' or 'the community' but their interests always have to be activated through people representing that institution or group. Those individuals often have an allegiance to other institutions or groups as well, which may influence their actions and/or the way in which they are regarded. For example, local Councillors often represent their local authority on other bodies and also have other interests which are unconnected to

their position as a Councillor. Therefore the activation of stakeholder interests by individuals adds a further layer of complexity.

5.2.5 Summary of the section

The 'people' dimensions are difficult to conceptualise because of the complexity and richness of human beings and the ways in which they combine in society. The differences between customer and theme dimensions are difficult to substantiate in practice, because the conceptual distinction between innate human characteristics and aspects of life amenable to policy intervention does not often hold when translated into practical examples. At a theoretical level, this fuzziness can be related to the interaction between nature and nurture which was covered in Section 5.2.3. Similarly, the distinction between the customer and other stakeholders is not easy to draw in practice, because of the two senses in which the term customer is used in the ODF, as service recipient and as an overall term for social differences.

The section has therefore been moving towards a reformulation of the people dimensions. One approach would be to distinguish between four different categories of stakeholder

- service deliverer
- service recipient
- stakeholders involved in service delivery
- stakeholders not involved in service delivery.

Within each category, the individuals have similar or different characteristics and needs, covering the social difference meaning of the customer dimension and the theme dimension respectively. Both social difference and theme are subject to a fuzziness in the various sub-categories in everyday use. There are conceptual vagarisms, for example in the term 'race', and overlaps between different categories, eg 'social' and 'community'. There are an infinite number of different ways of sub-categorising both social difference and theme.

Despite this, as a reformulated group, 'customer', 'theme' and 'stakeholder' seem to capture all the 'people' issues at the level of the social sciences, and therefore to be comprehensive and contribute to the consistency of the ODF as a whole. The analysis in this section runs counter to the over-simplistic conceptualisation of the objectives of public services that are often used in practice. For example, for the

concept of customer choice to be really meaningful it has to be disaggregated using the dimensional approach, to illustrate the diversity of choices, the different stakeholder interests and the different human needs that need to be reconciled.

The analysis in this section suggests that the three original dimensions of customer, theme and stakeholder may be better viewed as a single people dimension, with different sub-categories depending on the subject matter to which the ODF is applied. In this new formulation, the term 'customer' will be replaced by 'social group', - a sub-dimension which represents just the diversity aspect of the previous 'customer' dimension. Customer as service recipient is now covered under the stakeholders sub-dimension.

5.3 Time and space

5.3.1 Time and space and theories of the universe

In conceptual terms space and time are so closely linked that they need to be considered together. In physics, the study of space and time in dimensional terms is central to theories of the universe. One of the issues concerns the number of space-time dimensions. String theories cast doubt on the limiting of space-time to four dimensions, although the anthropic principle suggests that 'life, at least as we know it, can only exist only in regions of space-time in which one time and three space dimensions are not curled up small' (Hawking, 1988:165).

There are other ways in which science challenges our preconceptions of space and time. For example, many of the laws of science do not distinguish between the forward and backward directions of time. However, there are 'arrows of time' that do distinguish the past from the future (Hawking, 1988:152). One of these is the psychological arrow, the direction of time in which we remember the past, but not the future.

A realist conception of science draws distinctions between explanation at different scientific strata (See Table 3.3), so social theories can tie space-time concepts back to concrete experience, rather than be too concerned about the latest development in physics, which might add depth to scientific knowledge but does not constrain theorising at higher strata (see section 3.5). The ways in which people experience space and time in their everyday lives are the driving force for social sciences.

However, for the social theorist, the theories from natural science may help when analysing concepts, especially when using the retroduction mode of inference, where counterfactual arguments are engaged in.

5.3.2 Space and time in social sciences

The role of space and time in social sciences has been the subject of much debate in recent decades, with realist perspectives conflicting with other philosophical positions (Sayer, 2000). Sayer has challenged theorists who he suggests have given space an explanatory, rather than a contextual, status, indulging in 'spatial fetishism'. He also refers to the potential for 'temporal fetishism', where the passage of time is given causal powers (Sayer, 2000:112).

Another current trend is for social theories to claim that the nature of space and time in society has somehow been transformed at a fundamental level due to wider social and technological changes. Below, links between spatial and temporal fetishism and these claims that the relationships between society and space/time will be explored using the example of Manuel Castells' work. Castells is not the only one to argue for fundamental changes in space/time dimensions. The post-modern legacy has led to a wider questioning of cultural identities, with the 'Roaring Twenties' and the 'Swinging Sixties' being compared with the retrospection of the early twenty-first century, a possible conclusion being that the sense of temporal boundaries has been dissipated to the point where the future as a cultural concept no longer exists (Bracewell, 2004).

For the purposes of the ODF, it is assumed that,

- space and time are experienced as separate dimensions, which nevertheless need to be brought together in any social scientific explanations
- they have universal qualities, which are consistent wherever one is on the earth's surface and at whatever stage in human history
- that space and time are contextual dimensions – within which other dimensions operate - rather than having causal powers in themselves.

These assumptions need to be investigated, using the four modes of inference, evaluating the theories which challenge them and utilising theories and models which support the assumptions.

5.3.3 Conceptions of space and social theory

The conceptual difficulties in integrating space and time into social theory were explored by Robert Sack, in 'Conceptions of Space in Social Thought', working within a realist framework, to explore how geographic space is seen and evaluated in different ways, at different times and in different cultures (Sack, 1980:3). Sack was concerned with how different modes of thought conceptually separate and recombine space and 'things or substances', depending on the subjectivity or the objectivity of the modes and their subject matter. The modes of thought Sack covered were divided into two,

- sophisticated-fragmented modes (the scientific, the social-scientific and the aesthetic),
- unsophisticated-fused modes (the child's view, the practical, and the mythical-magical) (Sack, 1980:23-30).

Sack also identifies a societal view, where reformulations and syntheses of the two major patterns take place, both in primitive and civilised societies (Sack, 1980:31).

In his consideration of the social scientific mode of thought, Sack refers to a tripartite division of space, time and 'thing', or substance (P59). Explanation in social sciences relies on a relational concept of space, to recombine space and substance. The difficulties associated with theorising in a relational way are explored in depth. Sack suggests that most social scientific explanation conceptually separates society and space and then recombines them in ways which fail to recognise the complexity of the relationship. It often concentrates on one group in society or one aspect of behaviour without considering wider societal links or fails to incorporate the range of relevant areal units (P188-189). Furthermore, it is rare for the significance of both sophisticated-fragmented and unsophisticated-fused modes of thought to be appreciated when making the conceptual links between society and place (P193).

Sack's theories seem to be consistent with the ODF. They both maintain that space and time can be conceptualised as different dimensions from each other, and have no explanatory status except in a relational way with society. The complexity of space when related to society, eg in the hierarchy of administrative units in the modern world, has to be built into attempts at explanation. Sack refers also to other factors which are part of the over-simplistic recombination of space and society, such as groupings in society, which are operational dimensions in my terms. Therefore the

ODF might complement Sack's theoretical formulations. It does not provide all the answers for the conceptual separation and recombination of society, space and time, but it would help to identify obvious errors, such as a failure to incorporate one of the dimensions into an explanatory framework.

5.3.4 Manuel Castells : space of flows and timeless time

Using Sack's theories, Castells' attempts to redefine relationships between space and time and their relationships with society will be analysed, to see how far they can challenge the contentions underpinning the ODF, that, in a social science context, space and time are separate dimensions, they can be viewed as having universal properties, but have no causal powers in themselves.

In his trilogy, 'The information age – economy, society and culture', Manuel Castells argues that the rise of the network society in the late twentieth century has been associated with a change in the nature of space and time and the relationship between them. Castells' formulations are based on materialist perspectives on space and time – 'space is crystallised time' and, from the point of view of social theory, 'space is the material support of time-sharing social practices (Castells, 2000A:441).

Castells argues that society is constructed around flows: of capital, information, technology, organisational interaction, images, sounds and symbols. The 'space of flows' is a new spatial form characteristic of social practices that dominates and shapes the network society (Castells, 2000A:442). It has facilitated the development of 'the new industrial space', where the production process is separated into different locations on a global basis, reintegrated through telecommunications linkages (Castells, 2000A:417). The 'space of flows' has different layers, including

1. circuits of electronic exchanges
2. nodes and hubs
3. the spatial organisation of the dominant managerial elites.

However, the space of flows does not dominate the whole of human experience in the network society – people still identify with the 'space of places', where they live and identify with. Castells maintains that there is an increasing gulf between the space of flows and the space of places, which needs to be reconnected to prevent the breakdown of communication channels in society.

Castells asserts that the rise of the network society has shattered the historical rhythms of time, as linear, irreversible, measurable and predictable (P 463). The acceleration and compression of activities has led to the breakdown of biological and social rhythms (P476). Castells proposes the concept of 'timeless time', when the informational paradigm and the network society induce systematic perturbation in the sequential order of phenomena (P494). Examples given by Castells include split-second capital transactions, flex-time enterprises, the denial of death, instant wars and the culture of virtual time.

Castells claims that space shapes time in our society, reversing a historical trend. The space of flows induces timeless time, whereas places are time-bound (P495). The dominant trend in society displays 'the historical revenge of space, structuring temporality in different, even contradictory logics, according to spatial dynamics'. However, much of global society remains in a time-bound state, and there are struggles to reassert traditional conceptions of time, eg taking a long term perspective on global issues (P498).

The three assumptions from the beginning of this section about the properties of space and time in a social scientific context are challenged by Castells' theories. The juxtaposition of the two dimensions in his analysis and the roles ascribed to each one would imply that space and time do not have universal qualities, they are not necessarily always experienced as separate dimensions and they have causal powers.

5.3.5 Critique of Castells

Castells' trilogy has been attacked as being underpinned by a form of technological determinism, despite Castells' claims that this is not the case (Van Dijk, undated) I would argue that the epistemological failings of his arguments also include spatial and temporal fetishism, as defined by Sayer (2000), because of the way in which time and space have been conceptually separated and recombined.

Van Dijk questioned the concepts of the space of flows and timeless time on the basis that, if anything, the traditional categories of time and place (clock-time and proximity) become even more important in the network society than previously. For example, clock-time is of critical significance to stock markets. Furthermore,

'Social and media networks will not only remain embedded in and (trans) formative of categories of time and place, they will also keep connected to their material, social, physical and biological substructure or context' (Van Dijk, undated:6 of 9).

Virtual communities are not autonomous from the material world – for example, what happens when the electricity supply fails? Living in California, with its vulnerable energy supply network, Castells should be acutely aware of the dependence of virtual communities on the energy industry.

A key part of Castells' theories is the selective impact of the space of flows and timeless time. Many people continue to live with traditional biological and social rhythms undisturbed in places with which they have a strong allegiance. But could it not be the case that the interconnectedness of the network society extends across this divide, calling into question the opposition between the modern and the traditional which Castells identifies? Amongst the layers of the space of flows are the nodes and hubs and the spatial organisation of the managerial elites, which involve 'places' to which the participants in the space of flows will have strong allegiances.

Once the embeddedness of the network society within the dimensions of space and time has been recognised, the centrality of phenomena and the contextual role of space and time can be reasserted. The autonomy of space and time inherent in the concepts of the space of flows and timeless time and the causal efficacy implied by phrases such as 'the historical revenge of space' (Castells, 2000A:497) and 'the annihilation of time' (Castells, 2000A:499) can be rejected, without discarding the analysis of global trends made in Castells' work. It is possible to accept some of the propositions about the changing experiences of time and place that have taken place over the past decades, without having to argue that their nature has fundamentally changed. In this way the spatial and temporal fetishism which Castells reveals through his personalisation of the two dimensions can be avoided.

In the terms of Sack's analysis of the modes of thought associated with social scientific explanation, Castells has failed to connect space and time in a relational way to social phenomena (Sack, 1980:59, 85). By giving the space of flows explanatory power without embedding it sufficiently deeply in social phenomena – in Sack's terms recombining space with substance – Castells has emerged with arguments which, using the four theories of truth,

- are incoherent, because they give causal power to dimensions which should be contextual, ie space and time

- fail to correspond to reality, because they do not connect the network society to wider economic, environmental and social factors
- have limited pragmatic worth. The concluding chapter of *'The end of Millenium'* has a short section entitled 'what is to be done' where Castells suggests that his work, and theory and research in general, should only have the role of enhancing understanding of the world, so he offers no prescriptions for action (Castells, 2000B:389-390)
- may have a degree of consensus by virtue of the status of the author and his relationship with other similar iconic figures, but should be judged on the basis of how well it fulfills the other theories of truth!

5.3.6 Space and time in Sayer's realist social theories

Sayer adopts a relational approach to space and society and incorporates the role of time in social theory into his analysis. He concludes that

'Precisely because of the interdependence of space, time and process, concrete studies have to struggle with all three aspects. To neglect one is to mis-specify the other two' (Sayer, 2000:122).

However, Sayer contends that there is some justification for social theory's traditional abstraction from space, because social theory can be legitimately be applied in many different spatial settings. There are a wide variety of different spatial forms in which the conditions for applying a particular theory may be met. Therefore, abstraction from particular spatial configurations is a necessary feature of theorising, whether it is for general social theory or whether it is about space itself (Sayer, 2000:122, 128).

The necessity of abstracting from space is a theme that Sayer has in common with Sack. The way in which abstraction is done and how society and space are recombined within a theoretical framework remains problematic, and both these writers explore these issues in much more depth than I can cover them here.

5.3.7 The Space and Time Dimensions – summary

The theories of Sayer and Sack would seem to be consistent with the three assumptions about the nature of space and time which were introduced in Section 5.3.2. Their work suggests that, for those who write from a realist standpoint, the

three assumptions about the nature of space and time inherent in the ODF can be substantiated. Both authors

- uphold the distinction between space and time as different dimensions
- treat space and time on the basis of there being properties associated with them which apply universally, but have to be related to societal factors in their application
- are concerned to root out and undermine social theories which give causal powers to space and/or time.

The relational approach taken by these authors would also allow for the possibility of some radical change in the future which might undermine the basis for current theories. For example, if it became possible using a 'Time Machine' to move forwards and backwards in time or to be in more than one place at the same time, the properties of space and time in social theory would be completely changed (see Section 4.2.3).

While the Time Machine remains in the realms of fiction, the role of space and time within the social sciences remains contextual. Perhaps because of this, the ability to incorporate space and time effectively into social theory remains a difficult and imprecise skill, to which the key is the way in which abstraction is done and how society, space and time are recombined.

5.4 Synthesis – Reformulations of the ODF

The foregoing analysis in Chapters 4 and 5 has demonstrated how there are many elements of the ODF which meet the criteria for coherence, whether the ODF is viewed as a whole, whether the focus is on the three groupings of dimensions or whether it is one of the individual elements that is subject to scrutiny. However, there are many ways in which the complexity of the world and the nature of the social sciences conspire to leave boundaries unclear, both between the ODF and other elements of social theory and within the ODF itself.

The ODF is a general descriptive theory, which covers dimensions inherent in social processes and the management of social processes which can be categorised on the basis of rational thinking, through analytical social science (the right hand side of Wilbur's four quadrants (see section 4.2.6)). In Collier's tree of sciences the ODF is located within the social science stratum, but it also provides a context within which

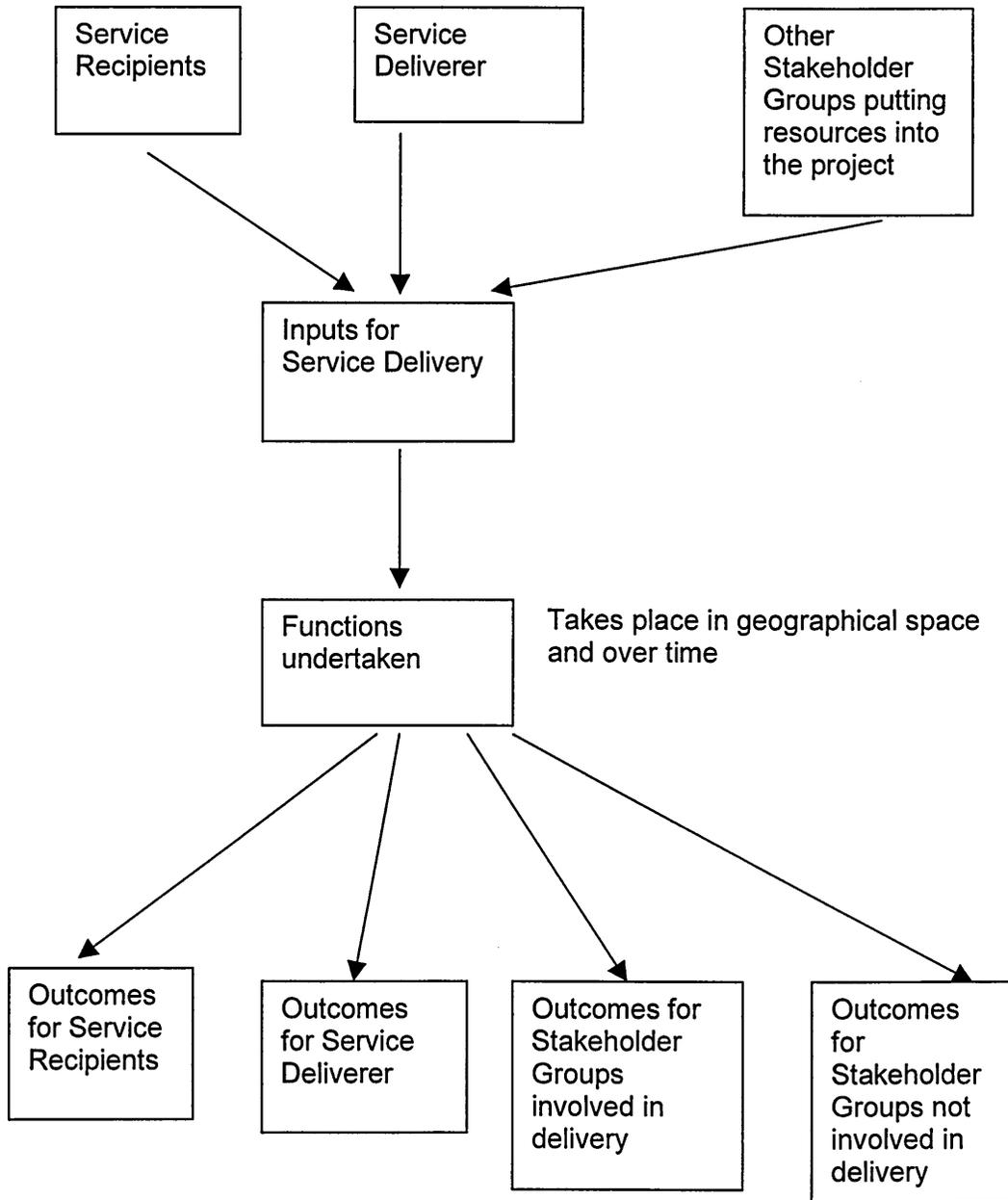
studies in the psychological and semiological sciences, of factors such as behaviour and emotions, might be undertaken.

The ODF challenges many of the ways in which public services are commonly conceptualised. For example, activities are commonly presented as contributing to a limited range of human needs, so there are economic projects, environmental projects etc. Various methods are used to incorporate a wider perspective, such as cross cutting themes, thematic impact assessments and different types of audit. The approach taken in the ODF is that any activity contributes in different degrees to the full range of human needs, but by initially taking a broad perspective it should be possible to focus down on the most important attributes of any public service in a given context.

The ODF was originally conceived of as a list of operational dimensions to help reorganise the staffing structure of a local authority team working in regeneration. It took the form of a table which explained the nature of each dimension and the implications for strategy and structure. As first indicated in Section 4.2, the Operational Dimensions Framework will take different forms depending on the context in which it is being applied. In this chapter there has been an emphasis on the application of the ODF to the act of delivery of a service. This lends itself to expression in a diagrammatic form, showing the relationships between the different dimensions (Figure 5.1). At the heart of the representation of service delivery is the input-output model. The people dimensions and the contextual dimensions of space and time represent an elaboration of this basic model. In the course of writing Chapters 4 and 5 the diagram has been continuously refined to reflect the conclusions drawn about the relationships between the dimensions. The diagram incorporates the reformulation of the people dimensions which was undertaken in Section 5.2.

In Section 5.1.2 the point was made that the inputs for services come not only from the service deliverer but also from the service recipients. However, it is not only these groups that put resources into service delivery. As discussed in Section 5.2.4, some of the other stakeholder groups also contribute resources towards delivery. Figure 5.1 reflects these distinctions in the portrayal of the inputs to service delivery. All stakeholder groups are, by definition, affected by service delivery, experiencing outcomes according to their interest in the service.

Figure 5.1 Diagrammatic Representation of the Operational Dimensions Framework for the act of delivery of a public service



Note : all groups of people (service recipients, service deliverer, stakeholder groups) are composed of individuals with different characteristics (expressed in the 'customer' dimension) and different needs (expressed in the 'theme' dimension).

All groups comprise individuals with different characteristics and different needs, as concluded in Section 5.2.5. Activities take place in space and through time. The role of these dimensions cannot be satisfactorily incorporated into the diagram, other than by the use of textual references.

The diagram at Figure 5.1 is complemented by Table 5.5 (on Page 152), which is a version of the ODF table specifically related to service delivery. It incorporates the changes to the ODF made during this chapter.

The original version of the ODF was formulated with the subject matter being staffing structures and work tasks (see Tables 1.1 and 1.2). Table 5.6 (on Page 153) is also concerned with staffing structures and work tasks, but incorporates the changes to the ODF arising from the analysis in chapters 4 and 5. A comparison with Table 1.2 shows that much of the original version is unchanged, but there have been major alterations in the representation of 'people', now shown as one dimension with three inter-related sub-categories. The new version is more consistent in representing the logical inter-relationships between dimensions.

The version of the ODF representing the act of service delivery (Table 5.5) includes the service deliverers in the stakeholder dimension, because from this perspective those employed to deliver the service are conceptually close to the other categories of people affected by the process of service delivery. In contrast, in the version for staffing structures and work tasks (Table 5.6), service deliverers are part of human resources, which in turn are part of the wider set of resources to be utilized to undertake functions.

Analysing where and why the two versions of the ODF in Tables 5.5 and 5.6 are the same and where they differ from each other is a useful exercise for identifying the essence of the ODF. The elements common to both versions are

- resources
- functions
- people
- space
- time

At its most basic, the ODF can be reduced down to these five dimensions. The ODF merely reflects the fact that activities are undertaken by people, they involve the use

of resources in order to undertake the functions which comprise the activities, and they take place in space and over time.

From these basic statements, versions of the ODF can be formulated to apply to different situations, where different elements of the framework form the subject matter for the exercise. In this chapter so far, I have derived two different versions, one for the act of delivery of a service and the second for organisational structures/work tasks. Having identified the essence of the ODF, and two different versions which vary because of the subject matter they are applied to, the next step is to derive other versions of the ODF for other subjects, which can be 'worked up' deductively from the basic propositions.

The coming together of the inductive, practice-based approach with a deductive, logic-based perspective strengthens the coherence of the ODF. In particular it gives the processes I have gone through in this chapter and the preceding one an elegance, which has not hitherto been apparent.

In the criteria for assessing the coherence of the ODF (see Table 4.1) one of the measures of consistency was that causal relationships between dimensions are identified. The dimensions can be viewed as the fundamental attributes of human activity, in a similar way to the use of the term in physics, where dimensions are the set of fundamental measures of a physical quantity

www.thefreedictionary.com/dimension, viewed on 20 May, 2006 (The Free Dictionary, 2006). In applying the ODF to different contexts, it is where there are conceptual relationships or fuzzy boundaries between dimensions that there are differences between the versions of the ODF.

Examples where there are conceptual overlaps between dimensions include the following

- 'people' is a dimension in its own right, but 'human resources' are also part of the 'resources' dimension. Therefore, the two versions of the ODF presented in this chapter vary in the scope of the resources dimension. When it is the act of service delivery which is the focus, then it makes sense to take human resources out of the 'resources' dimension and combine it with the stakeholder dimension (Table 5.5). In contrast, when human resources are the subject of the ODF, they need to be separated

out from other stakeholder groups and included in a full resources dimension (Table 5.6).

- the 'time' dimension and 'age' as a social group characteristic are systematically linked. Where the subject of the ODF is how particular individuals change over time, for example, in a longitudinal research design, it would be appropriate to conflate time and age together. Where this is not the case, as in the two examples of ODF's in this chapter, they remain separate, but the conceptual link is still present, and will affect the analysis
- space is systematically related to place of birth, which is one of the parameters used to operationalise the elusive concept of ethnicity (see Section 5.2.2) However the conceptual link is a weaker one than in the case of time and age. If the subject of the ODF were to be how place of birth affects social processes, there would be other spatial issues, as well as place of birth to consider, such as when and where people have moved in the course of their lives, and the place of birth of their ancestors. It would not be appropriate to conflate space with place of birth.
- 'theme' is closely related to, and is sometimes conflated with 'function'. It is easy to see why this is the case, because of an inter-section between the two dimensions. 'Economic' as a thematic interest refers to aspects of people's lives, but 'the economy' relates to functions undertaken by those people. This ambiguity is made potentially even more confusing because of Gulick's use of 'purpose' as a system of organisation, which he sometimes conflated with what I would call 'theme' (see section 5.3.1).

There are also parts of the dimensional framework where the definitions of pivotal words give rise to a lack of clarity, and/or potential confusion between and within dimensions. Examples are

- The term 'environment' has two meanings, relating to both the environment experienced by people and to the natural environment. The former use falls within the thematic part of the people dimension. The latter use is conceptually linked to the 'resources' dimension, in the form of natural resources. When relating the ODF to issues of environmental impact and sustainability it is crucial to recognise the difference and cover both meanings
- In the 'people' dimension, where there are fuzzy boundaries between the sub-categories, the difficulty in finding unambiguous terms is most acute

and there are choices to be made as to whether to focus on individuals or groups. In section 5.2 it became apparent that the conceptual distinction between innate characteristics and transient needs/interests is one that does not translate into clear boundaries in the ODF, and that many of the terms used to describe people, such as 'race', became conceptually unclear when subjected to in-depth analysis. Many of the terms in everyday use, such as 'customer', 'client' and 'social group', mean different things in different contexts.

The two examples of ODF's in this chapter treat the 'people' dimension in different ways. The ODF for the act of delivery of a service focuses on different stakeholder groups, who are defined in terms of their relationship to the service being provided, eg recipient, deliverer. The ODF for organisational structures/work tasks focuses on individuals, and distinguishes between their social group characteristics, thematic interests and organisational allegiances. Both are equally valid alternatives. It is also possible that an ODF for the act of delivery of services might have a focus on individuals and an ODF for organisational structures/work tasks might have a focus on groups of people, depending on the objectives of the analysis.

The next step is to actually derive versions of the ODF for different subject areas from the essence of the dimensional framework, in a deductive manner. I will use two examples, both of which relate back to earlier statements in the section.

One of the areas where there is a conceptual overlap between dimensions is between age and time. In a longitudinal research design this means that the two effectively merge into one dimension. Table 5.7 (on Page 154) is an ODF for a longitudinal study of individuals (rather than large groups), where the subject matter for the research (shaded) is changes through time in the lifecourses of a number of individuals of the same age.

In Chapter 4, one of the examples used to analyse the nature of the ODF as a whole was related to the policy objective of achieving changes in the use of different modes of transport. An ODF for such a strategy, this time pitched at the level of large groups of people rather than individuals, is shown in Table 5.8 (on Page 155). The subject matter for the strategy (shaded) is service recipients, who are people making decisions as to which mode of transport to use. In relating this ODF to modal choices, this would be a complicated ODF to utilize, because the nature of the function and

the stakeholder groups involved vary greatly between the main modes of transport, eg car, public transport, walking.

These two examples illustrate how different versions of the ODF can be built up from the common elements of resources, functions and people and the contextual dimensions of space and time. The dimensional framework is more than the sum of the parts, because it provides a tool for analysing the complexity of public service delivery which does not distort or misrepresent any of the underlying concepts, except where the ambiguities of language frustrate the best attempts to achieve a common understanding. However, there are many ways in which neither the original or the reformulated ODF are very elegant. The mixture of definite and fuzzy boundaries, of firm conceptualisations and equally valid alternatives, reflect the complexity of the world. The length of the chapters on coherence, and the cursory treatment given to some of the sub-categories and inter-relationships between dimensions are symptomatic of the complexity of the ODF.

We have moved to a position where the basic dimensional framework is the basis for modelling exercises, generating different versions to use for any given subject matter, be it a strategy, an organisational structure, an implementation problem or a research study. I would agree that the ODF therefore becomes much more coherent, on the criteria of consistency and elegance. It also becomes a more powerful technique, and new parallels with other analytical and management tools arise, a subject I will return to in Chapter 7.

5.5 Conclusion

In Chapter 1 it was suggested that an understanding of the range of operational dimensions and their inter-relationships was a good starting point for joining up public services. The ODF provides conceptualisations of public services, which can be used in fundamental management tasks, such as strategy development, organisational structures, implementation and service evaluation. The analysis of the coherence has enabled a much deeper understanding of the nature of the ODF to be established. The ODF has been subjected to criteria assessing its coherence as a 'rational abstraction' (see Table 4.1). By and large, it has met the criteria, but some of the most significant findings from Chapters 4 and 5 are concerned with fuzzy boundaries between dimensions and conceptual overlaps, where the complexity of the world limits the degree to which rational abstraction is possible.

The essence of the ODF has been established, and a new method introduced, of working from the basic building blocks to construct versions of the ODF for the range of different applications found in public policy.

In the terms expressed by Danermark et al (2002), the methods used in the chapter have been a combination of the four modes of inference, particularly using abduction and retroduction and also, at times, deduction and induction. Constantly trying to put concepts into a wider context, using counterfactual arguments and making logical deductions has identified some inconsistencies and weaknesses in the original formulation of the ODF. It has helped me to go through a learning process, with the following steps

- there is no single version of the ODF, because the context to which it is applied affects the reality which the ODF is attempting to represent.
- there is, however, a common essence behind all versions of the ODF
- from the essence of the ODF, different versions can be constructed deductively, to apply to different management contexts
- the seven dimensional framework is now a five dimensional one, because social group (customer), theme and stakeholder are now sub-categories of a single 'people' dimension
- the relationships between specific dimensions, or elements within them, are key areas for the variations in the ODF in different contexts
- ultimately, the coherence of the ODF is limited by ambiguities and limitations in the words used to describe the dimensions
- there are also decisions to make in each application of the ODF, about the scale of the analysis – such as whether it is primarily concerned with individuals or with stakeholder groups of people

The redefinition of the people dimension should make the ODF clearer as an aid to management, because of the centrality of the stakeholder concept. It offers the potential for tools and techniques to enable a joined up approach to the activities of different stakeholders. However, a note of caution should be sounded, because of the linearity in the input-output elements of the ODF. A linear approach is legitimate in looking at the delivery of a particular service, but the reality of joined up working is that the combination of different activities makes for non-linear combinations and unpredictable sequences of events. The ODF is a good starting point for joined up

working but further theoretical developments are needed to enable the non linearity of the context for joining up to be represented.

A further limitation in the ODF as a truly holistic tool concerns the omission of behaviour and emotions, the subject matter of the psychological and semiological sciences, and the 'left hand side' of Wilber's quadrants for integral theory. The basic model of the ODF has 'people' as a single dimension, which is then sub-divided in different ways. This would provide the opportunity to incorporate theories which relate to the internal aspects of human existence into the ODF. This is not a task however, which I am able to cover in the thesis.

The versions of the ODF developed in this chapter have relevance for other kinds of activity, beyond those which deliver public services. The model of service delivery applies to any service, whether it is undertaken or commissioned by a public agency or not. It would apply to a private sector or voluntary/community sector service as well. The ODF therefore has potential applications across a wide spectrum of different management contexts.

Table 5.5 Operational dimensions for the act of public service delivery (complements the diagram of service delivery in Fig. 5.1)

Shaded dimension is the subject matter for this version of the ODF

Type of Dimension	Stakeholder Groups				Processes	Contextual	Contextual	
	Input and Outcome	Input and Outcome		Outcome				
Dimension	<p>1. Non-human Resources – includes energy, capital resources, revenue items and funding</p>	<p>2a. Service Recipient – composed of individuals with similar or different characteristics and needs</p>	<p>2b. Service Deliverer – composed of individuals with similar or different characteristics and needs</p>	<p>2c. Other Stakeholders putting resources into service delivery – composed of individuals with similar or different characteristics and needs</p>	<p>2d. Other Stakeholders, not putting resources into service delivery – composed of individuals with similar or different characteristics and needs</p>	<p>3. Functions – different activities undertaken within services</p>	<p>4. Time over which service processes are delivered</p>	<p>5. Space – geographical area over which service is delivered</p>
Questions for strategy and organisational structure	<p>How can resources be maximized/used more efficiently or combined in different ways? Are there any key divisions between inputs, eg funding source, that need to be reflected in structures?</p>	<p>Who is the service aimed at? What roles are required of them in service delivery? What should be their role within organisational structures? What are the outcomes for them likely to be?</p>	<p>Who is going to deliver the service? What roles are required of them in service delivery? What are the outcomes for them likely to be?</p>	<p>What will their contributions to service delivery be? How do they need to be incorporated into service delivery structures and processes? What are the outcomes for them likely to be?</p>	<p>What are the interests of these groups in the service? What are the outcomes for them likely to be?</p>	<p>How can processes be made most effective and efficient? How can organisational structures help with effective and efficient delivery</p>	<p>What is the timescale for service delivery? Should the service be divided up according to different stages in delivery?</p>	<p>Where is the service to be delivered? What geographical variations in service delivery will there be? What geographical units should be used for organising the service?</p>

Table 5.6 Operational dimensions for staffing structures and work tasks (Reformulated)

Shaded dimension is the subject matter for this version of the ODF

Type of Dimension	Input and Outcome	Processes	Input, Output and Outcome			Contextual	Contextual
Dimension and categories within dimensions	1. Resources – includes human resources , energy, capital resources, revenue items and funding.	2. Functions - different activities undertaken within services	3. Customers and other people involved in and/or affected by activities carried out			4. Time over which services are delivered	5. Space – geographical area over which services are delivered
			3a Social group characteristics Categories are 'diversity' groups	3b Thematic interests Thematic categories may be sub-divided in many ways, eg economic, environmental and social	3c Organisational allegiances Criteria need to be used to measure stakeholder salience, eg by Mitchell et al., (1997)		
Questions for strategy and organisational structure	How can staff resources be maximized/used more efficiently and combined effectively with other resources? Are there any key divisions between inputs, eg funding source, that need to be reflected in staffing structures	How can processes be made most effective and efficient? How can organisational structures help with effective and efficient delivery	What are the social group characteristics of customers and other stakeholder groups? How will service delivery affect different social groups and what measures need to be taken to achieve service objectives defined on a social group basis	What will be the implications across the whole range of themes of service delivery? What measures need to be taken to achieve service objectives defined on a thematic basis?	Who are the key stakeholder groups, and what is their organisational status? What will be the implications for different groups of service delivery? What measures need to be taken to achieve service objectives defined on a stakeholder group basis?	Different temporal units come into play in service delivery and strategy, eg day, week, month, year	What geographical variations in service delivery will there be? What geographical units should be used for organising the service?

Table 5.7 Operational dimensions for Longitudinal Research Design (focus on individuals)

Shaded dimension is the subject matter for this version of the ODF

Type of Dimension	Input and Outcome	Processes	Input, Output and Outcome	Contextual	Contextual	
Dimension and categories within dimensions	1. Resources drawn upon by the members of the Study Group – includes human resources, energy, capital resources, revenue items and funding.	2. Functions - different activities undertaken by members of the study group	3. Study Group and other people with whom they come into contact	4. Time, related to the age of the Study Group	5. Space – geographical areas frequented by the Study Group	
Questions for research design	What variations are there in the resources available to different members of the study group?	What differences are there in the activities undertaken by different people in the study? How do they influence the lifecourses of the study group?	3a Social group characteristics Categories are 'diversity' groups	Choice of temporal units comes into play, eg at what interval will the study be repeated?	Where do different individuals spend their time, and how does this relate to the activities they undertake?	
			3b Thematic interests Thematic categories may be sub-divided in many ways, eg economic, environmental and social			What are the different needs and interests developed by different individuals. How do they influence the lifecourses of the study group?
			3c Organisational allegiances Criteria need to be used to measure stakeholder salience, eg by Mitchell et al., (1997)			What organisational allegiances are made by people in the study? How do they influence the lifecourses of the study group?

Table 5.8 Operational dimensions for a strategy to change modal split of transport usage (focus on group level)

Shaded dimension is the subject matter for this version of the ODF

Type of Dimension	Stakeholder Groups		Processes	Contextual	Contextual
	Input and Outcome	Outcome			
Dimension	<p>1. Non-human Resources – includes energy, capital resources, revenue items and funding going into different modes of transport</p> <p>2. Service Recipient – composed of individuals and groups undertaking journeys, with similar or different characteristics and thematic needs/interests</p>	<p>3. Service Deliverers – organisations delivering different types of services related to transport, with similar or different characteristics and needs/interests</p> <p>4. Other Stakeholders putting resources into transport services – organisations with similar or different characteristics and needs/interests</p> <p>5. Other Stakeholders, not putting resources into service delivery – organisations with similar or different characteristics and needs/interests</p>	<p>6. Functions - different activities undertaken to provide services and undertake journeys</p>	<p>7. Time over which services are delivered and journeys undertaken</p>	<p>8. Space – geographical locations of the provision of services and origins and destinations of journeys</p>
Questions for strategy	<p>How can resources be mobilised to support modal shifts in transport choices?</p> <p>How can the modal choices made for different types of journey be influenced? How susceptible to influence are different groups in society, with different needs, eg car owners and non car owners</p>	<p>How can those delivering services change the nature of service delivery to influence modal choice?</p> <p>How can the organisations change the way they allocate resources to change modal choices?</p> <p>What are the interests of these groups in the modal split? What influence do they have, and how might this be influenced?</p>	<p>How can the processes involved in delivering different kinds of transport service be altered to encourage changes in modal choice?</p>	<p>How can the needs of transport users be married up with the provision of services in favoured modes?</p>	<p>How can the needs of transport users be married up with the provision of services in favoured modes?</p>

6. A Case Study of Government Policy on Joining Up of Public Services in Britain (Correspondence theory of truth)

This chapter assesses the degree to which the recent history of government policy on joining up public services in Britain corresponds with the insights about joined up working derived from the Operational Dimensions Framework. Does the ODF help to explain the course of events in Britain as the New Labour government has grappled with the coordination of public services? While the analysis is restricted to one country and one relatively short timespan, it would be expected that if the ODF is a useful tool in this example, then it would also be a useful explanatory tool in other contexts, given that the underpinning concepts are seen as being universally applicable.

Correspondence is the second criterion of truth to be covered in the thesis. In terms of Danermark et al.'s six stage model of explanatory research based on critical realism, we are now in *Stage 5, Comparison between different theories and abstractions*. This chapter is concerned with the powerfulness of the ODF in explaining events, while the next chapter, on the consensus theory of truth, will be looking at the ODF in comparison with other theories, still within Stage 5 of Danermark et al's model.

In Section 3.9, on the methods to be used for each of the four theories of truth, the point was made that assessment of correspondence is not restricted to this one chapter. The ODF arose out of my attempts to make sense of the everyday experience of managing regeneration programmes in Barnsley in the 1990's, so correspondence at the 'intensive' level has already been addressed in Chapter 2. Because under critical realism theory has to be grounded in experience I have also covered aspects of correspondence in Chapters 4 and 5, on the coherence theory of truth. The 'extensive' case study to be covered in Chapter 6 takes a complementary approach, focusing on broad brush policies, and seeing how well the ODF can help to explain the course of policy development over time.

The chapter begins with a brief explanation of the correspondence theory of truth, in Section 6.1. It then moves on look at joined up government in Britain, since the term was first used in 1997, viewed from the perspective of the ODF. This enables conclusions to be drawn about the nature of attempts at joined up working and the extent to which the ODF helps to explain the course of events over time.

6.1 Correspondence theory of truth

In chapter 3 correspondence was referred to as the theory of truth most commonly associated with scientific methods of hypothesis testing through observation. A form of correspondence is assumed by positivist management research, which holds that it is possible to identify value-free causal explanations and general laws from observable 'facts' (Johnson and Duberley, 2000:39). However, the correspondence theory of truth has a number of variations, and the basic concepts are consistent with other approaches to management research.

Richard Kirkham identifies two basic types, correspondence as congruence, which is associated with Bertrand Russell, and correspondence as correlation, which is associated with the philosopher J L Austin. The common ground between the two is that they both claim some correspondence between a 'truth bearer' (which might be a belief or a proposition) and a 'state of affairs'. Under correspondence as convergence, the structure of the truth bearer mirrors or pictures the structure of the state of affairs, in much the same way as a map relates to a particular part of the world. Under correspondence as correlation the relationship between the two is purely a result of linguistic conventions, but represents an example of a wider set of correlations between truth bearers and types of state of affairs (Kirkham, 1992:119-132).

Lynch (2001:9-14) identifies a number of other variations on the correspondence theory of truth, including

- correspondence as causal relation, which holds that a particular use of a sentence correctly represents reality if and only if its component parts bear an appropriate causal relation to certain objects in the world. This theory is associated with Tarski and Field (Lynch, 2001:10-11)
- Alston's minimal theory of truth, in which correspondence is associated with truth as a property of propositions, rather than the concept of truth which an individual might have (Lynch, 2001:11)
- Horgan's textual semantics, whereby truth in any discourse is determined jointly by the world and the semantic standards of the discourse. The balance is determined by the extent to which the object of the discourse is mind-independent (Lynch, 2001:13)

In Chapter 3, a justification for using an objective ontology and a subjective epistemology in the thesis was set out, and a critical realist approach was adopted, which holds that there is a depth to reality, manifested in the existence of the three domains of the real, the actual and the empirical (section 3.4). This implies steering a middle course between correspondence theories which make simplistic connections between the world and theories about it and those which reduce correspondence to linguistic convention. Using correspondence as a criterion of truth, my proposition is that the ODF mirrors some aspects of the structure of the states of affairs found in the world. This is not a straightforward case of abstracting observable facts, in a positivistic way, but of looking behind the observed states of affairs and trying to make connections, recognising the implications of my own position as a self-interested party in the process and the difficulties in recording and interpreting events in the world. The fallibilistic approach I am adopting seems to resonate with the variations on the correspondence theory referred to by Lynch above. The focus is on establishing causal linkages between propositions arising from the ODF and the course of events in the world, looking at commonalities in the language used in policy documents and in accounts of government policy.

I suggest it is not necessary to delve further into the fine-grained distinctions between different versions of the correspondence theory of truth, but to be aware of these variations and their implications for the task in hand. Their implications are significant, however, in that they draw attention to the limitations associated with this particular 'extensive' case study. I will not be in a position to explore at first hand how well coordinated public services have been under a particular style of government. Rather, I will concentrate on government policies on joining up, and draw on accounts of successes or failures in coordinating the machinery of government, which are often found in the rationale for a new policy initiative. The problems have often been framed in ways which link to the concepts in the ODF, which is revealing in itself, but it is rare for a policy initiative to be implemented with an explicit reliance on a dimensional approach. Even where the dimensions are recognised, they are usually seen as alternative methods of organisation or as the basis for government programmes, rather than a framework to be incorporated in a holistic way into organisational structures and services.

6.2 Terms and their usage

There are a number of similar terms, which are sometimes used interchangeably, to describe the processes of intra and inter agency working which are the focus of interest. They include

- coordination
- collaboration
- integration
- joining up
- holistic

Some commentators have drawn specific distinctions between the meanings of these terms. For example Perri 6 et al, have looked at the spectrum of possible relationships in holistic governance and classified some as examples of coordination and others as examples of integration (6 et al., 2002:49 and 53). I would agree that integration implies a stronger degree of linkage than coordination, but I would not want to use such a distinction as a basis of classification. Instead, I will use whichever term seems to convey what I want to say most exactly, and rely upon the reader's understanding of the different terms to help them make sense of my argument.

One distinction which it is important to make at the outset is between 'government' and 'governance'. Leach and Percy Smith (2002:1-9) refer to governance as a broader term, which encompasses the processes whereby collective needs are addressed. Within governance the institutions of government play an important role, but a very wide range of organisations are involved, working in partnership with the various arms of government. As the sharp distinctions between the public sector and the private and voluntary sectors have blurred in recent times, so the importance of governance increases. However, in this chapter I am primarily concerned with government rather than governance, focusing mainly on the policies pursued at central and local government level at different times.

6.3 Continuity and change – a historical perspective

The term 'joined up' government originated in Britain, around the time that New Labour came into power in 1997. Although it was a new term, there are strong

threads of continuity with other attempts to achieve greater coordination of the work of Government in Great Britain.

Commentators who have looked at attitudes towards coordinating the different arms of Government in the twentieth century have identified a fluctuating pattern, of great interest followed by indifference. In the view of Perri 6 et al

'... in some ways, achieving coordination across the organisational instruments by which goals are pursued is an eternal problem – perhaps *the* eternal problem – in governance. Concern and priority for this waxes and wanes over decades, but it surely cannot wholly die away' (6, Leat, Seltzer and Stoker, 2002:9).

I will focus mainly upon the recent attempts by the New Labour Governments since 1997 to achieve greater coordination, because joining up Government and the delivery of public services have been a key part of the modernisation agenda. The degree of attention to coordination of the machinery of government in the late 1990's was unparalleled in Britain. With the adherence to evidence based policy and practice, there have also been closer links between the work of Government and public service management research, with many of the key individuals developing theories for joined up working having a foot in both camps.

However, it is important to recognise that there have been other times when the coordination of government policy and machinery has been a central preoccupation. Two examples stand out as being particularly significant. The first is the publication in 1918 of the Report of the Machinery of Government Committee, usually known as the Haldane Report, which established the functional departmental structure of Central Government in England (Hood, 2005). The Haldane Report viewed the options for government structure in terms of a choice between some of the different dimensions from the ODF. As well as influencing the structure of Central Government in Britain, the Haldane Report was also a source document for Luther Gulick in his theories on principles of organisation (see Chapter 4). More details on the Haldane Report are provided in Appendix 1, as back-up material for Chapters 4, 6 and 7.

The second example where the coordination of government policy and machinery has achieved a high profile is in the Joint Approach to Social Action (JASP) in the late 1970's, which has certain similarities with many of the initiatives for 'joining up' since 1997 (Klein and Plowden, 2005)

6.4 New Labour's First Term – Joined up Government

The term 'joined up government' was first coined just before the General Election of June 1997, and was used by Tony Blair in his first social policy speeches after the election (Perri 6 et al, 2002:20). There were a number of reasons why New Labour placed such evidence on 'joining up' from the beginning of their time in Government. These included

- the inheritance of a number of initiatives for integration from the out-going administration, especially in regeneration, eg Single Regeneration Budget, and in electronic government/one stop shops
- the need to integrate the vast number of individual policy initiatives being taken by New Labour
- the focus on social exclusion and the integration of health and social care from the outset, which required a joined up approach
- tough public spending restrictions, which meant that greater efficiency in the use of existing budgets was needed to deliver benefits to the electorate
- a willingness to learn from similar developments in other countries
- a determination to over-ride vested interests in Whitehall and amongst professions for autonomy (Perri 6 et al., 2002)

The populist use of the term 'joined up' is simply about linking different services. Thus the Prime Minister wrote in *The Observer* on 31 May, 1998,

'Even the basic policies targeted at unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, bad health and family breakdown, will not deliver their full effect unless they are properly linked together. Joined up problems need joined up solutions (quoted in Wilkinson and Applebee, 1999:1).

'Joined up Government' is defined in *The Oxford English Dictionary* as 'relating to, or designating a political strategy which seeks to coordinate the development and implementation of policies across government departments and agencies, especially with the aim of addressing complex social problems, such as social exclusion and poverty, in a comprehensive, integrated way'. However, as noted by Bogdanor (2005:1-2), this definition does not reflect the links to activities in the private and voluntary sectors which 'joining up' entails.

As a response to the fragmentation of services, joined up working reflected the understanding in the mid 1990's that organisational boundaries are inevitable in the

modern state, but that there are ways of aligning activities across these organisational boundaries, be they inter-departmental, between sectors (public, private, voluntary and community) or between different tiers of government (Ling, 2002:626). While this alignment of activity is something all governments do to some degree to achieve their objectives, New Labour's commitment to 'joined up government' has been a key element of its overall modernising government agenda.

The 'Congested State'

The attempt to overlay coordination mechanisms over a fragmented and complex pattern of government activity has been coined by the term 'congested state', Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002:17, 20). The 'congested state' is characterised by

- a desire to deliver on 'cross cutting' issues
- complex organisational domains and the encouragement of partnerships to achieve joint working across organisational boundaries
- plurality of forms of governance and mechanisms of accountability
- invisibility of key decision centres
- an active, networking role for senior public employees
- active citizens and stakeholders informing policy and delivery.

The move to the 'congested state' began in the 1990's under the Conservatives but it has been Tony Blair's Government which developed these characteristics in the late 1990's as part of the 'Third Way'. There has been much debate about the degree to which the 'Third Way' represents a departure from the politics of the Thatcher years or whether it builds and develops further the changes made in the 1980's. Lee and Woodward (2002) suggest that there is more common ground between the 'Third Way' and New Public Management than there is between the 'Third Way' and the approach to delivery of public services in the 1945-1979 period. They point to an intrinsic centrism, characterised by a depoliticisation of the policy process and a politicisation of implementation, through

- a move from negotiated discretion to central prescription in the Treasury's resource allocation and orchestration of policy
- the development of a 'new centre' for integrating policy at Central Government level, comprising 'Number 10'/Cabinet Office and the Treasury, but with a continuing rivalry and power struggle for control over domestic policy between them.

- the institutionalisation of the principle of 'earned autonomy' in reforming public services (Lee and Woodward, 2002).

The distinctive approach to coordination of Government activities by the New Labour Government has therefore been a key part of its ideology. However, we will see that there have been changes in New Labour's approach over time and a disparate range of activities have been branded under the banner of 'joining up' (Ling, 2002:616), reflecting a more complex reality than Lee and Woodward's critique would imply.

Cross-cutting issues

The concept of cross-cutting issues was referred to above as part of the 'congested state' policy direction. The term became widely used as public agencies sought to respond to the challenges of 'joining up'. Early in 1998 the then Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) commissioned two research projects on,

- cross-cutting issues in Public Policy and Public Service, which examined the challenge to central government of joining up policy making and implementation (DETR, 1999A)
- cross-cutting issues affecting local government, which examined the ways in which local government was affected and how a sample of authorities were changing to address cross-cutting issues more effectively (DETR, 1999B).

Four cross-cutting issues were selected for study - sustainable development, community safety, disaffected youth, and social exclusion. In addition, given the importance of regeneration as a model for integrated working in practice, this fifth issue was added in the second study. The focus of the research was primarily on policy process rather than content, and both reports were published in 1999.

The two studies found that much progress had been made in working in a more corporate manner, but that many challenges remained. The first study defined 'cross-cutting issues' (or 'wicked issues') as complex and uncertain policy problems, frequently at the boundary between different administrative jurisdictions and often involving unintended consequences of well-intended changes to public policy. It identified barriers to a new outcome-driven policy process, highlighting disputes

between central and local government, lack of a common understanding of some of the cross-cutting issues, a need to change the silo mentality of many professionals, and changes required to audit and inspection regimes (DETR, 1999A)

The second study observed that multi-dimensional problems often receive single dimensional interventions. In order to incorporate a multi-dimensional approach into public policy a clearer organising framework of ideas was necessary. It suggested that the language of integration, cross-cutting, and multi-stakeholder involvement had become commonplace, but there remained a large gap between joined-up talking and joined-up working. The study advocated a 'whole systems approach', with nine elements – direction, consultation, structure, systems, organisation, culture, capacity, motivation and evaluation (DETR, 1999B).

These two studies are relevant not only because of their commentary on the degree of joined up working in the late 1990's but also because of the theoretical constructs they used to explain practice, which will be returned to in Chapter 7. Although there is a reference to multi-dimensional problems and policy responses, there is an implicit assumption that some issues are cross-cutting and other are not. The ODF leads to a different prognosis – that all public service activity has a multi-dimensional character by definition, so everything is cross-cutting. Terms such as 'disaffected youth' or 'community safety' reflect the need to take a broader corporate view, but unless they are related to all the dimensions of the ODF they can constrain understanding.

The Modernisation Agenda

The Modernising Government White Paper, published in March, 1999, set out three aims for public services

- ensure that policy making is more joined up and strategic
- make sure that public service users, not providers, are the focus, by matching services more closely to people's lives
- delivering public services that are high quality and efficient (Cabinet Office, 1999).

Under the second of these aims, the Modernising Government White Paper sets out some of the problems in relating the structures for service delivery to people's needs. The chapter on Responsive Public Services refers to the use of 'Integrated Service Teams', to look at the practical problems faced at seven common 'life episodes'

- leaving school
- having a baby
- becoming unemployed
- changing addresses
- retiring
- needing long term care at home
- bereavement

The Integrated Service Teams found that there was generally no integrated information or single point of contact, little use of new technology and that people had to give the same information more than once to different agencies, or even different departments in the same agency.

Part of the response in the White Paper was to address the opportunities for more joined up delivery by recognising different dimensions. The White Paper said that public services must be sensitive to the needs of particular groups of people or businesses, and gives examples, eg New Deal for Disabled People. The White Paper referred to the setting up of

- national citizen-focused programmes (usually theme-related, such as NHS Direct)
- group focused programmes, such as the Better Government for Older People pilots
- area-based programmes, to tackle the problems of particular areas or localities (Cabinet Office, 1999, Para. 17).

However, there does not seem to be a recognition within the White Paper that the setting up of a multitude of different programmes could hinder the overall goal of more joined up working. As with the approach to cross-cutting issues, the lack of an acknowledgement of the multi-dimensional nature of all public services leads to solutions which only go part of the way to joined up working.

Joined Up Working

As an umbrella term, joined up working covers a wide range of different activities. The Government's 'Joined Up Public Services Website' refers to four different forms which it can take',

- Different ways of working with technology and people. This means changing and sharing culture and values and the approach to service information
- Partnership and cross-cutting working. This can be achieved by shared leadership, through pooled budgets, by merging structures and by developing joint teams
- Engaging with and involving the public. This might involve joint consultation activities or a shared focus on the customer, perhaps through a shared interface
- Accountability and Incentives. This can be achieved through policy design, regulation/deregulation and through performance measures and shared outcomes, www.servicefirst.gov.uk/2001/joinedup, viewed in May, 2005 (Cabinet Office, 2001)

These are similar to four different dimensions of joined up working under New Labour identified by Ling (2002:625-632), which are

- within organisations
- between organisations
- service delivery
- accountability 'upwards'.

Within organisations, joined up working is concerned with culture and values, information management and training. From within the Cabinet Office, the Performance and Innovation Unit (which became the Strategy Unit) and the Centre for Management and Policy Studies have sought to change the approach to leadership within public services, focussing on delivering joined up outcomes and cross cutting policies and weakening hierarchical structures. It is recognised that training and career progression routes need to be changed to achieve the shift in culture that is required, not only in the Civil Service, but in the wider public sector and in the private and voluntary sectors.

Between organisations, partnership working has become a theme across all public services. The work of the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) early in the life of the Government was a massive example of working across boundaries, which developed a critique of centralised, over-regulated and departmentalised intervention. The SEU produced eighteen Policy Action Team (PAT) Reports, all prepared by inter-agency and inter disciplinary teams. PAT Report 17 was entitled 'Joining it up locally' (DETR, 2000). This report identified the barriers which prevented services in deprived

neighbourhoods working together, and came up with a number of recommendations on

- the use of data and targets
- the key drivers for change
- local strategies and vertical linkages
- joining up in practice .

The SEU published its overall findings in 2001 in 'A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal – National Strategy Action Plan', which incorporated the emphasis on joined up working from PAT Report 17.

As well as setting up the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit to implement the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, the Government also established the Regional Coordination Unit, whose role includes promoting closer links between Government activity in the regions and in the centre. One of the areas requiring coordination between the regions and the centre is partnership activity. Sullivan and Skelcher identified 57 multi agency partnership schemes in operation in 2001/2, of which 51 had been set up since 1998 (Sullivan and Skelcher 2002:228-237). Many of these partnership schemes operated at local levels where they managed Area based Initiatives (ABI's), such as Surestart and Education Action Zones. In 2002 the Government published a long awaited report on 'Collaboration and Coordination of Area Based Initiatives' (Regional Coordination Unit/Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, 2002), which was closely followed by a Review of Area Based Initiatives (Regional Coordination Unit/Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2002), which sought to reduce the number and improve the coordination of ABI's, encouraging their incorporation into mainstream service delivery.

The multiplicity of partnerships at local level prompted the Government to require the establishment of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP's) in 2001 whose role is to bring together the public, private, voluntary and community sectors to identify the top priorities of the communities they serve and work with local people to address them. The LSP's were set up to rationalise and bring order to the multiplicity of different partnerships at a local level.

Service delivery has been subject to many initiatives to deliver a more joined up service to the public. This entails both the way that people gain access to services and the way that the services are organised behind the scenes. The 'one stop shop'

is perhaps the best example of a concept designed to achieve this 'seamless delivery'. Often new use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) provides opportunities for services to be delivered in a more joined up manner.

In order to provide services in a way that responds to community priorities, there has been an explosion of public consultation and involvement in service delivery. It is recognised that joined up delivery of services 'on the ground' can only be achieved with local knowledge, which is typically informal and unsystematic. As well as problems in collecting this type of knowledge, there are also potential problems of accountability in the way that it is used to inform policy (Ling, 2002).

Associated with the work of the Social Exclusion Unit and the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal was a recognition that the problems of deprived areas cannot be resolved through isolated special initiatives, but that mainstream services have a far greater influence over the fortunes of disadvantaged neighbourhoods. The emphasis has therefore recently been on 'mainstreaming' the new ways of working and innovatory practices associated with Area based Initiatives (RCU/ODPM, 2002). At the same time, inter-agency work within the mainstream has moved on from local, small scale projects to much larger, more ambitious attempts to coordinate the provision of services (Roaf, 2002)

Pervading all the other dimensions of joined up working are dilemmas for Central Government about *accountability upwards*. Delivery of cross cutting objectives, partnership working and new ways of delivering services all bring with them challenges to the conventional hierarchical systems of accountability. The Performance and Innovation Unit (PIU) Report 'Wiring it up' (2000) examined how new accountability arrangements and incentive systems might be introduced to facilitate joined up working. This theme has also been followed up by the National Audit Office, who used a number of examples of joined up working to make recommendations on the purposes and mechanisms for joint working, paying particular attention to the new forms of accountability arrangements required (National Audit Office, 2001)

'Wiring it up' recommended action in a number of key areas, with a strong emphasis on the centre to lead the drive for more effective cross-cutting approaches. In 2001 a report was prepared for the Prime Minister outlining progress made in the Government's first term in office towards the recommendations. The report was able

to point to a wide range of innovations and changes that had been made to the operations of Government at all levels, across the different aspects of joined up working referred to above, in the fields of

- policy work and reviews of practice across departmental and agency boundaries, including fifteen cross departmental policy reviews undertaken as part of the 2000 Spending Review
- new agencies and units with a role to promote joined up working, such as the Regional Coordination Unit and the Neighbourhood Coordination Unit
- new systems of training and incentives to cross departmental working in the Civil Service
- new mechanisms for scrutiny of joined up working in action and the use of outside expertise
- new budgetary mechanisms and dedicated funds to assist with joined up working, such as the Evidence-Based Policy Fund
- Public Service Agreements to achieve policy outcomes that require cross cutting approaches (Cabinet Office (with HM Treasury), 2001)

For joined up working to be achieved there has to be a commitment to rationality in decision making and implementation and to the investment of resources in joint processes. This is exemplified in the types of advice which are coming from a very wide range of sources to assist in joined up government, which Ling (2002:636-637) categorises under headings such as

- goal setting
- accountability
- networking and alliances
- skills and learning
- time and money

In Ling's view, there are ambiguities in intra-state relationships which have never been fully resolved in the drive to joined up government. At the centre there are different priorities, with the Treasury emphasising formal agreements such as Public Service Agreements and the Cabinet Office training and culture. Between the centre and the rest of the apparatus of government there are tensions in the degree of central prescription and control. The introduction of new agencies and partnerships increases the complexity of public service structures and can sometimes make it more difficult to achieve the joined up approach intended.

The proliferation of new agencies and partnerships can be traced back to the approach to cross-cutting issues and modernising services. A better understanding of the multi-dimensional nature of all public service activities could have led to more fully joined up policy responses, focusing on the inter-connections between different services rather than a proliferation of independent initiatives concerned with a limited range of themes, social groups or geographical areas. Instead, the understanding of the problem gave the green light to individual government departments and their Ministers to do what comes naturally and spawn a wide range of separate initiatives and programmes, which then themselves need joining up.

6.5 New Labour's Second Term – Delivery of Improved Public Services

Having been re-elected on a platform of delivery of improved public services, at the outset of his second term, the Prime Minister made a number of changes to the machinery of Government designed to strengthen the capacity of No.10 and the Cabinet Office to deliver policy priorities. This made the centre of Government more complex in organisational terms. In terms of central policy on public services, the Delivery and Reform Group in the Cabinet Office was set up, which included the Delivery Unit, the Office of Public Services Reform and the Strategy Unit (formerly the Performance and Innovation Unit), as well as a number of other central units.

In the second term, the concept of joining up public services became 'old news'. This is reflected in the Cabinet Office websites on the topic. Thus the 'Joined up Public Services' part of the Better Public Services section

www.servicefirst.gov.uk/2001/joinedup/whatisju.htm (Cabinet Office, 2001) was not updated after January, 2002, and the 'Joined up' theme in the Policy Hub's site has no content after 2003, referring to John Denham, who resigned as a Minister in protest at the Iraq War, as the Minister for Young People

www.policyhub.gov.uk/bpmaking/joined_up.asp (Cabinet Office, 2003) (websites viewed in May, 2005).

The improvement of public services in the second New Labour Government was based on increased investment and reform, to achieve a focus on customer needs and priorities. The reform strategy is set out in 'Reforming our Public Services' (Cabinet Office, 2002) which is founded on four key principles

- Standards: a framework of national standards and accountability, to enshrine people's right to high standards regardless of where they live
- Devolution: within that framework of national accountability, to make sure that responsibility for how services are delivered is devolved as far as possible close to those who use the services
- Flexibility: enabling services to be delivered in different ways to suit particular circumstances – including staff flexibility and greater use of incentives
- Choice: greater choice – including, where appropriate, new partnerships and alternative providers – means greater quality as service standards and efficiency are improved (Thomson, 2002:32)

'Joining up' was still part of this new agenda, but it received less emphasis. It was referred to in terms of the imperative for services to work effectively together, rather than relying on the customer to join them up. Also agencies were required to work together to understand how key issues, such as health, education and crime, interact in particular areas (Cabinet Office, 2002).

The apparent incompatibilities between certain aspects of the 'key principles' are referred to in 'Reforming our Public Services', but are quickly brushed aside. For example, the tensions between national standards and devolving responsibility, in terms of accountability, are acknowledged but it is asserted that 'the best way in which a national standard can be met is by recognising local and often individual differences, and giving service providers the flexibility to shape services around the needs and aspirations of customers and communities'. This is fine if the requirements of the national standard fit with the locally derived way of delivering services, but what if they do not?

In some ways the new agenda reflected the moving on of 'joining up' to the delivery of front line services, now that some of the groundwork in embedding the concept into policy-making had been achieved. In other ways, there were moves away from the emphasis on coordination towards radical reform of the nature of public service provision, containing some parallels with the early Thatcher years. The 'earned autonomy' principle, which has been manifested in the approach to most mainstream services can promote a competitive mentality amongst providers and a tendency to dispute costs which fall at the interface between different services, militating against a 'joined up' culture. The target driven culture can encourage managers to take a narrow focus, unless the targets are expressed in such a way as to encourage joined

up delivery. The drive to cut bureaucracy and move resources to 'front line delivery' arising from the Gershon report, cutting thousands of jobs in the Civil Service, also rests uneasily with the concept of joined up working, since the coordination of services cannot be undertaken at the 'front line' without 'backroom' efforts in Government machinery to make it happen.

The approach within the Government is that working together with other services is part of the process of better delivery, to be achieved alongside everything else. This is reflected in the objectives of the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit, which are

- ruthless prioritisation
- vigorous challenge
- stronger problem solving, and
- deeper collaboration

Joining up and local governance

Joining up at the local level has been a key part of New Labour's Local Government Modernisation Agenda (Sullivan, 2005). In the second term, the Government's approach was coined in the term, 'new localism' whereby deliverers of local services are given the freedom to run the services as they determine themselves, within an overall set of policies and targets set by the Government. A key question, however, is the degree to which Central Government is willing to 'let go' and reduce control in practice. Where there is freedom granted to the local level to determine how services are run, the result might be more 'joining up', if the local partners work together to integrate their activities, or there might be less 'joining up', if local autonomy involves individual agencies running narrowly focussed services without working together.

There have been major changes in the organisation of services in the second New Labour term, prompted by horror stories of service failure, which are due partly to a lack of coordination. Thus the Victoria Climbié case was instrumental in the formation of single local authority directorates for Children's Services, merging Education and Children's Social Services. In terms of the ODF, this is an example of a change from theme as the primary determinant of organisational structure to social group. Another trend in the structure of service provision has been the encouragement of neighbourhood-based delivery, associated with Surestart Children's Centres, neighbourhood management pathfinders and other initiatives. Thus there is a major tension between the centralising of decision-making and establishment of larger units

for service delivery at the local authority level, associated at the same time with a greater level of autonomy at the neighbourhood level. Establishing unified Children's Services will only lead to better outcomes if joining up at the strategic level feeds through to responsive delivery for the individual child.

With these major question marks about the effects of wider government policies on joining up at the local level, it is not surprising that New Labour has been consistent in its advocacy of 'joining up' at the local level. Sullivan (2005) has identified three strategies used by New Labour for local 'joining up'

- empowerment
- endorsement
- enticement.

Each of these three strategies has a distinctive vision of what 'joining up' means. Empowerment has placed local government at the core, for example through the legislative provisions for the 'duty of community strategy' and the 'power of economic, social and environmental well-being'. Endorsement is built upon the concept of network governance, through Local Strategic Partnerships. Enticement involves a system joined up as a result of direction and control from central government, for example through Local Public Service Agreements. The lack of coordination between central government departments and the inconsistent messages for local partners over the role of the local authority in relation to other partners at LSP and neighbourhood levels has hindered the effectiveness of central government policy on 'joining up' at the local level (Sullivan, 2005).

Sullivan (2005) sees Local Area Agreements (LAA's) as offering a more rounded approach to 'joining up' at the local level, including elements of empowerment, endorsement and enticement and addressing the need for central government departments to work together to facilitate joining up locally. While this might be the case, LAA's are structured in such a way that they repeat previous failures to recognise the multi-dimensional nature of public service provision, leading to all kinds of problems of definition and overlap.

Put simply, LAA's are a new way of striking a deal between central government, local authorities and other major delivery partners in an area. The key objectives are

- improving central/local relations
- improving service delivery

- improving efficiency
- improving partnership working
- enabling Local Authorities to provide better leadership

www.gos.gov.uk/goem/lov-gov/laas/?view=Print, viewed on 18 February, 2006
(Government Office for the East Midlands, 2006).

The first round of pilot LAA's in 2005/6 was based on three blocks

- Children and Young people
- Safer and Stronger Communities
- Healthier Communities and Older People

In terms of the ODF, these categories are defined according to a customer group, a theme and a mixture of customer group and theme, respectively – a recipe for overlaps in coverage. There are also significant gaps – the three blocks are difficult to relate to a wide range of mainstream services, including economic development, transport and housing. In the first round of LAA's this led to a range of convoluted devices to fit what local areas wanted to cover into the block structure. Thus Derby based its plan for all three blocks on the 'Outcomes of Children' framework, while Derbyshire added a fourth block on 'Sustainable Communities'

www.gos.gov.uk/goem/lov-gov/laas/?view=Print viewed on 18 February, 2006
(Government Office for the East Midlands, 2006). While LAA's have become outcome-orientated rather than funding-led, this in itself has led to difficulties in accountability, for example on the new mandatory 'Respect' outcome, where the 'cross-cutting' nature of anti-social behaviour makes it difficult to ascribe responsibility for the delivery of targets, www.idea-knowledge.gov.uk/idk/aio/4245410 P.3, viewed on 18 February, 2006 (Improvement and Development Agency, 2006). The second round of LAA's has added a fourth block on economic development and enterprise and more areas are to be allowed to work on a single pot, rather than the four blocks. However, this does not change the fundamental point from the perspective of the ODF, that LAA's would be much easier to relate to the complexity of delivery 'on the ground' if they reflected the multi-dimensional nature of public service provision.

6.6 Late second term/early third term of New Labour

The late second term New Labour Government saw the role of public sector reform as building on the progress in improving services to achieve objectives which have an inherent tension between them. The Civil Service Delivery and Reform website states

that to achieve the four principles of high standards, devolution, flexibility and choice, the focus is on

'Universal provision with personalised delivery

A move away from the post-war welfare state where 'one size fits all', to a service designed to meet the needs of individual pupils, patients and citizens. This means services are geared towards the lives of citizens rather than being governed by the decisions and customs of providers.

High standards flexibly delivered

National standards have been key in driving improvement in public services but this needs to be combined with the flexibility to cater to particular local and individual circumstances. Creative solutions will be needed to deliver national priorities so that they are responsive to local situations. This is going to require a new relationship between the centre and local organisations – experts from local organisations will need to contribute to policy development, target setting, and communicating with citizens.

Equity and choice

Extending choice will improve service quality and deliver greater equity. Choice is not an alternative to 'a good local service', it is a means of helping to secure it. This will require greater responsibility on the individual for their own health, education and neighbourhood. They will need a real say over the services they want, how they are delivered, and from whom they receive them'.

www.civilservice.gov.uk/improving_services/delivery_and_reform/about_delivery_and_reform/public_sector_reform/index, viewed on 24 May, 2005

(Cabinet Office, 2005).

The theme of simultaneously achieving objectives which are often viewed as alternatives extends to the Labour Party's General Election Manifesto, 2005, where Tony Blair's Preface states that Labour will not duck tough choices but will

'...refuse to accept false choices. The British people never wanted to choose between wealth creation and social justice. They never wanted to choose between national security and overseas aid. They never wanted to choose between equal rights and protection from crime. These are the false choices that landed us with economic decline and social division' (Labour Party, 2005:9).

While the Manifesto claims that it can reconcile these 'false choices', the mechanisms for doing so are presented quite conventionally. The chapters deal with different themes (economy, education, crime and security, quality of life), customer groups (older people, families), areas (international policy) and processes (democracy). In each case the manifesto sets out what has been achieved by Labour so far, what the current issues are and what Labour plan to do in a third term. When viewed within the terms of the ODF, individual chapter headings correlate closely with the dimensional framework. While coordination of Government activity may remain a key internal objective, it does not feature strongly at a political level now. There is no specific reference to joining up public services in the Manifesto.

The role of the central coordinating mechanisms in the Cabinet Office have changed (www.cabinet-office.gov.uk viewed on 19 February, 2006). The Office of Public Services Reform has been disbanded, and the high-level strategic analysis function is less prominent in the various central units that are active. The main themes at the moment seem to be

- social research and evidence-based policy making (Government Social Research, Policy Hub)
- digital applications and e government (e Government Unit and Strategy Unit)
- better regulation and less red tape (Better Regulation Executive)
- policy analysis on specific policy areas (Strategy Unit and Policy Hub)
- performance management (Prime Minister's Delivery Unit)
- civil service training and leadership (National School of Government, various training and leadership initiatives).

Across a wide range of public services the Government is engaged in reform and restructuring, based upon user choice as the over-riding principle for improving public services. Commissioning is separated from delivery of services, with local authorities, Primary Care Trusts and other local agencies coming together through Local Strategic Partnerships to coordinate their commissioning roles. Delivery is to be through independent, autonomous providers, such as schools, hospitals and health centres, who would effectively be in competition to attract service users. Getting this agenda through parliament is proving problematic, and the main proposals for education, for example, have been watered down as a result. Critics of the government say that this approach to public services will make it more difficult to join them up 'on the ground'. The combination of larger public bodies, eg merged PCT's, Children's Trusts, and more independence for local providers, such as schools, will

make it more difficult to coordinate services (Hetherington, 2005). The Government sees the responsibility for coordinating public services as lying with the Local Strategic Partnership. The consultation paper entitled 'Local Strategic Partnerships: Shaping their future' proposes a statutory duty for local authorities and other specified public bodies to work together through LSP's to co-ordinate service delivery (ODPM 2005A, Exec Summary para. 18). The unresolved question is whether working together at this level can filter down to service delivery on the ground, if the guiding principle is user choice.

In the early summer of 2006, the government came under fire for a series of poorly performing services, many of which involved an apparent failure to join up at central government level. Many of the issues where the government apparatus has been accused of failing to join up are internal to Home Office, but they also involve links between departments. For example, the culpability of the Department for Work and Pensions and the Home Office over the lack of action over individuals suspected of having falsified entries in passports, was coined by the Editorial in 'The Times' on 1 June, 2006, as 'a remarkable failure of joined up government' (The Times, 2006). Faced with poor poll ratings, a recent major Ministerial reshuffle and a power struggle over future policy direction during the transition to a new Prime Minister, it is unclear how the government will react to such accusations that it is failing to 'join up' at even the most basic level.

6.7 Conclusions

While the approach to 'joining up' by the new Labour Government has seen many advances in the coordination of public services, from the perspective of the ODF there is a conceptual weakness in the understanding of the nature of the problem which 'joining up' is meant to address. The main point is a simple one. Governments and their advisers have often expressed the need for joined up working in ways which make reference to different dimensions from the ODF. However, they tend to see alternative structures for service delivery in either/or terms, eg thematic *or* customer focused, moving to localised delivery of services *or* greater centralisation.

The implications for public services include

- a proliferation of new initiatives, increasing fragmentation and hence making joined up delivery more difficult
- frequent restructuring of public services, to fit with the latest policy change

- an optimistic view of the ease of reconciling policy objectives which potentially conflict with each other, such as equity and choice, unless the policy framework is sensitively designed.

Since 2002, joined up working has lost its political salience, but at the practical level it continues to be part of the armoury for improving service delivery. The partnership approach to strategic coordination and service provision continues. The corporate structures of public agencies, coupled with the use of new technology, mean that technical barriers present less of a hindrance to joined up working than in the past. However, the continuing fragmentation of public service provision and emphasis on user choice as the guiding principle for public services brings with it dangers for the coordination of services at the local level. Furthermore, in 2006, the government was under fire, rightly or wrongly, for examples of apparent failures to achieve even the most basic levels of 'joining up' between services at the central government level.

The conclusion from the perspective of the ODF is that at no point in the history of joined up working in Britain has the conceptual understanding of the complexities of the context to public service delivery been adequate. The starting point for attempting to coordinate services needs to include an appreciation of the dimensions of public service provision. This does not provide ready-made solutions to achieve joined up working, but it helps to highlight barriers and issues to which particular attention needs to be placed. For example, the fragmentation of public services means that the stakeholder dimension is particularly important in order to stand a chance of joining up.

In Section 6.6 examples were given where the Government is highlighting 'false choices', where policy objectives which are potentially at odds with each other, such as wealth creation and social justice, are both seen as achievable. If this is to work in practice it will always require joined up working. In the example of wealth creation and social justice it will require arms of Central Government and regional/local agencies to coordinate the policies for encouraging enterprise with those working with disadvantaged people, to ensure they share in the benefits of economic development. The ODF would provide a tool to map out the links and ensure that a coordinated approach is taken.

From the case study of joined up government under New Labour, there is a correspondence between the ODF as a 'truth bearer' and the 'states of affairs' in government policy in a number of ways, including

- the way in which issues to do with the coordination of government have been expressed in terms which can be fitted within the ODF
- the way in which the ODF acts as a means of placing the policies of government within a wider context - at no time have the policies embraced the full dimensional perspective contained in the ODF
- the way in which the ODF gives pointers as to what the implications of the policies taken by government might be, and why they do not lead to joined up government in practice.

The ODF does not offer a detailed policy prescription for joining up government. Instead it offers a starting point for working out solutions which are context-specific. Many of the most critical factors for achieving joined up working, such as behaviour and organisational culture, lie outside the direct coverage of the ODF, but the ODF provides a way of contextualising such issues.

In terms of the six stage model of explanatory research based on critical realism, the current chapter has been concerned with the explanatory power of the ODF in relation to government attempts to join up public services, as part of *Stage 5, Comparison between different theories and abstractions*. The ODF suggests that some of the basic assumptions used for 'joining up' should be conceptualised differently, which would give a more realistic approach to the potential for 'joining up' and help to avoid some of the pitfalls. It does not explicitly compare the explanatory power of the ODF to that generated by other theories, but this will form part of the content of Chapter 7, on consensus.

7. The Operational Dimensions Framework and existing theory (Consensus theory of truth)

Chapter 7 assesses the significance of the ODF, as a theoretical development with the potential to influence ways of conceptualising public services and be used as a practical analytical tool. It looks at the extent to which aspects of the ODF are already part of mainstream social theory, then relates the ODF to branches of theory with which it has commonalities to propose a new Scientific Research Programme and finally looks at areas of practice which might be enhanced using the ODF. In this way, the potential in the future for the ODF to attain some sort of consensus status amongst those developing and using these branches of theory and working in these areas of practice can be assessed. The emphasis is on identifying where the ODF can add value to existing theories.

Consensus is the third criterion of truth to be covered in the thesis. In terms of Danermark et al.'s six stage model of explanatory research based on critical realism, this chapter and the preceding one between them cover *Stage 5, Comparison between different theories and abstractions*. Chapter 6 was concerned with how well the ODF explains events, while Chapter 7 is concerned with comparing the ODF to other theories. This enables conclusions to be drawn on the explanatory power of the ODF. As a general descriptive theory, that explanatory power often rests in the way that it complements other theories – it is not just a case of competition between the ODF and other theories.

This chapter starts with a brief exploration of the philosophical basis of the consensus theory of truth, in Section 7.1. Translating the consensus theory of truth into some simple questions to relate the ODF to different branches of theory and areas of practice is then covered in Section 7.2. A number of branches of theory and areas of practice which either directly incorporate elements of the ODF or relate in some way to it at a conceptual level are then identified in Section 7.3. They are divided into

- examples of a dimensional approach, similar to the ODF (Section 7.4)
- theory-based starting points, where there are commonalities with the ODF (Section 7.5)
- practice-based starting points, where the corpus of theory could be enhanced using the ODF (Section 7.6).

At the end of the chapter, conclusions are drawn about the extent to which the ODF is already part of mainstream theory and the potential for it to have greater influence where the opportunity arises to achieve the links to other theories covered in the chapter.

Chapter 7 draws from the preceding chapters on coherence and correspondence, and set the scene for pragmatic applications of the ODF in Chapter 8. Some of the theories which relate most closely to the ODF, from Chapters 4 and 5 on coherence, are revisited to help identify the extent to which the ODF is already part of mainstream theory. The ways in which public policy theories have influenced governmental approaches to joined up working in Britain provide a link with Chapter 6, concerned with the correspondence theory of truth. Then, finally, some of the areas of public policy theory to which the ODF relates most closely have practical applications which are alluded to, mainly in Section 7.6. In some cases, related management tools have been developed using the ODF, which provide potential material for more in-depth case studies in Chapter 8, on the pragmatism theory of truth.

7.1 The Consensus Theory of Truth

The consensus theory bases truth upon agreement on a particular idea or concept, amongst a group of people. In Darwin's classification of theories of truth, based on Wilber's four quadrants (see Section 4.2.6) consensus is located in the lower left quadrant, concerned with the 'interior of the collective' (Darwin, 2004A, P45-6). Consensus is associated with the values and common practices which are involved in shared understandings and shared cultures.

In modern times, the use of consensus as the basis of theories of truth can be traced back to C S Pierce, whose work is also associated with pragmatism and hence will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 8. Pierce held that investigators using different methods and sources of evidence would eventually converge on the same conclusion, and hence achieve consensus (Kirkham, 1992). Such an approach has links to Kuhn's paradigms of scientific development and to Habermas' 'ideal speech situation' (Johnson and Duberley, 2000:73 and 121-122). For Kuhn, the truthfulness of any account or theory is based on the shared assumptions and conventions associated with a particular scientific paradigm. The consensus is upset during periods of paradigm change, when the orthodoxy is challenged and eventually

replaced by a new paradigm. For Habermas, focussing on the act of human communication, the possibility of consensus is an essential prerequisite for engagement with others. In normal conditions, validity claims are maintained through the exercise of power, under conditions of 'systematically distorted communication'. A goal of Habermas' critical theory is to work towards an 'ideal speech situation', where rational consensus might be achieved through open and equal debate, without recourse to force, coercion, distortion or duplicity. Philosophers have often discarded consensus theories of truth because of the circularity in relating truth to concepts of rationality and justification (Sosa, 2001:642). However, as a criterion for evaluating the truth claims of a new theory, consensus complements the insights obtained through the use of the other theories of truth, and the philosophical objections to circularity do not matter so much.

Using consensus as a criterion of truth is closely linked to the degree to which the ODF also fulfils the criteria of coherence, correspondence and pragmatism. This will heavily influence the extent to which it will impact upon communities of practice to gain a foothold and then become steadily more accepted as part of the mainstream in a particular branch of theory. Achieving consensus about the validity of the ODF should then lead to it being utilized more in practical management contexts, which would increase its exposure and potentially encourage acceptance.

The idea that there are many ways in which the truthfulness of a theory needs to be tested is a central plank in the structure of the thesis, and uses the approach set out by John Darwin, in his paper on theory and practice in management research. In that paper, Darwin refers, drawing on the work of Lakatos, to the concept of a scientific research programme (SRP), as an alternative to Kuhn's paradigm (Darwin, 2004A:46-48). Competing or complementary SRP's can exist side-by side and can be pitched at different levels. Darwin uses the term 'holons', wholes that are part of other wholes, to explain the relationships between different SRP's.

7.2 Use of the consensus theory of truth to evaluate the ODF

There would seem to be two ways in which the consensus theory of truth might be applied to the ODF. *First*, it could be used to see how far the Operational Dimensions Framework is part of the existing consensus amongst those who practice in the branches of social scientific theory to which it is relevant. *Second*, it could be used to

see how the ODF might become part of the existing consensus in the future, because it adds value to existing theories.

As far as I am aware, no one has developed a general descriptive theory exactly the same as the ODF, but in Chapters 2, 4 and 6 we have already seen that dimensional concepts have been extensively used in public policy analysis, including

- in the structuring of regeneration programmes in the UK (Chapter 2)
- in the Haldane Report of 1918 (see Appendix 1)
- in Gulick's 'systems of organisation', a similar, if conceptually flawed, theory. As Gulick's ideas are still influential in the US today, there is a potential link to the consensus in public policy there.
- in Challis' analysis of the organisation of Social Services Departments in the UK (Chapter 4) However, Challis' analysis of organisational structures for Social Services Departments, has had little influence upon mainstream theory, as far as I can ascertain.
- in the organisation of Central Government programmes since 1997 (Chapter 6).

In most of these applications, the dimensions are seen as alternatives for the organisation of public sector staffing structures and government programmes. Therefore, the current consensus does not fully reflect the complexity of the ODF. There could be many reasons for this. One of the most pertinent is that working at a political level there is a need to express policy in simple messages. Therefore the focus for government programmes is often a specific target group, based on a single dimensional parameter, eg 'BME communities' or 'educational attainment'. Working at a political level, logical consistency is not the most important factor. Acknowledging the dimensional relationships in all their complexity draws attention to the difficulties in implementation, and perhaps the optimistic aspirations for programmes with relatively small funding associated with them. It also means straddling many administrative boundaries, to work with those who have responsibility for the other linked policy areas. However, theories about public policy ought to reflect the full complexity of the dimensional framework, even if the government's approach does not. In reviewing similar models and frameworks to the ODF, a key issue will be to see where the dimensions are conceptualised. Such an understanding is most likely to be found in the literature on regeneration, written by academics and practitioners with a similar background to my own.

There are therefore two bodies of theory which can be examined to see how far the ODF is already reflected in the generally accepted concepts and ideas – Gulick’s systems of organisation and the literature on regeneration in the UK. They form *Category A*, and are covered in Section 7.4.

The identification of relevant theory-based starting points, not structured in a similar way to the ODF but where it might add value, needs to be based on an awareness of

- the field in which I am working,
- the philosophical and methodological underpinnings of the research, and
- the scale at which I am working.

The field in which I am working is **public policy** (although, based on the arguments made in Section 1.4 the relevance of the ODF is not restricted to this field). Therefore the ODF is part of the huge body of theory around public policy, about the role of the State in intervening in economic, environmental and social matters. The ODF is a tool to assist in public policy and its implementation.

As discussed at length in Chapter 3, the ODF overtly draws from **critical realism**, as a philosophy with methodological implications which has led to a distinctive approach to social theory.

The scale at which the ODF is pitched is what has recently become known as **holistic**, relevant at both micro and macro scales and able to bridge the gaps between them. The ODF aims to take a holistic approach, and links to other theories which make similar claims

In the public policy field there are a growing number of theorists who have used critical realist methods and also many writers who have attempted to take a holistic approach. However, there are few, if any, whose public policy research embraces both critical realism and a holistic approach. My argument is that there is a gap in the development of theory. The ODF plugs that gap and hence can enrich and enhance existing theories.

In Chapter 3 I have already signalled my rejection of the notion of a single paradigm model of the social sciences, in favour of a pluralist model, where there are competing philosophies and different branches of theory, related to each other in complex ways. My proposition is that by fusing together a number of similar branches

of theory with the insights from the ODF, it may be possible to develop a corpus of theory which could have the explanatory power to form a consensus, in a specific combination of field/philosophy/scale – in public policy theory where critical realism underpins the research and a holistic approach is aspired to. In this sense, to use Darwin's approach, there may be a Scientific Research Programme (SRP) where the ODF could be an integral part of a general corpus of theory. Although it might be one SRP amongst many, the practical implications are potentially extremely significant - public policy on a global scale relies upon the prevailing SRP's in its field. The branches of theory included in this potential Scientific Research Programme form *Category B*. They will form the subject matter for Section 7.5.

It would be naïve to presume that my proposition can be anything more than a tentative exploration of possibilities. I am restricted to rational argument, making links between different theories and ideas. In terms of the consensus theory of truth such an exercise might be a precursor to the application of Habermas' theories on 'ideal speech situations', seeking to achieve agreement through rational debate on this emerging SRP, amongst theorists sympathetic to the underpinning philosophy and interested in this field. However, the ODF is likely to gain acceptance more easily if it can be seen to have 'real world' uses, where it adds value to existing management tools and practices. Hence *Category C* in the exploration of the consensus theory of truth involves a number of public policy fields where the ODF might have an immediate impact. These areas of practice sometimes rely on, or have developed, a corpus of theory, but their distinguishing characteristic is that the starting point is a practical management problem, rather than a theory. The areas of practice are introduced in Section 7.6, while case studies on the practical application of the ODF to some of them are provided in Chapter 8, which is concerned with the pragmatism theory of truth.

In investigating practical applications of the ODF in Section 7.6, I have taken an eclectic approach. The fields of public policy to which it might be applied are generally not linked to an explicit philosophical background. I am generally looking at incremental improvements to existing management tools, emphasising the complementarity of the ODF to what exists already. Although the focus is on areas of practice, ultimately I am concerned with the adequacy of the theoretical frameworks used to make sense of these areas and offer policy prescriptions. In this sense the questions to be asked are the same as for the branches of theory.

To guide the analysis in this chapter there are three questions which encapsulate the arguments made above on how the consensus theory of truth can be used as a criterion to assess the worth of the ODF. The questions apply whether the starting point is a branch of theory or an area of practice. They are

- to what extent and where are there common underpinning ideas and concepts with the ODF and to what extent is common language used?
- to what extent and where are there gaps or shortcomings in existing theory, which could be plugged by the ODF?
- to what extent and where are there complementarities which mean that theories could be further developed in conjunction with the ODF

7.3 Branches of social theory and areas of practice linked to the ODF

In *Category A*, where a dimensional approach similar to the ODF has already been developed, I have already identified the two theories, which will be covered in Section 7.4. They are Luther Gulick's 'Systems of Administration' and a broader group of theories about Area Regeneration in the UK.

In *Category B*, linked theories with commonalities to the ODF, I have identified six different branches of theory, most of which are orientated towards public services in some way, and some of which draw also from critical realism or holistic approaches. The list comprises Systems Theory, Network Theory, Wicked Problems, Realist Social Theory, Polarity Management and Data Warehousing. They will be explored in Section 7.5.

In *Category C*, areas of practice which might be enhanced using the ODF, the list is Joined up Government, Public Service Delivery, Implementation Studies, Impact Assessment and Audit Techniques, Sustainable Development and Evidence-based Policy/Theories of Change. They will be explored in Section 7.6.

A list of the branches of theory/areas of practice is found in Table 7.1, together with some of the principal protagonists and their key publications. There is not space here to explore the background to these theories or explain their propositions in detail. Instead I will concentrate to how they link to the ODF, covering the three questions posed at the end of Section 7.2.

Table 7.1 Branches of theory/areas of practice which are linked to the Operational Dimensions Framework

<i>Branch of theory/area of practice</i>	<i>Protagonists</i>	<i>Key sources</i>	<i>Links to other branches</i>
The extent of existing consensus about the ODF			
Examples of a dimensional approach, with some similarities to the ODF			
1. Principles of Administration	Gulick	Notes on the theory of organisation, 1937	10, 12
	Mintzberg	The structuring of organisations, 1979	10, 12
	Hammond	In defence of Luther Gulick's 'Notes on the theory of organisation', 1990	10, 12
2. Social Services organisation	Challis (<i>not covered in Section 7.4, because of its minimal impact on mainstream theory</i>)	Organising Public Social Services, 1990	10
3. Area Regeneration in the UK	McGregor et al	Developing people – regenerating place, 2003	10
	Smith	ABI's – the rationale and options for area targeting, 1999	10, 15
	Burgess, Hall, Mawson and Pearce	Devolved approaches to local governance, 2001	10, 11
	RCU/NRU	Coordination and Collaboration in Area based Initiatives, 2002	10, 11
	Sullivan and Skelcher	Working across boundaries, 2002	5, 10, 11, 12,
Developing a consensus about the ODF			
Theory-based starting points, where there are commonalities with the ODF			
4. Systems theory (holistic theories, applied to public policy as well as other fields)	Ashby	Introduction to cybernetics, 1964	
	Checkland	Systems thinking, systems practice, 1981 and 1999	5
	Wilkinson and Applebee	Implementing holistic Government, 1999	3, 10, 11, 12, 15
	Wilkinson and Pedlar	Whole Systems Development in Public Service, 1996	3, 10
	Darwin, McAuley and Johnson	Developing Strategies for Change	5, 6
5. Network theory	Monge and Contractor	Theories of communication networks, 2003	4
	Marsh and Smith	Understanding Policy networks, (in Political Studies, 2000)	11, 12
	Rhodes	Control and Power in Central-Local Government Relations, 1999	10, 11
	Davies	Scale, complexity and the representation of theories of change, 2004	4, 15
6. Wicked problems	Rittel and Webber	Dilemmas in a general theory of Planning, 1973	4, 10
	Stewart and Clarke	Handling the Wicked Issues – A challenge for Government, 1997	3, 10, 11, 12

<i>Branch of theory/area of practice</i>	<i>Protagonists</i>	<i>Key sources</i>	<i>Links to other branches</i>
7. Polarity Management	Barry Johnson	Polarity Management 1996	
8. Realist Social Theory (based on critical realism, and applied to public policy, as well as other fields)	Archer	Realist Social Theory: the Morphogenetic Approach, 1995	4
	Sayer	Being Human, the problem of Agency, 2000	
	Pawson and Tilley	Method in Social Science – A Realist Approach, 1992	4
9. Data Warehousing	Kimball and Ross	Realistic Evaluation, 1997	15
		The Data Warehousing Toolkit: The complete guide to dimensional modelling, 2002	15
Developing a consensus about the ODF			
Practice-based starting points, where the corpus of theory could be enhanced using the ODF			
10. Joining up Public service Delivery	Roaf	Coordinating services for included children, 2002	3, 12
	Roche	Complicated Problems, Complicated solutions? Homelessness and joined up Policy Responses, 2004	3, 6, 11
11. Joined up Government	Perri 6 et al (holistic approach)	Towards Holistic Governance, 2002	4, 10, 12
		Joined Up Government in the Western World, 2004	10
	Ling (holistic approach)	Delivering Joined up Government in the UK: Dimensions, Issues and Problems, 2002	10, 12
	Chandler	Joined up Local Government?, 2000	10
12. Implementation Studies	Pressman and Wildavsky	'Implementation', 3 rd Ed. 1984	10, 11
	Schofield	Time for a Revival; Public Policy Implementation, 2001	10, 11
13. Impact Assessment and Audit Techniques	Becker and Vanclay (eds)	International Handbook of Social Impact Assessment, 2003	14
	Hawtin, Hughes, Percy-Smith	Community Profiling, 1994	3, 10
14. Sustainable Development	UK Government	Sustainable Development Strategy, 2005	10, 13
	Blair and Evans	Seeing the bigger picture: Delivering Local Sustainable Development, 2004	13
15. Evidence based Policy and Theories of Change	Evidence based Policy Network	Various, 2001+	3, 8
	Pawson	Evidence based Policy: A Realist perspective, 2006	8
	Kubisch, Weiss, Schorr and Connell	New Approaches to Evaluating Community Initiatives, 1995	3
	Kings Fund (Cote, Allen and Woodhead)	Finding out what works, 2004	3

7.4.1 *Gulick's Systems of Administration*

In Chapter 1, it was identified that the ODF is particularly relevant to public policy because there is a need to coordinate public services in a way which is generally more wide-ranging and pressing compared to the private sector. In Chapters 3 and 5 we have seen that choices around the organisation of public services have a long history of being framed in terms which relate to parts of the ODF, starting with Lord Haldane's Report into the machinery of government in 1918 (see Appendix 1) Haldane's report influenced the main example of a dimensional approach to public service organisation, in Luther Gulick's 'systems of organisation', which form one of the classical principles expounded in Gulick's 'Notes on the theory of organisation', published in 1937. As explained in Section 4.3.1, Gulick's work was criticised by Herbert Simon, whose ideas then became pre-eminent in the post-war development of public policy theory. However, in the United States Gulick's work has influenced many influential management theorists, including Henry Mintzberg, and there is a school of thought which holds to the continued relevance of Gulick's classical principles to management issues today (Hammond, 1990, Sharp and Housel, 2004).

In Section 4.3.1, I suggested that from the perspective of the ODF there are flaws in Gulick's conceptualisation of 'systems of organisation', which are reflected in Simon's critique. In particular, one of the 'systems' is 'purpose', which I would argue has to be expressed in terms of the seven Operational Dimensions, rather than being a dimension in its own right. Although Simon picked up on this issue, he did not reformulate the 'systems of organisation' to correct the error. Instead, he promoted a very different approach to management theory, based on the study of decision-making processes in administration (Simon, 1976).

While the clash with Simon heralded a decline in the popularity of the classical administration school in the 1940's (Uveges and Keller, 1998:10-14) its influence in the US was only diminished, rather than eliminated, and has experienced a resurgence at various times since then, eg during the period of consolidation and change in the teaching of public administration in the 1980's (Laudicina, 1998:724-725). Despite its age, Gulick and Urwick's 'Papers on the Science of Administration' (1937) was recently assessed as being the sixth most frequently quoted book in public administration in the US (Chandler, 1998:754).

In Section 4.3.1 another American commentator was quoted confirming the continuing reference to the systems of organisation in business textbooks and reorganisation studies (Heffron, 1989), suggesting that this part of Gulick's work is still used, despite Simon's critique, because there is nothing better to replace it. The ODF could provide a theoretically robust alternative to Gulick's systems of organisation.

Public administration in the US has been portrayed as a highly eclectic field, borrowing many concepts from across the social sciences. The classical administration model is one of five, the others being neobureaucratic, institutional, human relations and public choice models, which interlink with each other in a 'mosaic of knowledge and purpose' (Chandler, 1998:760). In such a context, the ODF, as a variant on Gulick's 'systems of organisation', would have great potential to add value to a wide spectrum of existing theories, including those which do not take a rational-analytic approach. For example, the ODF could fit with and add value to Charles Lindblom's theories about the policy process. Lindblom was hostile to the notion that rational techniques could in some way supplant the need for political agreement and consensus. For Lindblom, 'to understand who or what makes policy, one must understand the characteristics of the participants, what parts or roles they play, what authority and other powers they hold, and how they deal with and control each other' (Lindblom, 1980:2). Using the stakeholder dimension as a starting point, the ODF provides a way of operationalising such an approach to the policy process.

In Great Britain and the rest of Europe classical public administration has had much less of an impact than in the US. New approaches to public institutions have been seen as discrediting the classical school, rather than as alternatives within a pluralist framework (Lane, 2000:3). However, some of the innovations in public policy studies in the UK will be drawn upon later in Chapter 7, such as the work of Sir Geoffrey Vickers on systems theories.

7.4.2 Area Regeneration

As described in Section 1.7, the ODF arose out of my experience in managing area regeneration initiatives in the UK. The deliberations in determining the nature of each bid for funding in Barnsley in the 1990's drew out the distinction between theme-based, small area-based and social group-based programmes. This classification of

programmes is reflected in government policy and in many of the theories about community regeneration which underpin it. It is part of the existing consensus. What is different about the ODF is the assertion that the differences between programmes merely reflect the emphases given to each dimension. The key question is therefore whether this deeper conceptualisation of the dimensional nature of human activity is found within theories on area regeneration.

Accompanying the emphasis on area based solutions in the UK in the 1990's were a number of studies on area regeneration, which in some cases were commissioned to inform government policy. From the perspective of the ODF, these theories are naturally concerned with the relationship between the space dimension and other dimensions, particularly theme and social group. How far have there have been any approaches which incorporate a theoretical framework like the ODF?

The rationale for area targeting was examined by Gillian Smith, a researcher at the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions in the late 1990's, who was a User Fellow at the Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion at the London School of Economics in 1998. She was concerned with the extent to which deprivation is concentrated in geographical areas, and the implications of using area-based programmes to tackle it. This was a critical question for the emerging approach to regeneration of disadvantaged areas, coming at the time when there was a proliferation of Area Based Initiatives and the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit was set up.

Smith found that there are geographical areas that suffer disproportionately from problems, but that in aggregate, only a minority of deprived people live in the most deprived areas (Smith, 1999:4,5). There are a number of reasons for concentrations of poverty in particular areas. Using employment as an example, Smith identified factors such as postcode discrimination and the lack of integration of these areas in social networks for obtaining jobs(P10-12).

Smith's analysis focused on geographical areas and measures of deprivation, which are expressed thematically. Although she invoked social group issues on occasions, such as ethnic origin, it was not an integral part of her method. Using the ODF, the interplay of area, theme and social group would have been a starting point for the study.

In the second part of her paper, Smith was concerned with the implications of area-based programmes. She identifies some criteria, such as whether policies are inward or outward focused (Smith, 1999:37) and then looked at the options for the size of area to be targeted and the alternative mechanisms for allocating funds. If there had been a fuller coverage of the different operational dimensions in the analysis of deprivation, the second part of the paper would have been able to contrast the options on targeting in a more realistic way, reflecting the area, theme and social group targeting inherent in any programme.

With the proliferation of area-based initiatives (ABI's), the focus turned to the effort needed to coordinate them and the relationship with mainstream programmes. In 1999 a research project was commissioned which looked at the coordination of a number of ABI's in six different localities, resulting in the publication of 'Collaboration and Coordination of Area-based Initiatives' by the Regional Coordination Unit and the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit in 2002. The report concluded that successful joint delivery depends on clarity over four key questions:

- Focus – a clear focus for the target of joint delivery, be that on client group, area or topic
- Agency – a clear view of which agencies are expected to be involved
- Resources – staff, skills, funding and buildings which will form the basis for joint delivery, together with the energy and commitment which will make it work
- Activity – the particular programme or project for joint working (RCU/NRU, 2002:110-111).

This list includes all the Operational Dimensions, with the exception of time, about which there are references elsewhere in the report, in the context of the timescale for different ABI's. However, there is a clear conceptual difference, in that the ODF proposes that it is not a choice of choosing between client group, area or topic, but on choosing the emphasis given to each dimension and how they are combined.

A similar comment can be made about 'Devolved approaches to local governance: policy and practice in neighbourhood management' by Burgess, Hall, Mawson and Pearce, 2001, a study funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. They contrasted different approaches to neighbourhood management, as being

- Area-based
- Theme or client-based
- Project-based (Burgess et al, 2001:98-101).

The advantages and disadvantages of different approaches in achieving various policy objectives were outlined. For example, area-based approaches were felt to offer more potential for producing 'joined up' working. However, from the perspective of the ODF, the contrast between different dimensions should not be set out as 'either, or', but presented in terms of how different dimensions are combined in programme design.

The integration of area based regeneration activities and programmes targeted at individuals was the focus of a report by McGregor, Glass, Higgins, MacDougall and Sutherland (2003), supported by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. The report was concerned with identifying

- the benefits of a more integrated approach
- obstacles to greater integration
- recommendations on achieving greater integration.

The study covered a number of the different New Deal programmes for welfare-to-work and area programmes such as the Single Regeneration Budget, Health Action Zones and New Deal for Communities. In their mapping of the different initiatives McGregor et al identify client group, target area/population and delivery agent as three of the key parameters defining these programmes, in addition to area covered (McGregor et al., 2003:6-9). However, because they do not represent the parameters in a dimensional way, the full extent of the barriers to integration are not identified. For example, 'too many players', 'different priorities', 'different timescales' and 'mismatch between boundaries' are some of the barriers examined, but they are not related to each other as being an inevitable consequence of the existence of operational dimensions inherent in the delivery of services (McGregor et al., 2003:26-28). As a consequence, some of the recommendations do not have as sharp a focus to them, as might have been possible using the ODF. For example, one of the key recommendations is 'make integration a key programme design and redesign component' (P40). To do this effectively, the design of the programme needs to be defined using the full set of operational dimensions.

In area regeneration, one application where an approach very similar to the ODF has been taken is in the detailed search options in 'renewal net', the web-based information resource funded and promoted by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU, 2002 onwards). The search criteria include five which can be related to the Operational Dimensions Framework,

- theme
- document type (equivalent to function in this context)
- region (space)
- target group
- created (time)

(www.renewal.net/Search.asp, viewed in February, 2006)

I suggest that the search engine could also have included the stakeholder dimension, in the form of a criterion which might be called 'organisation', although there may have been technical reasons limiting the number of variables, or a desire not to make the search process over-complex by including too many criteria.

The distinction between area regeneration and mainstream services has become less pronounced recently, as partnerships at the local level have increasingly become concerned with the totality of the interventions contributing to the regeneration effort. In 'Working across boundaries – Collaboration in public services' (2002), Sullivan and Skelcher contrasted outcome-defined partnership working with the traditional functionally-defined way that public services have been delivered (P33). They are concerned not only with area-based initiatives and partnerships but also the ways in which mainstream public services have been adopting partnership approaches. They are concerned to understand why and how partnership working is increasing, arguing that hitherto the collaborative agenda has been under-theorised, and even overlooked (P10).

There are many different types of partnership, and many legal forms that they can take (Coulson, 2005). Sullivan and Skelcher produced a typology of partnerships, looking at the characteristics of three different generic types – strategic, sectoral and neighbourhood (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002:24). Within sectoral partnerships there are some orientated to a specific customer group, eg connexions, and others concerned with a theme, eg community safety partnerships. There are many different ways of classifying partnerships, used for many different purposes. Using the method

outlined in Section 5.4, the reasons for undertaking the classification could be used to build up typologies as versions of the ODF.

Sullivan and Skelcher examined collaboration on cross-cutting issues and across sectors, pointing to a 'locality effect', consisting of the unique features that together characterise the local operating culture. Initial research has identified a number of factors relevant to the definition of the locality effect, including

- geography
- population
- organisational boundaries
- political culture and relationships
- history of partnership working (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002:116).

The ODF could help ensure that analysis of the 'locality effect' drew in all relevant factors under these headings. For example, the characteristics of the population might be defined on the basis of social group, while the particular local issues and problems would be identified on the basis of theme. The ODF would not cover all the key factors – for example, political culture and relationships involves behavioural and cultural factors which fall outside its remit. This demonstrates how, in the terms expressed in Chapter 4, the psychological and semiological sciences have a key role to play in theorising area regeneration, complementing the social sciences, which is the principal domain of the ODF.

This analysis has only covered studies of regeneration problems and policies in the UK. A comprehensive international trawl of area regeneration theories is beyond the scope of my thesis. However, there is reference in Section 7.6 to some of the theories which have emerged in the US, in the field of implementation studies and theories of change, which cover similar ground, but have not taken an overtly dimensional approach.

7.4.3 Examples of a dimensional approach and the extent of existing consensus about the ODF

The main conclusion to be drawn is that the ODF as a whole does not, as far as I can ascertain, feature in the mainstream corpus of theory in any branch of public policy.

An appreciation of some of the dimensions as alternatives for the focus of programmes or the organisation of services is present in the theories underpinning area regeneration in the UK and in classical organisation theory, but seldom do the theories start from the philosophical basis that all the dimensions are present in any given context. This point is stated in the original writings of Luther Gulick (1937) and Herbert Simon (1976:36), but even in these cases, the implications are not fully followed through in the analysis and conclusions. However, in terms of the implications for future interest in the ODF, it is of great significance that the dimensional approach is part of classical organisation theory, because of the continuing influence of this school of thought in the US.

Given that the Operational Dimensions Framework originated from work on area regeneration in the UK, it is not surprising that theories in this field often incorporate the dimensions from the ODF. The corpus of knowledge around area regeneration and partnership working has enough of a consensus on the significance of many of the dimensions in the ODF for there to be scope to relate the ODF to existing theory, with the aim of influencing mainstream thinking in the field. However, the examples in this section do not relate the dimensions to each other in the manner of the ODF, and never include all the dimensions from the ODF. Different dimensions have been seen as alternatives for the focus of regeneration programmes, rather than as all being present in any programme. Consequently, the analysis of how 'place' relates to other dimensions and the solutions offered to address the problems of joining up different initiatives suffers from a gap in the theoretical underpinnings for the prescriptions offered.

Theories on the dimensional nature of area regeneration policy no more reflect the complexity of the relationships between dimensions than does the modernising government documentation of the late 1990's (see Section 6.4). This is the key issue to address if the ODF is to find its way into the existing consensus in regeneration policy.

7.5 Developing a theory-based consensus about the ODF

As referred to in section 7.3, there are a number of inter-linked branches of theory which have much in common with the ODF. Although they do not generally take an explicit dimensional approach, the commonalities may enable a fruitful contribution from the ODF to further develop these branches of theory, which could lead to a Scientific Research Programme in the field of *public policy*, where *critical realism* underpins the theory and a *holistic approach* is aspired to. Using the ODF in conjunction with other theories, powerful new analytical tools and management tools might ultimately be developed.

It is difficult to decide in which order to cover the six branches of theory, because there is so much cross-over, and cross-referencing between them. Furthermore, in some cases there are practical management tools which have evolved out of the theory, while in other cases this has yet to happen. In the event, I decided to discuss systems theory first, because it provides the roots for some of the other branches of theory, in particular network theory, which follows next. The discussion of 'wicked problems' and polarity management follow, then realist social theory, and finally dimensional modelling as associated with data warehousing.

There is a degree of arbitrariness in the six headings which follow, because there are related concepts, which could have been additional or alternative headings. Complexity theory, which is strongly linked to systems and network theories, is an example of this. However, hopefully I have covered a good proportion of the key ideas, from whatever source, in the following text. I will not have included all the branches of theory relevant to the potential new Scientific Research Programme – hopefully others will be able to assist me in this regard.

7.5.1 Systems Theory/Whole Systems Approaches

Under a broad banner of systems theory are a number of different management theories and methods which can be usefully related to the ODF, to establish where there is common ground and identify where the ODF might add something to existing theory. I have already touched on systems theory and whole systems approaches in Chapters 4 and 5, on the coherence of the ODF. In Chapter 4 it was recognised that, in terms of Wilber's four quadrants, the ODF is primarily concerned with the social system and its environment, in the 'Exterior-collective' quadrant. In Chapter 5, the conceptual

basis of the resources and functions dimensions was explained in terms of the inputs to, and outputs from, a system. In that chapter the fundamental significance of systems to human thought processes was highlighted using the work of Baron Cohen (2004) on male and female brain types (Section 5.2.2).

The development of thinking about systems has been traced through the history of science by Checkland, starting with the ancient Greeks (Checkland, 1981:23-58). In the twentieth century there have been three major systems perspectives influencing social theory and research – general systems theory (von Bertalanffy, 1971), functionalism (Parsons, 1951), and cybernetics (Ashby, 1964).

Significant to the position of the ODF as a theoretical framework is the question of the representation of reality through systems approaches. Ashby's Law of Requisite Variety is concerned with the relationship between a system and its regulator, expressed initially in mathematical terms, but then related to systems in biological and social sciences (Ashby, 1964:206-264). Where the system is very large and the regulator very much smaller, there is a limit on the quantity of control that the regulator can achieve, no matter how it is configured (P245). The Law of Requisite Variety has been expressed more generally as stating that a model can only represent reality if it has sufficient internal variety to capture the complexity of that reality (Davies, 2004:102). In earlier chapters I have claimed that the dimensions in the ODF are present in any situation where human activity, which can be equated with systems involving human activity, is taking place. Therefore, it can be argued that the ODF is a key tool if the complexity of reality is to be modelled, and Ashby's Law of Requisite Variety is to be met. Such an argument fits well with a critical realist philosophy – there is a reality which can be modelled (objective ontology) but the modelling process is fraught with difficulties, because everyone views the world differently (subjective epistemology). One of the keys to achieving consensus around a systems approach is to pick out common features of reality to provide a structure to the modelling activity that as many people as possible can agree on.

The Law of Requisite Variety also has major implications for public policy. Even if human systems can be modelled in a comprehensive way, this does not mean that control can be exerted if the means to exercise that control is limited. Ashby refers to the implications of the law for the work of ecologists, economists and sociologists, wishing to intervene to achieve policy goals with limited resources and an inability to match the complexity of the systems they are attempting to regulate (Ashby,

1964:244). The ODF, with its emphasis on resources, provides a basis for management actions which acknowledge the constraints upon the control of social processes.

One of the key figures in the use of systems approaches in management studies is Sir Geoffrey Vickers, whose work incorporated a dimensional approach with some commonalities with the ODF. Vickers seminal book 'The Art of Judgement', published in 1965, used methods derived from two primary sources, cybernetics/systems analysis and psychology. 'The Art of Judgement' is composed of four parts, corresponding to four analytical contexts or dimensions, which are mental, institutional, situational and ecological (Vickers, 1965).

Within the mental dimension, Vickers saw 'reality judgements' and 'value judgements' coming together in the 'appreciative system' or interpretative screen involved in decision making (Vickers, 1965:70). While Vickers' four dimensions form a comprehensive model for the decision making process, as opposed to the 'general descriptive' role of the dimensional framework in the ODF, there are some commonalities between his model and the ODF, especially in the emphasis he places on the institutional setting of the appreciative system, which links with the stakeholder focus in the ODF. The insights from Vickers' work might also help in a future task of incorporating the psychological and semiological science elements to the ODF.

Vickers' work has had a major influence on the development of soft systems approaches, as acknowledged by Checkland in his 'thirty year retrospective' (Checkland, 1999:A48-A58). *Soft Systems Methodology* was developed in an action research programme at Lancaster University in the 1970's. As a management tool, soft systems methodology is reliant upon the conceptualisation of the system under scrutiny. It lays great emphasis on generating alternative views of the system to uncover aspects of the problem situation and identify its components. 'Root definitions' of the views of the system being analysed are formulated, using the mnemonic CATWOE to identify the elements of the system. CATWOE stands for

- Customers (beneficiaries or victims of the system's activities)
- Actors (people who carry out activities in the system)
- Transformation (what the system changes – conversion of input to output)
- *Weltanschauung* (underlying image or model of the world which makes this system a meaningful one to consider)
- Owners of the system (has the power to modify or demolish the system)

- Environmental constraints (things that have to be taken as given) (Checkland, 1981:312-319).

CATWOE can be related to the dimensions in the ODF. 'C', 'A' and 'O' relate to different key stakeholders in a system, while 'T' covers the resources and function dimensions. Some dimensions are not explicitly included, eg theme, space, although they might feature in the 'W' and/or the 'E'. While the root definitions need to be concise, from the point of view of the ODF, they do not necessarily capture all the key attributes of a system.

According to Clegg and Walsh, one of the key weaknesses in soft systems methods is that it does not address the politics of system change (1998:231-232). While the SSM method involves many of the key stakeholders (eg in the 'C', 'A' and 'O' of CATWOE), it does not look systematically at the full range of stakeholder interests or necessarily address the relationship between those carrying out the SSM exercise with those stakeholders. From the perspective of the ODF, soft systems analysis does not have safeguards built in to ensure that all the significant attributes of a system are brought into the analysis of the problem and subsequently into potential ways of addressing it. A method of generating views of the system based on the stakeholder dimension in the ODF with other dimensions contributing to the root definitions of the different views might provide a variant on the SSM approach, which would help to address the politics of system change.

Systems thinking has also spawned a series of management tools similar to soft systems methodology which fall under the banner of *whole systems development*, *whole systems events* and *future search conferences*.

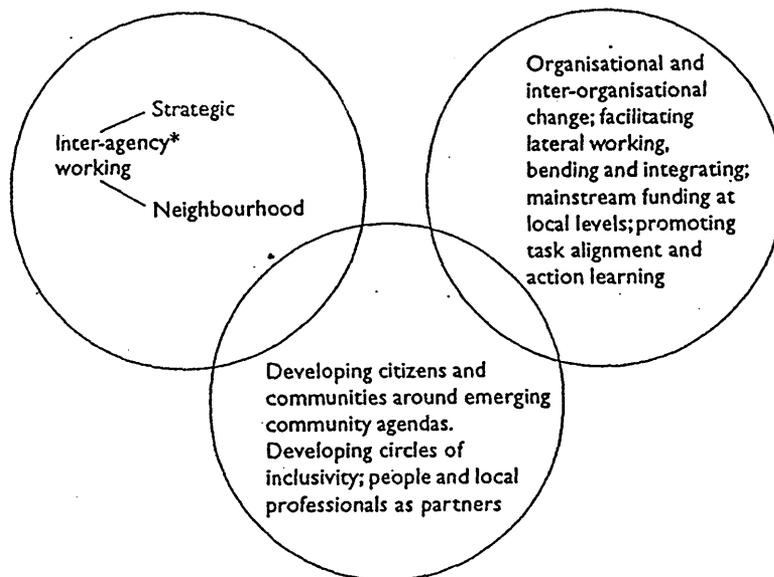
There are numerous variations on the basic model in use in the UK, such as those described by Darwin et al (2002:311-321), Wilkinson and Pedlar (1996:38-53), and Wilkinson and Applebee (1999:67-89). Some of the contexts in which whole systems approaches have been used have been in regeneration and public sector service delivery. As with soft systems methodology, a key question is how the method ensures that the conceptualisation of the system under study is comprehensive. How do you set about getting the whole system in the room and exploring the whole before seeking to fix any part?

The whole systems method is based upon bringing all the main stakeholders together. Wilkinson and Pedlar (1996) refer to diversity as being one of the five key ideas, including the full range of social group and departmental/professional interests. From the perspective of the ODF, Wilkinson and Pedlar are focusing on the three elements of the people dimension (stakeholder/organisational allegiance, social group and thematic interests/needs). However, there are implications arising from the complexity of this dimension, which whole systems models need to acknowledge. The many combinations mean that it will never be practical to bring all relevant interests together, and every individual inevitably embodies a multiplicity of interests. The ODF could help address this issue.

In conceptualising a district-wide system for whole systems exercises, Wilkinson and Applebee (1999:82) identify three inter-linked dimensions (diagram reproduced as Figure 7.1). Most of the ground covered in their diagram relates to the stakeholders dimension in the ODF, and there is little acknowledgement of different themes and customer groups. Wilkinson and Applebee focus on engagement with the local community, but this cannot be expressed in purely geographic terms, as the neighbourhood. Social groups (often referred to as communities of interest in regeneration work) thematic interests and organisational allegiances are also relevant to the conceptualisation of the term 'community'. A more comprehensive and integrated approach to defining 'the whole system' could be developed using the ODF, which might enhance the usefulness of whole systems methods.

Wilkinson and Applebee link whole systems approaches to wider theories about joining up public services, in their book on 'Implementing Holistic Government'. Their work is therefore also referred to in sub-section 7.6.2, on joined up government and holistic governance. To conclude on systems theory, I have suggested that the significance of the ODF to a Scientific Research Programme for the social sciences lies in its role in the representation of systems, for which it is a tool which can be used to capture the complexity of reality. In this section we have moved through from grand universal systems theories down to specific management tools derived from systems theory. At none of the levels at which systems analysis has been applied is there anything similar to the ODF in use, but there are analytical devices designed to try to capture the breadth and diversity of systems in use in soft systems methodology and whole systems events, which could be enhanced using the ODF.

**Figure 7.1 The key interlinked dimensions for the whole district-wide system
(reproduced from Wilkinson and Applebee, 1999)**



'Communication networks are the patterns of contact that are created by the flow of messages amongst communicators through time and space' (Monge and Contractor, 2003:3). Monge and Contractor have developed what they call a Multitheoretical, Multilevel (MTML) analytic framework (2003:29-77). The multilevel approach means that they test for regularities about individuals, groups of perhaps two or three people, intra-organisational groups and inter-organisational groups at the same time. The multitheoretical approach means that they test for different network properties at the same time, including information on the attributes of network nodes. Using p^* statistical network techniques, the degree of fit between network data and a succession of multitheoretical, multilevel hypotheses is tested and compared. These techniques can be used in research on a number of different social theories, including theories of self-interest and collective action, cognition, contagion, exchange and dependency, homophily and proximity, and network evolution.

The testing of theories on homophily and proximity is one of the areas where the ODF is most relevant. Network characteristics are influenced by the attributes of participants, usually on the basis that similarities attract. Combinations of attributes, eg gender and tenure, may account for patterns in network linkages. Networks also influence the development of identity and self-categorisation. Monge and Contractor draw on theories which suggest that individuals and organisations tend to characterize themselves on a handful of key dimensions. 'Often these dimensions include gender, age, race, religion, product or service sector, or other organisational demographic characteristics (such as tenure, professional affiliations, age of the industry) or membership in voluntary organisations' (Monge and Contractor, 2003:303).

It is significant that the word 'dimension' is used in this context. The ODF would provide a way of systematically grouping different attributes, distinguishing between their different characteristics and modelling different combinations of attributes. The computer packages used in network analysis would enable modelling on a multi-dimensional basis, thereby providing a means of capturing the complexity inherent in the ODF.

Network theories have been used to analyse modes of governance, leading on to policy propositions about effective governance structures. Examples of this approach

are found in the German literature, where the focus has been on the relationship between the state and civil society, and in Holland, where questions do to with effective and efficient networks for strategy development and management have been more to the fore.

From the perspective of the ODF, network theory relates closely to the stakeholder dimension. The development of network theories could usefully be informed by the analysis of stakeholder salience referred to in Chapter 5, to help identify the critical links within the network for decision-making. The reformulated service delivery version of the ODF in (Table 5.6) sees the stakeholder dimension incorporating the service deliverer, the service recipient and the other contributors of resources to the service. In each case, the thematic and social group composition needs to be identified. This would enable a sophisticated approach to the question of policy network membership which would help to make the use of network theories in new contexts, such as the evaluation of aid projects (see Davies, 2004), more rigorous.

The operation of networks is fundamental to 'joining up'. Joining up policies is dependent on the knowledge base of those formulating policies and the inclusiveness of the networks used to consult on the policy and disseminate it. Joined up working depends on the networks between agencies in service delivery, and how well they deal with the needs of customers.

Carole Johnson (2004) used network theories, mainly from the Dutch literature, to analyse joined up working in regeneration programmes and partnerships in the West Midlands, in her PhD thesis. Identifying between network structuring and game management as being the different levels of network management, she assessed the degrees of coordination and co-governance in an SRB programme, a Local Strategic Partnership and a Regeneration Zone Partnership. Johnson drew out some interesting findings, for example that a high level of coordination may be associated with a low level of co-governance. However, she did not look in detail at how networks are related to the dimensional characteristics of the programmes and partnerships. Such a perspective would enable a more rounded assessment of the constraints upon joined up working, and the reasons for the patterns of network management she found.

To conclude on network theory, it is clear from the brief references made above that it is an extremely diverse field, which is evolving very rapidly. Although none of the

branches of network theory seem to have used a dimensional approach explicitly, network analysis can incorporate all kinds of data on the attributes of individuals and organisations and the relationships between them. This means that there is much scope for modelling the ODF within a network approach.

7.5.3 Wicked problems

The term 'wicked problems' was first coined by Rittel and Webber, who were concerned to explain the apparent loss of confidence in professionals working in public services in the US (Rittel and Webber, 1973:155). They asked why the approaches to public policy in the 1960's and early 1970's, including the emphasis on goal formulation and problem definition informed by systems analysis, had failed to address public concerns. They concluded that the techniques being used were derived from the natural sciences and were designed for use on 'tame' problems, associated with closed systems. Social problems are associated with open systems, and are 'wicked', in the sense that

1. There is no definitive formulation of a wicked problem
 2. There is no 'stopping rule', that tells the planner that the solution has been found
 3. Where solutions can be identified, they are defined as good or bad, not true or false
 4. The solution to a wicked problem has subsequent repercussions over an extended period
 5. Every solution has consequences that cannot be undone – there is no 'trial run'
 6. There is no limited set of potential solutions nor limited set of operations that may be used
 7. Every problem is essentially unique
 8. Every problem can be considered to be a symptom of another problem
 9. Wicked problems can be explained in different ways, which influence the framing of the solution
 10. The planner will be blamed if they get it wrong
- (Rittel and Webber, 1973:161-167).

Rittel and Webber suggested that because of the increase in living standards in the US expectations have risen and public investments are increasingly seen as zero-sum games.

From the perspective of the ODF, part of the reason why public policy problems are 'wicked problems' is because they have to be defined across the full range of operational dimensions. This contributes to a number of the characteristics of wicked issues referred to above, including 1., 4., 6., and 7. The extent to which they can be reduced down to 'tame' problems rests on the extent to which 'system closure' can be obtained in the public intervention. If the solution to a water shortage problem is framed in terms of the replacement of water pipes, most aspects of the issue are tamed, but if the solution is to reduce water consumption it is still wicked.

There is a lot more that could be said about 'wicked problems' in relation to the ODF, but a key point is that in public policy wicked problems should be viewed as being the norm, rather than the exception. The reason why they seem to be a recent phenomenon is that the scope to reduce them down to tame problems has been reduced by heightened public sensitivities and expectations, in a context where global interdependencies have increased.

Clarke and Stewart (1997) suggested that the management of wicked issues requires holistic, not linear or partial thinking. They called for new forms of governance which eschew the single minded pursuit of objectives for a wider perspective. They endorsed Vickers' description of policy-making as the setting of governing relations or norms, concerned with the maintenance of relationships in time (Clarke and Stewart, 1997:5). The ODF could complement such an approach, as a holistic management tool to ensure that governing norms are able to capture the full range of interests in them, perhaps combined with network analysis to model relational data and explore changes over time. The full implications of 'wickedness' in public policy would be appreciated better if a dimensional approach were to be grafted on to the concept.

7.5.4 Polarity Management

Polarity Management is a management tool based on a specific theoretical understanding of the nature of problems, which has been developed by Barry Johnson and is explained in 'Polarity Management – Identifying and managing unsolvable problems' (1996). Polarity Management requires stepping back and looking at the nature of the difficulty. It involves conceptualising mutually interdependent opposites, or polarities, which appear to be contradictory but actually need to be tackled together. Examples are reducing cost *and* improving quality or

centralised coordination *and* decentralised initiatives. A 'polarity map' can be used to assist in the management of the polarities, so that strategies do not lurch from one extreme to the other (Dromgoole and Mullins, 2000:64-67).

Johnson provides two simple criteria to distinguish problems to solve from polarities to manage,

- is the difficulty ongoing?
- are there two poles which are interdependent?

If the answer to both questions is 'yes', there is a polarity to manage (Johnson, 1996:81-82). Polarity management involves identifying the upsides and downsides of each pole, and then trying to maximize the upsides of both poles and minimize the downsides, in a continual process of adjustment (Johnson, 1996:114). The definition of a polarity has some similarities with the characteristics of wicked problems (see sub-section 7.5.3 above). In particular, 'is the difficulty on-going?' equates to the second characteristic of wicked problems, that there is 'no stopping rule', in combination with the fourth characteristic, that the solution has repercussions over an extended period. Probably the most significant and all-pervading example of a polarity for public services is meeting individual needs/providing equality of service.

The polarity management method has some similarities with the ODF. Some of the examples of polarities given by Johnson can be related to one or more of the seven dimensions, such as

- centralised/decentralised (resources, function, space)
- common computer systems/customised computer systems (resources)
- cost/quality (resources, function)
- ethnicity/multi-ethnicity (customer, stakeholder) (Johnson, 1996:16 and 231).

I would suggest that polarity management could be enhanced with the perspective provided by the ODF. The ODF dimensions mean that in delivering public services there is a mass of inter-connecting polarities at play. Even within a single dimension it is possible to identify polarities, for example in simultaneously meeting the needs of different target group categories, distinguished by age or ethnic group or gender etc. Apparently simple polarities, such as centralisation and decentralisation, are in practice much more complex, because of the hierarchy of administrative levels in public service delivery. Network theory might help to extend the polarity concept to reflect this added complexity.

Polarity management also links to the concept of 'false choices', as found in the Labour Party manifesto for the 2005 General Election, and discussed in Chapter 6 'False choices' such as that between wealth creation and social justice could be framed in terms of polarities, which require constant management to maximize upsides and minimize downsides.

To conclude on polarity management, as a management tool it could help to deal with 'wicked problems' in public services. The concept of a polarity might be extended and refined through other bodies of theory, such as network analysis. Johnson's polarity management has not used a dimensional approach, although many of the polarities he uses as examples relate to different dimensions in the ODF. The ODF might therefore be able to contribute something distinctive to enhance polarity management as a tool for use in public services.

7.5.5 Realist Social Theory

Amongst the social theories inspired by critical realism, one of the most influential is Margaret Archer's morphogenetic approach (Archer, 1995). She used Bhaskar's Transformational Model of Social Action (TMSA) to develop a model for conceptualising social change (morphogenesis) or lack of social change (morphostasis) over time. In 'Realist Social Theory: the morphogenetic approach' (Archer, 1995:160), she superimposed her model over Sayer's generic realist method (see Figure 3.1). The complementarity of these seminal realist theories provides a basis for others writing from a similar ideological position, such as myself, to develop them further. Based on my earlier work, I would suggest that the ODF and the other theoretical frameworks I have developed provide a basis for doing this.

Archer's morphogenetic cycle could be adapted for use in public policy contexts using the ODF. Potentially, her model might be helpful in identifying why some interventions work in achieving policy objectives and others don't. In developing her model to identify the reasons for morphogenesis or for morphostasis, the ODF could be used in conjunction with the different types of emergent property she uses in her explanatory framework (Archer, 1995:294-344). The role of different types of 'agent' and 'actor' in Archer's theories and the 'double' and 'triple' morphogenesis arising from social interaction (Archer, 1995:271-293) could be used in conjunction with the conceptualisation of stakeholder roles in public service delivery, in the ODF (see

Section 5.2.4). Archer's theory is strong on the role of some operational dimensions, eg time, but weaker on the incorporation of others, such as space (see Section 5.3.6). The ODF would help to adapt her approach so it balanced out the role of the different dimensions.

Another area of realist social policy which would have a key influence upon the new Scientific Research Programme would be Pawson and Tilley's work. Their *context + mechanism = outcome* formula would be adapted using the critique contained in Appendix 2, which relates it to the management processes/social processes perspective I developed in Chapter 3. Recently, Pawson has been applying his realist evaluation approach to the issues of evidence-based policy, and specifically to systematic reviews –this will be covered in section 7.6.6.

To conclude, realist social theory has not thus far used a dimensional approach when applied to public policy. The ODF would therefore be able to contribute something new to this branch of critical realism. The basis for developing a new approach would be to start from Sayer's structures of causal explanation and Archer's morphogenetic cycle and then use insights from Archer's and from Pawson and Tilley's work in conjunction with the ODF.

7.5.6 Dimensional Modelling for Data Warehousing

Data warehousing is concerned with the manipulation, storage and use of information held by an organisation in computerised databases. Dimensional modelling is a technique developed by Ralph Kimball and colleagues in the US, whereby information is ordered to enable it to be used to best advantage to inform the improvement of business processes. Data warehousing is used primarily in the private sector, and is orientated towards financial performance. It has its own specialised terminology, and makes conceptual assumptions which have positivist underpinnings, such as a distinction between 'facts' and 'dimensions'. Nevertheless, there are ways in which aspects of the technique might be used selectively to inform the SRP for a holistic approach to public policy based on critical realism, and dimensional modelling for data warehousing could itself be enhanced using the ODF.

One of the elements of dimensional modelling which could be of assistance in technical terms concerns the computer programmes developed to handle multi-dimensional data. As with the technical capabilities developed in association with

network theories, dimensional modelling may provide methods to enable the complexity of the ODF to be matched by multi-dimensional databases

The dimensional design process has four steps

1. Select the business process
2. Declare the grain
3. Choose the dimensions
4. Identify the facts (Kimball and Ross, 2002:32-38).

Step 2, 'Declare the grain' is of particular relevance to the use of the ODF. It is concerned with the units in which the dimensions can be measured. For example, time can be measured in units from seconds through to billions of years, and can be ordered in many different ways, eg calendar year/fiscal year, weekdays/weekend, holiday/non holiday. These distinctions are particularly important in retailing, the example used by Kimball and Ross to illustrate the dimensional design process, but they are also relevant to public policy. The way in which time is best represented is determined by other dimensions. For example, in regeneration work there is frequently a need to use both calendar years and financial years, because of the different requirements of European Union and UK funding programmes.

The grain of the analysis is particularly significant for the people dimension in the ODF. As indicated in Section 4.4, the choice as to whether to pitch the ODF at the individual or the stakeholder group level is one which needs to be made in every application of the ODF. In dimensional modelling terms, this is an example of 'declaring the grain'.

7.5.7 A Scientific Research Programme on a holistic approach to public policy theory, based on critical realism

As indicated in Section 7.2, my aim is to present an outline of a Scientific Research Programme (SRP), based on the insights from systems theory, network theory, the concept of 'wicked problems', polarity management, realist social theory and dimensional modelling (data warehousing). The ODF is an integral part of this SRP, deeply ingrained into the underpinning philosophy.

It starts from an objective ontology, that the world is composed of interlocking systems and networks. The building blocks for human systems are individuals, who

have social group characteristics, transient needs and organisational allegiances, and relate to other people in society in complex ways, captured in essence through the critical realist Transformational Model of Social Action. Human activities can at their simplest be represented through input-output models, but the mass of interconnected activities taking place over space and time mean that a linear analytical approach is unable to start to capture the complexity of society. The difficulties in analysis are increased still further by the subjective epistemology which is associated with a critical realist philosophy.

Public services involve management processes on behalf of the state, which are in some ways distinct from other processes going on in society. They can therefore be represented as systems in their own right, as long as the open nature of these systems is an integral part of the approach. Public services deal with inherently 'wicked problems', which can also be represented as polarities. Conceptualising such problems and polarities in dimensional terms is useful when trying to represent them. By recognising the complexity of the operating environment and the delivery of public services themselves, the inherent fallibility of public policy programmes is recognised and the scope for unintended consequences can be acknowledged and managed. Systems theory and network theory offer not only high-level theories but also practical management tools, such as soft systems analysis and whole systems approaches, which can be enhanced by the incorporation of the ODF.

Public policy is distinct from many other human activities in the imperative to join up different activities with each other, which requires a holistic approach. The SRP explains why joining up is so difficult. At least by recognising the complexity of public service provision, using the ODF, an attempt to represent the whole system can be made and the critical issues for joining up addressed, by identifying what links are the most important. Network theory and dimensional modelling techniques used in data warehousing may be able to offer a way of representing the ODF in a computerised form. An example would be the development of models on the density of networks, as a measure of joining up.

Finally, the Scientific Research Programme (SRP) as it stands is only concerned with the right side of Wilber's four quadrant model. It therefore needs to link to other SRP's which cover the left hand side of the quadrant from a similar underpinning philosophical perspective.

7.6 Developing a practice-based consensus about the ODF

This section is concerned with areas of practice, mainly concerned with public policy, where theories have been developed which could be enhanced using the ODF. The scope for application of the ODF is more immediate in some cases than it is for the theory-based starting points covered in the last section. Some of the examples of practice-based starting points will be followed up in the next chapter, on the pragmatism theory of truth. In some cases there is a one-to-one correspondence with an application outlined in the following chapter. For example, the discussion on Sustainable Development is followed in Chapter 8 with a management tool for assessing sustainability. In other cases, the link is more general, with practical applications covering strategy development and implementation issues which relate to a number of different practice-based starting points.

As with the theory-based starting points in Section 7.5, it is difficult to decide in which order to cover the different sub-sections, because of the degree of cross-over. First to be covered will be attempts to join up service delivery, followed by joined up government and holistic governance. Then there is a section on implementation studies, followed by impact/audit appraisal and sustainable development. Finally, I will cover evidence-based policy and theories of change.

7.6.1 Joining up Public Service Delivery

One of the areas of public service delivery which could be enhanced using the ODF has already been covered – the analysis of the organisation of Social Services Departments by Linda Challis (see section 4.3.2). There are other examples which have not embraced a dimensional approach to the same extent that Challis did, but have used the practice of joined up working as a basis for developing theory.

Challis was writing in the late 1980's, when local authority departments, including Social Services, were less integrated into wider corporate structures than is the case now. Recently, theories about the practice of coordinating services to the public have been based around the partnership concepts and structures which now influence all public service delivery. Partnership structures are linked to the quest for 'joined up delivery', since that term was introduced in the late 1990's. An example of this approach is 'Coordinating Services for Included Children – Joined up Action' by Caroline Roaf, published in 2002. A special needs teacher and a magistrate in Oxford

since the 1970's, Roaf became involved in voluntary sector initiatives to challenge the lack of coordinated provision, first for difficult-to-place adults (Elmore I) and then for children and young people who were 'slipping through the net' because no single agency was able to coordinate a response to the range of problems they suffered from (Elmore II). The book aims to develop theories on joined up services, by generalising from the experience of the projects in Oxford (Roaf, 2002:xi-xii).

Although Roaf does not explicitly use a dimensional approach, it is possible to see all the operational dimensions featured in some way in her models of inter- and intra-agency cooperation. For example, the distinction between 'upstream' and 'downstream' work depending on whether the child is at risk of developing problems or has reached the situation where those problems are manifest, has elements of the social group, function and time dimensions. The version of the ODF in Table 5.5 is particularly easy to relate to Roaf's work, because her analysis is based on stakeholders. Comparing Table 5.5 to her model underlines some of the real-world complexities which are involved in extending the ODF, from the act of delivery of a service, to the coming together of different service deliverers in an inter-agency scenario. The ODF could be used to structure Roaf's model slightly differently, and perhaps cover some of the complexities that are not covered fully in her analysis. For example, Roaf's approach is centred on the individual child, but there is little discussion of the diversity of children's needs, which could be explored through the social group and theme dimensions in the ODF.

The need to respond to the full range of problems of a particular group in society is also the theme of a recent paper by Martin Roche, on joined up policy responses to address homelessness (Roche, 2004:761-772). Roche refers to the multi-dimensionality of the problems faced by homeless people and the various different agencies involved in responding to those needs and maps some of services that might be involved (Figure 7.2). There are a number of themes in Figure 7.2, eg substance misuse, mental health, and one customer group, asylum-seekers and refugees. If the multi-dimensionality of the issues are to be systematically covered there are other ways in which customer groups might be identified, eg by age, gender, ethnic background, and other themes, eg physical health. It might be that Roche has undertaken an analysis of all the dimensions and prioritised the seven 'needs', but if this has not been done systematically it would add credibility to the research to undertake such an exercise using the ODF. In addition, Roche often refers to the difficulty in addressing the changing nature of the needs faced by

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Figure 7.2 Provision related to homelessness
(reproduced from Roche, 2004)

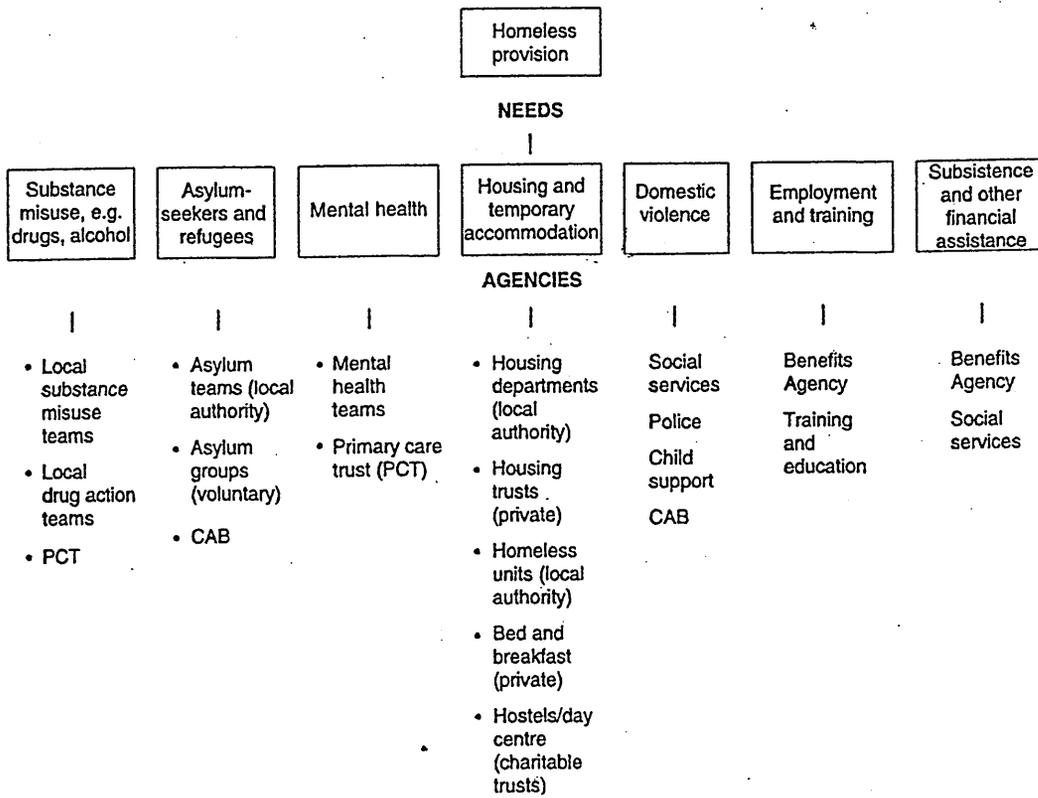
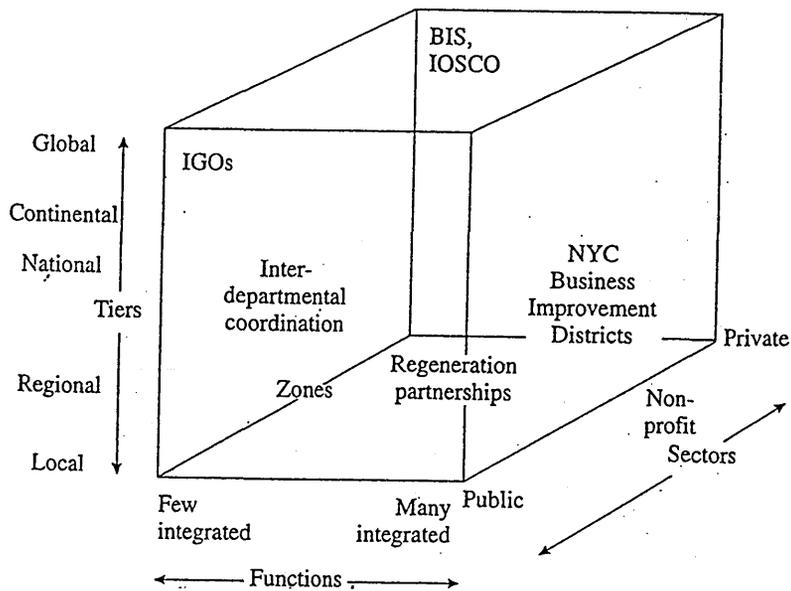


Figure 7.3 The dimensions of holistic working
(reproduced from Perri 6 et al, 2002)



homeless people. The division between thematic interests, which change over time, and social group, defined by characteristics which are usually fixed, such as gender, would be a helpful analytical device in this context.

The two examples used above are only illustrative of the volume of work, some of it published and some not, relating to the joining up of services 'on the ground' to address wicked problems. They cover both intra- and inter-agency working and stress the importance of networking across organisational boundaries. In relation to the questions posed in section 7.2, the examples use similar concepts to the ODF sometimes implicitly and sometimes explicitly, but they do not have an overarching framework on the dimensions for 'joining up'. In my view, these examples would benefit from use of the ODF at the outset of the analysis, to ensure that in attempting to coordinate services the full range of dimensions is appreciated and informed decisions taken on where to focus attention. The examples also draw attention to the influence of organisational culture on attempts to join up services, and hence the limits of an analytical approach – it has to be complemented by an understanding of the 'left hand' side in Wilber's four quadrant model (see Section 4.2.6)

7.6.2 Joined up Government and Holistic Governance

Contrasting with the 'bottom up' theories on joining up services developed at the level of service delivery are 'top down' theories, which start from analysis of the role of the state in managing systems of governance. With the strong political commitment to the new concept of 'joining up' in the New Labour Government in 1997, there have been instances of theory and practice being closely linked, although the shifting sands of political commitment to particular concepts and catchphrases have meant that this relationship is often transitory and messy.

In Section 6.4, I used Ling's fourfold clustering of dimensions of joined up working to record the policy initiatives from the early New Labour years. Ling proposed this as a pragmatic typology, rather than a theoretically constructed categorization, so it would be useful to see how his four dimensions relate to the ODF (see Table 7.2 below)

Table 7.2 Ling's dimensions of joined up working and the Operational Dimensions Framework

<i>Ling's dimensions</i>	<i>Concerns</i>	<i>Main Operational Dimensions from ODF</i>
New types of organisation	Culture and values, information management and training	Stakeholder, Resources
New ways of working across organisations	Shared leadership, pooled budgets, merged structures, joint teams	Stakeholder, Resources
New ways of delivering services.	Joint consultation with clients, developing a shared client focus, 'one stop shops' for service users	Function, Social Group, Theme, Space, Stakeholder
New accountabilities and incentives	Public Service Agreements, performance measures, shared regulation	Stakeholder, Function

Source Ling, 2002

As one might expect, the stakeholder dimension from the ODF features every time, as the focus is on organisations. Despite his admittance that his typology is a pragmatic one, there is a logic to the divisions which Ling has developed, but it might be used in conjunction with the ODF to get a more comprehensive approach to the complexities of joined up working.

The complexities of working at different administrative levels has been highlighted by Cowell and Martin (2003). Their research into the local government modernisation agenda, drew attention to the conflicting pressures in practice for vertical integration between central and local government and horizontal joined up working at the local level. Like Ling's analysis, this study focuses on the organisational complexities of joined up working and the power struggles between different stakeholders which lie beneath the surface.

The theory of joined up working in the early days of New Labour was associated with the 'think-tank', Demos. They also supported one of the main theoretical developments in recent years on holistic governance, 'Towards Holistic Governance – the new reform agenda', by Perri 6, Diana Leat, Kimberley Seltzer and Gerry Stoker, published in 2002. For these authors, holistic government is characterised by mutually reinforcing objectives and means, as opposed to joined up government where objectives and means are merely consistent.

Fragmented governance is identified as the problem to which holism is the solution (6 et al., 2002:28). They propose that holistic working needs to bring coherence at all the key levels of activity - policy, regulation, service provision and scrutiny - and across three basic dimensions (see Figure 7.3 on Page 214). The three dimensions cover attributes of organisations – tiers, sectors and functions (which in this case is similar to the theme dimension in the ODF). While 6 et al refer to some of the Operational Dimensions not covered in Figure 7.3, such as resources, customers and time, elsewhere within their book, they do not set out anything similar to the ODF to acknowledge the complexities of joined up working.

6 et al acknowledge the inevitability of trade offs between objectives under conditions of limited resources, so that there might be an integrated response to the needs of the client, but this could be at the expense of integration within a particular locality. Similarly, there may be trade offs between different administrative arrangements, so integration between the public sector and private/voluntary organisations might be at the expense of integration within the public sector itself (6 et al., 2002:56- 57). In evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of holism, they suggest that dilemmas of targeting are endemic in all public management and social policy models, and are not unique to holistic strategies. They are not a reason to abandon attempts at coordinating and integrating services (6 et al., 2002:66). This might be so, but it suggests that a tool such as the ODF is needed to identify the full extent of the trade-offs that must be addressed in working towards holistic governance.

While holistic governance as conceptualised by 6 et al. (2002) may be a worthy aspiration, it is difficult to see it as fully attainable, except temporarily in very limited situations. In the analysis of the hurdles to holistic governance, they identify some of the trade-offs between operational dimensions which inevitably limit agreement on objectives and limit the extent to which administrative systems can capture the complexities of the real world. In contrast, their tropes model of inter-organisational coordination is based on only two variables. An alternative approach would be to use a more comprehensive model, incorporating all the operational dimensions in the ODF as a starting point. I would also contend that joining up initiatives is ambitious enough a goal, and that very seldom can mutually reinforcing goals and means be present to enable holistic governance to become a reality.

Wilkinson and Applebee's 'Implementing holistic government – joined up action on the ground' also sets a policy agenda for change, although their focus is more on the impact at community level, than the national perspective of 6 et al. Their eight, inter-connected recommendations for holistic governance are concerned with closing the gap between 'top down' and 'bottom up' and addressing the horizontal connections between communities and between agencies, and comprise

- i. Developing 'middle ground' activity
- ii. Adjusting regeneration funding regimes to be more community-led
- iii. Developing empowered multi-agency front-line teams
- iv. Action research and development and learning
- v. Social housing policy to build participation
- vi. Simpler and more coordinated planning systems
- vii. Preventative action, tackling of systemic causation
- viii. Beacon Status to be linked to holistic outcomes, working with local communities (Wilkinson and Applebee, 1999:151-162)

The ODF would provide a tool to enable these proposals on connecting public services so they engage better at community level to be related to the wider context for public service delivery and the complexities this brings with it. The impact of all dimensions upon delivery needs to be taken account of, otherwise organisational restructuring or different ways of working will merely ensure better joining up in and across some dimensions but less joined up working in and across others. For example, if services are to be neighbourhood-focussed, there still needs to be a mechanism for specialist customer needs to be coordinated across the organisation as a whole.

In summary, then, in terms of the questions posed in section 7.2

- the theories of joined up working and holistic governance developed in the last few years incorporate many of the individual insights which are reflected in the ODF. The term dimensions has also been used, albeit never in as broad a way as suggested by the ODF
- however, the wide view on the constraints on joined up working implicit in the ODF has not been systematically utilised when developing models for holistic governance. For example, the constraints on joined up working will vary

- depending on which of the dimensions are used as the driving force for strategies and structures, in any given situation
- there is therefore much scope for utilizing the ODF in a complementary manner to existing theory on joined up and holistic working. In particular, the ODF could be used to develop a stakeholder-based model of joining up, using the insights in the articles by Ling (2002) and Cowell and Martin (2003).

7.6.3 Implementation Studies

While the ODF includes the notion of inputs and outputs as being inevitably bound up with the delivery of a service, it is not wedded to a staged approach to the policy cycle. It does, however, place a focus on implementation, which is an area of public policy which has had increasing attention, since the early 1970's, when Derthick and Pressman and Wildavsky initially identified the gap between public policy intentions and what actually happens 'on the ground', using examples from the USA (Parsons, 1995:463-464).

The third edition of Pressman and Wildavsky's 'Implementation', published in 1984, incorporates many of the insights from the 'bottom up' theories and promotes the idea of implementation and evaluation as learning (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984:xv-xviii). In this edition they refer to an article by a practitioner-turned researcher, Gordon Chase, who had been responsible for change programmes in public services in New York City. Chase lists 44 'factors for consideration' in implementing a human services programme (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984:x-xii). Many of these factors reflect the complexities of Operational Dimensions, and the correspondence between the 44 factors and the ODF has been mapped in Table 7.3. While the 44 factors go into detail on some dimensions, eg resources and stakeholders, they fail to cover others, such as the effect of the space and time dimensions on implementation. The ODF translates into a checklist for identifying any factors which might have been neglected in the design of a change management programme before it reaches the implementation stage, and a monitoring tool for use during implementation.

Table 7.3 The 44 factors for consideration in implementing a programme, and their correspondence to the ODF

(from Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984, Px-xii, reproduced from Chase, G, Implementing a public services program: how hard will it be, Public Policy 27 (Fall, 1979): 385-436)

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Correspondence to dimensions in the ODF</i>
A. Difficulties arising from Operational Demands	
1. People to be served	
(a) Number of client transactions	People dimensions
(b) Ease of reaching client	People dimensions/time
2. Nature of services	
(a) Number of discrete functions	Function dimension
(b) Complexity of discrete functions	
(c) Coordination among functions	
(d) Replication	
3. Likelihood and costliness of distortions or irregularities	
(a) Involving clients	People dimensions
(b) Involving services	Function dimension
4. Controllability of Program	
(a) Measurability	Function dimension
(b) Uncontrollable critical elements	Any dimension
B Difficulties arising from Nature and Availability of Natural Resources	
1. Money	
(a) Flexibility	Resources (funds)
(b) Obtaining additional funding	
2. Personnel	
(a) Nature of personnel in place	Resources (staffing)
(b) Numbers, kinds and quality needed	
(c) Availability of personnel in market	
(d) Attractiveness of program to personnel	
3. Space	
(a) Nature of the current facilities	Resources (land and property)
(b) Availability of facilities	
(c) Special problems in acquiring or using space	
4. Supplies and technical equipment	
(a) Availability and usability	Resources (raw materials and equipment)
(b) Importance of technology	
C. Difficulties arising from the need to share authority	
1. Overhead Agencies	
(a) Number of transactions	Stakeholder/function
(b) Likelihood of favourable response	
2. Other Line Agencies	
(a) Extent of involvement	Stakeholder/function
(b) Critical nature of involvement	
(c) Likelihood of harmonious working conditions	
(d) Ability to pinpoint responsibility	

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Correspondence to dimensions in the ODF</i>
3. Elected politicians	
(a) Capacity to help or hurt	Stakeholder
(b) Inclination to help or hurt	
4. Higher levels of Government	
(a) Extent of authority	Stakeholder
(b) Number of transactions	
(c) Nature of politics	
(d) Likelihood of favourable response	
5. Private sector Providers	
(a) Need	Stakeholder/function
(b) Availability	
(c) Control	
(d) Political problems	
6. Special interest Groups	
(a) Kinds and inclinations	Stakeholder
(b) Strength	
(c) Likelihood of helping or hurting	
7. The Press	
(a) Level of Visibility	Stakeholder
(b) Power of the Press	
(c) View of administration	
(d) Controversial dimensions	

While the field of implementation studies has a long pedigree in the US, it is less well developed in the UK (Schofield, 2001). It has not hitherto taken an explicit dimensional approach, but there are obvious uses of the ODF as a design and monitoring tool, to ensure that the implementation process does not overlook any key dimension. This might well be as part of a stakeholder analysis exercise, and will be easier if the prior policy-making process has taken a dimensional approach. There is therefore much scope for utilizing the ODF in a complementary manner to existing theory on implementation.

7.6.4 Impact Assessment and Audit techniques

In recent decades there has been a growth in analytical techniques, which fall into two main camps. First there are tools which are used to identify the needs and aspirations of communities, as a prelude to action to improve conditions. Amongst the techniques which fall into this broad umbrella are needs assessments, social audits and community profiles (Hawtin, Hughes and Percy-Smith, 1994:3-4). The differences between these three tools rest mainly upon the depth and type of analysis and the extent to which they involve local communities. Social Audits tend to involve

a variety of organisations and look beyond community needs towards the overall health of a community, being concerned with the interplay of public services and their effects on housing, employment, the environment etc. Community profiles go one stage further, in that they are often initiated and undertaken by the community (Hawtin et al., 1994:4).

The dimensional approach has much to offer in helping needs assessments, social audits and community profiles to be comprehensive and systematic. In practice there is often an attempt to cover one or more dimensions in depth, for example themes or customer groups, but without recognising the full range of dimensions and the interplay between them. For example, Hawtin et al. ask the question 'what is the community', identifying that it may cover a geographical area, or might be defined according to age, gender, ethnicity, nationality, shared problem, religion etc. (Hawtin et al., 1994:33). Based on the ODF, a community ought ideally to be defined using all seven dimensions, if the analysis of needs and aspirations is to be rigorous and sensitive to difference.

The second set of tools are concerned with impact assessment, usually pre-fixed with one of the themes, such as environmental impact assessment, social impact assessment or health impact assessment. There tend to be complex methodologies built up around these techniques, often because they are linked to regulations to ensure that impacts are identified and mitigated. Social Impact Assessment (SIA) is often viewed as an umbrella concept, being concerned with all impacts on communities.

In 'The International Handbook of Social Impact Assessment – conceptual and methodological advances' (2003), Henk Becker and Frank Vanclay bring together a collection of articles about the development of Social Impact Assessment as a field of practice. Comparing various conceptualisations of Social Impact Assessment, they note that recently SIA has moved beyond predicting the negative impacts of projects to become, at its most ambitious, a philosophy about development and democracy. This is reflected in Vanclay's definition

'SIA is a process of analysing (predicting, evaluating and reflecting) and managing the intended and unintended consequences on the human environment of planned interventions (policies, programmes, plans, projects) and any social change processes invoked by those interventions so as to bring about a more sustainable and equitable biophysical and human environment.(Vanclay, 2003:2).

This very broad definition of SIA seems similar to what one would come up with when translating the Operational Dimensions Framework into an appraisal tool. (In Chapter 8 I will include this as one of the practical applications of the ODF). 'Planned interventions' can be viewed as analogous to 'services to the public' in the ODF. The ODF provides the framework within which theories for analysing and managing planned interventions would be applied. The final part of the definition is about the goals of an appraisal tool, which goes beyond the stated remit of the ODF as a general descriptive theory. More detail on how this definition of SIA is operationalised is provided in the chapter in the Handbook by Van Schooten, Vanclay and Sloodweg, on 'Conceptualising social change processes and social impacts' (2003:74-91).

Although the authors say that SIA reflects the objectives and interests of the observer, from the standpoint of the ODF the basic categorisation seems to fail to recognise the inter-dimensional linkages, eg between theme and customer dimensions, and emphasize different dimensions over others without sufficient justification, such as

- including gender as a full category but leaving other social groupings at best to sub-categories elsewhere
- being weak on the impact across space of an intervention
- being weak on the impact over time of an intervention

The ODF could therefore be used in conjunction with the SIA methods to produce a more comprehensive and logical approach to social impacts.

Other chapters in the Handbook are concerned with the integration of different assessment models. Therefore Sloodweg, Vanclay and van Schooten look at integrating environmental and social impact assessment (2003:56-73) and Rattle and Kwiatkowski are concerned with integrating health and social impact assessment (2003:92-107). The ODF provides a model for a more comprehensive approach to impact assessment, which might complement the work which starts from specific regulations and impact assessment tools and attempts to unify them.

As well as the impact assessment methods which start from a thematic basis, there are also impact assessments for social groups. In particular, there is a duty on public authorities in the UK under the Race Equality legislation to carry out Race Equality Impact Assessments on any new policies they are going to introduce. The

requirements of the legislation and a step by step guide are found on the Campaign for Racial Equality website, www.cre.gov.uk, viewed in October, 2005. The ODF provides a basis for integrating thematic and social group impact assessments.

In summary, in relation to the three questions posed in Section 7.2

- there is a lot of common ground between the ODF and the various impact assessment and audit tools, although the conceptual tools tend to be different.
- seldom do the impact assessment and audit tools use an explicit dimensional approach, although the tools have often needed to explore the range of themes, customer groups etc in order to try to take a comprehensive approach within their terms of reference. The impact assessment tools, in particular, tend to have started from a specific theme, eg environment, health, rather than take a coordinated approach to all impacts, although Race Equality Impact Assessment is an example of a social group based method. Social impact analysis aims to take a more comprehensive approach, but does not always recognise the dimensional complexity of the world
- the impact assessment and audit tools include explicit aims and hence go beyond the scope of the ODF. There are complementarities which could usefully be explored further.

7.6.5 Sustainable development

Sustainability has become increasingly used at different levels of government – global, European, national and local – as a key concept behind public policy. Thus in England the Government we have a national ‘Sustainable Communities Plan’ (ODPM, 2004).

In the UK, the Government’s the definition of sustainable development is

‘meeting four key objectives at the same time in the UK and the world as a whole:

- social progress which recognises the needs of everyone;
 - effective protection of the environment;
 - prudent use of natural resources;
 - maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth’.
- (‘A Better Quality of Life’, UK Government, 1999:8).

Blair and Evans (2004) highlight the economic, social and environmental dimensions to this definition, and suggest that in practice sustainable approaches are those

which tie together all the dimensions in a joined up way, and give an example from Newark where this has been achieved. They sum up the challenge of sustainability as resolving the tension between ultimate ends (a good quality of life for everyone) and ultimate means (maintaining the life-support capacity of the earth). The UK Government's Sustainable Development Strategy, launched in March 2005 has a goal for sustainable development which is similar to this, 'to enable all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life without compromising the quality of life of future generations' (UK Government, 2005:7).

While the goal of sustainable development is straightforward, the indicators to measure it are not. The UK Sustainable Development Strategy refers to 68 of them. Table 7.4 shows how the different indicators relate to the original seven dimensions in the Operational Dimensions Framework.

The 68 targets cover huge swathes of Government Policy. Nevertheless there are some omissions, such as no reference to community cohesion/cultural and ethnic identities. The ODF provides a method of mapping the indicators and perhaps establishing links between them to find ways of joining them up. Such a process could potentially incorporate all the different areas of impact assessment, referred to in section 7.6.4, and merge sustainability into a single impact assessment exercise.

In summary, in relation to the three questions posed in Section 7.2

- there is a lot of common ground between the ODF and the concept of sustainability, although the main 'dimensions' used in definitions of sustainability are thematic ones, eg economic, environmental and social.
- the indicators of sustainability are diverse, and could be systematically related to each other using the ODF, and then themselves be 'joined up' to encourage joined up working in public policy.
- the ODF therefore provides a tool which could be used in conjunction with the UK Sustainable Development Strategy to make it easier to focus on what is needed to deliver it in a joined up manner (see Chapter 8 for a case study on this).

Table 7.4 Indicators of sustainable development and the Operational Dimensions Framework

Operational Dimensions	Examples of Indicators
1. Resources	13 Resource Use Energy Supply, eg 4 Renewable Energy 25 Land Recycling
2. Function	5 Household Energy Use Emissions from different industrial sectors, eg 10 Manufacturing 33 Productivity
3. Social Group	44 Young adults not in employment, education or training Poverty for different groups, 43 Childhood, 45 Pensioner 56 How children get to school
4. Theme	21 Biodiversity conservation 38 Crime and 39 Fear of crime 40 Employment 49 Health Inequality 62 Housing conditions 65 Local Environmental Quality
5. Stakeholders	37 Active Community Participation
6. Space	66 Satisfaction in local area 67 UK International Assistance
7. Time	Most targets are expressed in a quantitative measure at a point in the future

7.6.6 Evidence-based Policy and Theories of Change

Basing policies on evidence of ‘what works’ was one of the core features of the drive to modernise government following the election of the New Labour government in 1997. There are a number of initiatives both within the Government machinery itself and amongst the research community to develop evidence-based policy (Nutley, Davies and Walter, 2002:10-11). Within Government the ‘Adding it up’ initiative led by the Cabinet Office and the Treasury has sought to introduce ‘knowledge pools’ to inform policy-making and improve skills in interpreting, using and applying evidence. In 2001, the Economic and Social Research Council set up the UK Centre for Evidence-based Policy and Practice (www.evidencenetwork.org), which aims to

- improve the accessibility, quality and usefulness of evidence
- develop methods of appraising and summarising research relevant to policy and practice

- inform and advise those in policy-making roles, through its dissemination function.

The drive towards evidence based policy has led to increasing emphasis being placed upon evaluation studies, and the methods for transferring lessons from one context to another. The focus on evaluation is needed to address the issue that as the increasing complexity of social systems progressively undermines notions of certainty in social knowledge it simultaneously raises the stakes in relation to rational guidance of those systems (Sanderson, 2002:19). However, in practice there are many different ways of evaluating programmes, and many different stakeholder perspectives on how the results are used (Institute of Local Government Studies, 2005).

From the outset, the political constraints and practical limitations of evidence based policy were recognised (Solesbury, 2001:7-10). The political interest in evidence based policy came at a time when the limitations of traditional research methods, such as Random Controlled Trials have been highlighted and new evaluation methods/ developmental tools have been introduced (Sanderson, 2002:4-7, Kings Fund, 2004:9-11). Through a secondment to the ESRC UK Centre for Evidence-based Policy and Practice, Ray Pawson has been at the forefront in the introduction of new methods into evidence-based policy. In two working papers he provided a critique of existing approaches to systematic review, and proposed a new 'realist synthesis' (Pawson, 2001A and 2001B). Later on, he has produced a book, 'Evidence-based Policy: A Realist Perspective', in which he elaborates on realist synthesis, and provides several case studies (Pawson, 2006).

Pawson draws attention to the significance of abstraction in policy formation and evaluation, for example, in describing the targets for intervention, eg the 'individual' or 'the area', and the interactions between different categories of 'stakeholder' (2006:78). The ODF provides a useful tool for establishing the basis for abstraction, which then feeds into the comparison of different instances where mechanisms and contexts result in outcomes. Since the basis for abstraction is critical to the development of programme theories from the evidence, the ODF would be a useful tool for Pawson's realist synthesis. In his article on realist synthesis, Pawson (2001B) pulled out examples of incentives from a number of different policy areas, identified by theme, eg transport, housing, education. The ODF would help to theorise about the relationships between themes, using the analysis in Section 5.2 and ensure that the comparison of case studies was based not only on one dimension, but

recognised the significance of other dimensions for developing programme theories. The point made in Appendix 2 also needs to be taken into account, that policy outcomes need to be viewed as the interaction between management processes and social processes, to get over the potential limitations of the context + mechanism = outcome formula. In his description of the various incentive schemes, and their sometimes perverse effects, Pawson is, in effect, concerned with these interactions. In his 2006 book, Pawson is centrally concerned about the role of evidence in policy-making. He concludes that its role is primarily one of enlightenment, 'designed to speak directly to the choices that have to be made in devising or reforming a programme' (Pawson, 2006:180). This idea is traced back to the ideas of Carol Weiss in the United States, who was a key figure in the development of the 'theories of change' concept. Although Pawson draws sparingly from the theories of change literature, I feel there is much to be gained from relating his ideas on evidence-based policy to theories of change, also adding further ideas from the ODF.

The theories of change concept was developed by Carol Weiss and other evaluation specialists in the US, whose work since the 1970's on incorporating theories into evaluation exercises culminated in a 1995 publication by the Aspen Institute, entitled 'New Approaches to Evaluating Comprehensive Community Initiatives'. In her contribution to the book, Weiss hypothesized that a key reason complex programmes are so difficult to evaluate is that the assumptions that inspire them are poorly articulated. She argued that stakeholders of complex community initiatives are typically unclear about how the expected impacts will be achieved, and the series of steps over time which are involved (Weiss, 1995:67-69). Weiss described a process for developing theories of change, but acknowledged that the process would encounter problems, including theorising interventions, measuring effects, testing theories and interpreting the transferability of the results. (1995:87-89). Volume 2 of 'New Approaches to Evaluating Comprehensive Community Initiatives' dealt with many of the issues do with theory, measurement and analysis which have to be addressed in practical uses of the model (Fulbright-Anderson, Kubisch and Connell, 1998).

The key to the ToC method is the conceptual framework used to model change processes. It is recognised that theories of change for CCI's (which are by definition spatial concepts) must necessarily be complex, because they

- have multiple strands (economic, political, and social)

- operate at many levels (community, institutional, personal network, family and individual)
- are co-constructed in a collaborative process by diverse stakeholders
- evolve over the course of the initiative (Connell and Kubisch, 1998:16).

From the perspective of the ODF, these categories cover the theme, stakeholder and time dimensions. To fully specify a theory of change, other dimensions, ie resources, functions, social group would also be included. However, this would make the picture too complex unless the programme theory was able to cut through to a few key ideas, in the way that realist synthesis aims to do.

Connell and Kubisch provide hypothetical theories of change, using the examples of community building and educational reform, in the form of grids for different 'levels' (ie community, organisational/institutional, personal network/family and individual) over time (1998:24-27). While the grid is a useful device for operationalising the theory of change approach, it fails to capture the dimensional complexity of the context for CCI's. Therefore, the ODF could enhance the theories of change approach.

In 2004 the Aspen Institute in the US and the Kings Fund in the UK issued linked publications on the extent to which spatially-targeted social programmes in the UK and CCI's in the US are really evidence-based and how far evaluations are building knowledge and learning for the future, arising from concerns that after many years of implementing such programmes understanding of 'what works' is limited. The publications were informed by case studies and a transatlantic seminar series. The two publications contain a wide range of recommendations on building knowledge, developing a learning culture and integrating the perspectives of different participants (Coote, Allen and Woodhead, 2004:51-53, Auspos and Kubisch, 2004:26-27). The reports broadly support a theories of change method. The suggestions made above about how the ODF might contribute to a strengthening of the theories of change approach would fit in with the report recommendations. For example, I would suggest that the difficulties in identifying what is transferable from evaluations would be assisted by the use of realist synthesis, informed by the ODF, to meet the need, identified in the Kings Fund report to put evidence in its context.

In terms of the three questions posed in Section 7.2,

- evidence-based policy and practice has not thus far used a dimensional approach explicitly, although the narrative review technique has some similarities with the ODF
- conventional approaches to evidence-based policy have been subject to critique from a realist perspective, while there are real concerns about the impact of policy interventions, for example, about Comprehensive Community Initiatives in the United States
- the combination of realist synthesis and the theories of change model, both informed by the ODF offers much scope for developing a rigorous, theory-laden approach to evidence based policy

7.7 Summary

The chapter has attempted to identify to what extent there are gaps in mainstream public policy theory which could be filled using the ODF. There have been two main parts to the analysis, covering the extent to which the ODF

- is part of existing theories which have already achieved a degree of consensus
- has the potential in the future to achieve consensus, in conjunction with branches of theory with which it has commonalities.

While no existing theories cover exactly the same ground as the ODF, there are two influential branches of theory which take a dimensional approach – classical administration theory in the US and area regeneration theory in the UK (see section 7.4). The ODF can be promoted as an enhancement of the existing corpus of theory in each case. In classical administration theory the 'systems of organisation' were originally mis-specified, from the perspective of the ODF. In area regeneration, the dimensions have always been viewed as alternatives for programme design, rather than elements to be built into it. The development of a consensus around the ODF in these circumstances rests on the extent to which those who currently lead in the development of the branches of theory might be persuaded of the benefits of the enhancements arising from the ODF.

The existing branches of theory which take a dimensional approach do not share the underpinning critical realist philosophy of the ODF. In Section 7.5 a potential Scientific Research Programme is proposed which would incorporate insights from a

number of different branches of theory compatible with the ODF. The SRP would be concerned with joining up public services, developing an approach to holistic governance based on critical realist social theory.

There are also a number of branches of theory which have arisen out of practice, which could be enhanced using the ODF, and are covered in Section 7.6. Here, there are immediate applications of the ODF and also potential for the wider Scientific Research Programme to influence these areas of practice at a deeper level.

In Danermark et als' six stage model, *Stage 5, Comparison of theories and abstractions* has now been completed. In terms of the critical realist domains of reality (see section 3.4), the explanatory power of the ODF has been demonstrated both at the *empirical* level, eg in the enhancements to theories arising from areas of practice, and as a part of a deeper Scientific Research Programme, concerned with reaching down to the *actual* and *real* levels of existence as well.

8. The usefulness of the Operational Dimensions Framework (Pragmatism theory of truth)

As well as being a general descriptive theory about particular aspects of the world, the ODF can also be of use for practical problems in the workplace. It is therefore entirely appropriate that one of the criteria of truth against which it is being assessed is concerned with its usefulness. The chapter builds upon the outline of the pragmatic theory of truth and the methods for assessing it, contained in Sections 1.8 and 3.9.

Before going into any case studies, it is necessary first to investigate the origins of the pragmatism theory of truth and the different versions associated with different philosophers (Section 8.1). This will lead us into a debate on the term 'useful' and how feasible it is within the constraints of the thesis to cover this criterion of truth adequately (Sections 8.2 and 8.3).

I will then give examples where the ODF has been used in practical management contexts, concentrating on three main case studies (Sections 8.4-8.7) and indicate how it can be used in other contexts (Section 8.8).

In the six stage model of explanatory research based on critical realism, we are now in *Stage 6, Concretization and Contextualisation*, which involves interpreting the meanings of mechanisms and contributing to explanations of concrete events and processes. The alignment between the six stage model and the four criteria of truth is only approximate, and the aim of the chapter is more ambitious than to explain events, which was a central preoccupation in Chapter 6, on correspondence. In the present chapter the main aim is to demonstrate the usefulness of the ODF in practical terms. Based on the wider objectives of critical realism as an instrument of emancipation (see Danermark et al, 2002:192-194), it might be argued that the six stage model should end with a more explicit attempt to use the explanatory power of the research to intervene in the situations and events which have been studied.

8.1 The Pragmatism Theory of Truth

The term 'pragmatism' is derived from the Greek word 'pragma' meaning 'deed' or 'action'. As a theory of truth it was developed by sceptics of Plato and is based on the idea that knowledge is limited to that which might guide human practice and purposes (Johnson and Duberley, 2000:157).

In recent times, philosophers associated with pragmatism include C S Peirce, William James and John Dewey, although there are a variety of different epistemological positions amongst these philosophers (Johnson and Duberley, 2000:158). There are also different positions taken amongst commentators over the links between pragmatism and critical realism. On the one hand, Richard Kirkham explains the ideas of Peirce and James under the chapter heading of 'non-realist theories' (Kirkham, 1992:79-101). On the other hand, Johnson and Duberley suggest that critical realism and pragmatism are very closely aligned, to the extent that Sayer's avowedly critical realist theories are based on pragmatism, even though Sayer himself makes no mention of any such links (Johnson and Duberley, 2000:157).

There are also issues we need to cover on the relationship of the pragmatism theory of truth to the other three theories of truth I am using as criteria against which to assess the ODF. An example of this is the label Kirkham gives to Peirce's Pragmaticism, which he describes as a consensus theory of truth (Kirkham, 1992:80).

Peirce's central proposition was that people using different methods and sources of evidence would eventually converge on the same conclusion. Common experiences through human perceptions play a key role in achieving this consensus. One of the examples he used was of a blind man and a deaf man experiencing a murder taking place. Through different perceptions they would arrive at the same conclusion of what had happened. Peirce's theories were not realist, because the truthfulness of the shared conclusion was based not on some mind-independent reality but rested solely upon the consensus amongst all investigators. For Peirce, a proposition is true if, and only if, it would be agreed to by everyone who investigates the matter with which the proposition is concerned (Kirkham, 1992:80-82). Although other methods might enable consensus to be achieved, experience and scientific method tend to be the most effective ways in achieving agreement. Therefore there is a close link between Peirce's Pragmaticism and the consensus theory of truth, which is based upon agreement amongst 'the community of practice'. I shall return to this link in section 8.2.

William James' instrumentalism is closer to the usual meaning of pragmatism than Peirce's theories. He held that truth equates to long term usefulness (Kirkham, 1992:94). It is the long term usefulness of beliefs, such as a presumption by somebody that they are better at their job than anyone else, which turns beliefs into

facts. Truth is therefore relative, because someone else might find it equally useful to hold to a different set of beliefs. Associated with 'long term usefulness' are attempts to explain, predict and manipulate the world to achieve people's goals (Kirkham, 1992:96-102). Truth is therefore an instrument to serve people, rather than vice versa. Truth is associated with fruitful searches for meaning, and is a dynamic, rather than a static concept.

How then could Johnson and Duberley suggest that Andrew Sayer's approach to social theory is pragmatist, if the theories of truth promoted by Peirce and James are based on a subjective ontology? The answer seems to be that the subjective epistemology held by critical realists over-rides any differences in beliefs about the mind-independence of reality. This enables Sayer to use a concept of 'practical adequacy' to evaluate knowledge claims, which has obvious connotations of pragmatism (Johnson and Duberley, 2000:162). However, the pragmatic-critical realist position would depart from the non-realist pragmatists when comparing the similarities and differences in the beliefs held by different people. A pragmatic-critical realist would try to relate them, in an overtly fallibilistic way, to some kind of independent reality, in order to distinguish propositions and beliefs which are more true from other propositions and beliefs. Non-realist theories of truth have no basis for doing this, so a random set of propositions cannot be rejected in favour of an alternative, no matter how much rigorous effort has gone into formulating it (Kirkham, 1992:118).

8.2 Conceptualising Usefulness

What is the relevance of these fine-grained philosophical distinctions for pragmatism as a criterion of truth against which to assess the ODF? There are two main points arising from the prior introduction to pragmatism, namely

- the need to look at the connections between consensus theory of truth and the pragmatism theory of truth,
- the complexities inherent in the term 'useful', which require consideration before launching into practical case studies.

There are some ways in which the consensus criterion of truth has to precede the pragmatism criterion of truth. A theory or a model has to have some kind of acceptance amongst the 'community of practice' before it can be applied and have a chance to prove its practical worth. This does not mean, based on Peirce's

philosophy, that the theory has to get to a stage of being universally accepted (and I would question whether in the social sciences it is worth even considering such a notion) but that it gets a toehold amongst the mass of competing theories and methodological tools used to shape policy and practice. Once a theory has achieved this, its practical usage and the degree of acceptance amongst the community of practice are likely to be iteratively related. Success in dealing with practical problems should in turn lead to greater acceptance, which will lead to more practical applications.

Use of a theory will at some point mean that it competes with other theories in the same field. Because of his optimism about the convergence of different investigators towards the same conclusion this is not a situation Peirce confronts satisfactorily. Using the categorisation of philosophical approaches in Section 3.3, the standpoints taken by different scientists lead to competing explanations of the same phenomena. More than this, political factors come into play, often leading to theories being used to support the actions of particular coalitions of policy makers, often on matters of the utmost importance to the future of the world, such as global warming.

This leads us into the second issue arising from the discussion of pragmatism as a philosophy, concerning the complexities associated with the term 'useful', because it is clear that a critical question is 'useful to whom?'. One of the fundamental difficulties is the question of timescale. James' position on this was that a criterion of truth was being useful in the longer term. In policy terms this creates real difficulties when there is constant pressure to achieve results within the timescale of the political cycle. It also creates problems for a DBA thesis which has to be completed in a relatively short time, and for which I am reliant on others seeing the merits of the ODF in tackling management problems and deciding to use it.

8.3 Usefulness of the Operational Dimensions Framework

As a general descriptive theory which claims to capture universal characteristics of the world, the potential uses of the ODF are very wide. As a way of thinking about management issues, the ODF could be a pervasive feature of a branch of management theory linked to realist philosophies, as proposed in the Scientific Research Programme developed in Section 7.5. At an immediate and practical level, the uses fall into a number of broad, overlapping areas, covering

1. *analytical tasks*, for use in the assessment and evaluation of strategies, business plans, programmes, projects and service delivery. It might enable gaps in the coverage of particular issues to be identified or reveal inappropriate grouping together of sub-categories from different dimensions which will lead to confusion in implementation. When used to review policies it can help ensure that the approach is comprehensive and priorities are clearly justified. The ODF could be used at different stages in the life cycle of a strategy or programme to provide a consistent approach to development and review processes.
2. *management tasks*, for use in the changes to new organisational or working structures, for example during a restructuring exercise or setting up a new partnership, or as a tool to help structure events and exercises, eg consultations, research studies, learning materials. It might be used to ensure a balance in the invitations to a consultation exercise, to structure the agenda of a workshop or to plan the content of a study course in regeneration.

These uses are by no means exhaustive. The ODF is a flexible analytical tool which can be combined with other management theories and management tools, to improve their rigour and coverage, as explored in Chapter 7. There is potential to develop new management tools using the ODF in combination with other theories.

The uses in analytical and management tasks referred to above will often be linked in an iterative manner. For example, a critique of an existing strategy might lead to the ODF being used in consultation events to revise that strategy and change organisational structures accordingly. After these changes have taken place, the ODF might be used analytically again, in the evaluation of the effects of the changes.

8.4 Usefulness of the Operational Dimensions Framework – progress so far

It has been difficult to get the toehold amongst the community of practice necessary for the ODF to be applied in practical management contexts. Initially in 2000, when the ODF was developed in the context of a practical management issue, the restructuring of the Special Programmes Team at Barnsley MBC, it was used in a management task – the stakeholder event (see Section 2.8). The stakeholder event was a success and the ODF helped to obtain views on different options for the restructuring of the team. However, the new structure did not utilize the dimensional approach to a significantly greater degree than the old one. Bearing in mind James'

reference to long term usefulness, this is the only example where a retrospective assessment of the ODF in practice might possibly be undertaken. However, there are limits to the continuation of the case study, for a number of reasons

- the ODF was mainly utilized in the stakeholder workshop, which of itself was a relatively small part of the process
- because the changes to staffing structure at Barnsley made at that time did not incorporate a significantly greater dimensional approach than before, it is not possible to research the impact of the ODF as a basis for organisational structures.
- A possible proposition for the case study would be something like 'would the team have been more effective if an explicit dimensional approach had been built into the new structure'? This kind of question would be difficult for respondents to answer with anything other than speculation.

Since 2000, I have applied the ODF in other contexts, but never in such a way that any kind of external validation of the dimensional approach was involved. Examples include

- using the ODF to analyse the recommendations in the Cattle Report on Community Cohesion, following the riots in northern urban areas in 2001. I particularly focused on thematic and customer categories, and came up with some comparisons on the coverage of the recommendations. This analysis was included in the paper I presented to the International Conference on Critical Realism in 2002. The relevant extract from the paper is attached as Appendix 3. An interesting point arising from my findings concerns the lack of reference to gender in the Cattle Report.
- using the ODF to consider the opportunities and constraints on the use of social enterprise models by community partnerships in the South Yorkshire Coalfield to develop new income streams. This analysis fed into a report for the South Yorkshire Coalfield Partnership Board in March, 2004 as preparation for a debate on this topic at the Board meeting. The adaptation to the ODF I developed for this purpose is found at Appendix 4. Although the debate at the Board meeting was useful, it focussed on substantive issues, rather than the relevance of the ODF grid.

Both these uses were based on the 'old' seven dimensional version of the ODF. I have had other recent attempts to persuade colleagues to use the ODF in the development of strategies and programmes, although initially I was cautious about

undertaking a big empirical case study on account of the further work being undertaken during the thesis to refine the ODF, for example in Chapters 4 and 5, on coherence. Using these attempts to link the ODF explicitly into practice, there are three case studies, which form the main part of the chapter. They are

1. A follow up to the original use of the ODF to assist with the restructuring of the Special Programmes Team. This involved an interview with John Woodside, who was the Head of Special Programmes in 2000 and is still the senior manager for that area of work. Bearing in mind the limitations referred to above, the case study focuses on the broad questions as to how the organisational structures have evolved since that time and how the dimensional approach links in with current practical management issues. John Woodside's roles include a responsibility for supporting the Local Strategic Partnership in Barnsley, and the dimensional approach links to current initiatives, such as Barnsley's Local Area Agreement.
2. Work that I have been involved in for the South Yorkshire Partnership, engaging with Investment Planning in Yorkshire and the Humber. Investment Planning was initiated by Yorkshire Forward, the Regional Development Agency, and is concerned with aligning public funds contributing to economic development towards the delivery of the Regional Economic Strategy. I introduced the ODF in an informal regional meeting, called the Yorkshire and Humber Investment Planning Advisory Group. Various potential uses of the ODF emerged.
3. Use of the ODF to carry out Impact Analysis and Sustainability Appraisals. I devised a Sustainability Appraisal Tool based on the ODF which I was able to apply to the draft Estates Vision for Sheffield Hallam University.

In combination, these three case studies provide evidence as to the usefulness of the ODF, with a degree of corroboration from the partners I have been working with. The case studies involve the use of the ODF in analytical tasks. This can be justified on the basis that the initial use of the ODF, in Barnsley in 2000, took place within the context of a management task – applying the ODF in a workshop event. Also, the analytical use in the third case study is part of an iterative sequence and feeds directly into a management task, the preparation of the Estates Strategy for Sheffield Hallam University.

Where the case studies involved group meetings and one-to-one interviews I endeavoured to tape the discussions, so I had the opportunity to review the research

evidence at my leisure, and also generate a verbatim recording to substantiate my conclusions. I used semi-structured interviews, with a list of topics to cover, adjusted to the interests and roles of the interviewee.

Before going into the case studies, it is necessary to consider how they relate to the criteria associated with the pragmatism theory of truth. First, there are issues concerning the role of the ODF in the delivery of public services and different levels of usefulness. Because of the nature of the ODF as a general descriptive theory and a starting point for joined up working, its input is made at the point of formulating a strategy, implementing a programme or devising a staffing structure. This is at least one step removed from the impact of public policies and investments on their target groups and a further step away from changes to the overall quality of life of the target groups. In the DBA thesis I will not be able to track the impact of the ODF beyond the initial adoption of the ODF as an aid to the policy process.

Related to this point are the issues referred to in section 8.2 about timescale. I am still at the early stages in the cycle of acceptance by the 'community of practice' and the opening up of opportunities for use in management contexts. I am even further away from any opportunity to assess the long term impact of the ODF, using James' instrumentalist definition. In the DBA I will only be able to refer to some of the initial applications of the ODF, although the signs are that the case studies are leading to a number of further potential uses.

8.5 Case Study 1 : The ODF and structures for partnership working in Barnsley

This case study looks at how the organisational structures in the Community Planning Division of Barnsley MBC have evolved since the restructuring in 2000, when the ODF was used as a management tool to look at the implications of different dimensional pressures for officer structures. It also looks at how John Woodside, as the Assistant Director with responsibility for that team has used 'dimensional thinking' in his approach to organisational structures and how the dimensional approach links in with current practical management issues in Barnsley. The case study follows on from the analysis in Chapter 2. It is based on a semi-structured interview undertaken with John Woodside, Assistant Borough Secretary – Community Planning, in December, 2005.

After the restructuring in 2000 the Community Planning division included the following teams

- a Strategy team, concerned with the preparation and review of the Barnsley Community Plan and partnership development around the plan.
- a Social Inclusion Team, concerned with neighbourhood renewal, community-orientated funding streams and the management of the Kendray Initiative
- a European team, concerned with strategic alignment with EU policy and the strategic input into the South Yorkshire Objective 1 programme
- a Regeneration Programmes Team, managing Single Regeneration Budget programmes and covering other programme management issues, mainly on finance.

In 2005, the division retains a broadly similar role, but there have been some significant changes. The corporate management arm of the Council has been reorganised, so the division now falls under the Borough Secretary, reflecting the links between partnership working and the Council's democratic structures. The team supporting Area Forums (nine locality-based Council Committees, covering two or three wards in each case) was already an arm of the Borough Secretary's Directorate, and was moved into Community Planning, in line with the rationale for this reorganisation.

The European team has moved elsewhere, to be one of the few functions covered in the Chief Executive's Department. The Strategy team now operates as a secretariat for Barnsley's Local Strategic Partnership, reflecting the increased importance of LSP's (in Barnsley the LSP has always been supported from within the Council, rather than by an arms length team).

The impact of the dimensional perspective is found mainly in the approach that John has taken to the roles of officers, reflecting the support in the stakeholder workshop in 2000 for a flexible 'matrix management' approach with multi-skilled, multi-function staff (see Section 2.8). This is particularly the case in the Strategy team, where there is a generic job title 'Community Planning Officer', but each of the four posts within the team covers a geographic area and one of four strategic functions – corporate management, strategy development, partnership development and area coordination – in addition to linking with specific thematic Delivery Partnerships.

The area coordination role for one of the Community Planning Officers reflects attempts that have been made to improve the links between locality-based structures and thematic partnerships. Around the turn of the millennium the tension between the Area Forums and the Strategic Goal Groups was a key problem, over issue-based and area-based priorities. The Strategic Goal Groups have now been replaced by Delivery Partnerships, of which there are currently nine. Four of them are based on the Local Area Agreement blocks, while the other five cover transport, culture, learning, environment and equalities/diversity/inclusion (the future of some of the Delivery Partnerships depends on the coverage of the LAA fourth block). The structures of the Community Planning Team help to link area-based and thematic priorities, but it is still 'hard work' in practice to join them up.

The organisational complexities in joining up different parts of the division's work are illustrated by the position of the Kendray Initiative, which became the Kendray Neighbourhood Management pathfinder, when it was successful in the first round of bids for this pathfinder programme. The Kendray Neighbourhood Management Team are managed by the Principal Social Inclusion Officer, although the team has become more 'arms length' over time, but the links with the Area Forum which covers Kendray are not as well developed. There is a continuing need to integrate Kendray Neighbourhood Management into both social inclusion work and local democratic structures.

In the original analysis of the Special Programmes Team in 2000 the customer dimension was the main one not reflected in the structure of the team. Diversity issues are now covered by the Social Inclusion Team, in their involvement in the Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Delivery Partnership, so all the dimensions feature in the work of the Community Planning division.

Barnsley was one of the first round pilots for Local Area Agreements, so by late 2005 they were negotiating their second LAA. I asked John Woodside if the uneven combination of customer groups and themes in the LAA blocks was causing problems in practice (see Chapter 6 for an analysis of LAA's from the perspective of the ODF). He felt that Stronger and Safer Communities operates well as a block, Health and Older People reasonably well, while Children and Young People is an especially incoherent block, because there is so much overlap with other Delivery Partnerships, which are theme-based. He gave the example of initiatives to reduce teenage pregnancies, which overlap in particular with the health theme. I referred to

the evaluation of the first year of LAA's, which had proposed a themed agreement around the community strategy, rather than pre-defined blocks, providing the flexibility which the 'single block' LAA has got (ODPM, 2005B). John agreed this would be preferable, and suggested that outcomes could be related to blocks, while funding/activity contributes to all blocks. This links to a central proposition of the ODF, that activities have effects across all themes, social groups and geographical areas.

The case study illustrates the complexity of the relationships between dimensions in practice. In 2000 I was disappointed that the restructuring of the Special Programmes Team did not follow an explicit dimensional approach. The follow up five years later suggests that, despite this, the Community Planning division had found ways of covering all the seven dimensions, in a fluid way, working flexibly within wider organisational imperatives and a constantly changing policy context. Matrix management has been used to try to cover the key dimensions for individual posts, but the structures are anything but neat and consistent, and within the Community Planning division, effective joining up sometimes necessitates working across organisational barriers.

The ODF seems to have had an influence on the approach to organisational structures and ways of working used by John Woodside, as the head of the division, particularly in the way that matrix management has been used.

8.6 Case Study 2: The ODF and investment planning in Yorkshire and the Humber

Investment Planning was initiated in 2004 by the Regional Development Agency, Yorkshire Forward, as a new approach to join up the way public funds are spent in the region, to maximize their impact on the delivery of the Regional Economic Strategy. Investment Planning is undertaken through sub-regional partnerships, and I became involved in it from the outset, working for the South Yorkshire Partnership on a part-time basis. It immediately appeared to me that there might be opportunities to use the ODF to assist with Investment Planning, since the goal of coordinating public investment in economic development to achieve the objectives of the Regional Economic Strategy was clearly aligned closely to the types of work where the ODF would be useful.

In the Yorkshire and Humber Investment Planning Advisory Group were a number of colleagues who had established good working relationships and were open to ideas on processes to help them be more effective in their work. They included

From Regional Organisations

Simon Foy, Yorkshire Forward

Martin Seymour, Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber

Sue Jeffrey and Karen Hill, Yorkshire and Humber Assembly

From Sub-Regional Partnerships

Graham Joyce, Director of the South Yorkshire Partnership (my own role is as a part-time seconded Programmes Manager for Investment Planning with the SY Partnership)

Neil Heavens, West Yorkshire Economic Partnership

Jonathan French and David Smurthwaite, York and North Yorkshire Partnership Unit

Mick King, Humber Forum

After producing the first Sub-regional Investment Plans in the summer of 2004, the group had an away day in August, 2004. One of the issues which arose in reviewing the work that had gone before was how to limit the scope of investment planning so it is manageable while not leaving out areas of public funding which are relevant to the objectives of the Regional Economic Strategy. I referred to my DBA, and the relevance of the ODF to this issue and suggested that I prepare a paper on the topic, an offer which was accepted. In addressing this issue, I was concerned with the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) document itself, as well as the investment plans which have been produced in each of the four sub-regions. The analysis therefore came up with recommendations relating to both the RES and the scope of Investment Planning.

The paper was completed in November, 2004, and discussed at the monthly meeting of the Yorkshire and Humber Investment Planning Advisory Group on 10 December, 2004. The item was recorded, so that I could concentrate on my own contribution to the discussion and could analyse the debate at my leisure afterwards. The item came at the end of the agenda, so there were some parts of the discussion which related back to comments earlier in the meeting. I have pulled out four key points from the discussion.

Following that initial group discussion, I followed up the potential uses of the ODF with one-to-one semi structured interviews, some of which I was able to record. I also pursued other opportunities to use the ODF to inform the work on Investment Planning.

Point A – Usage of tools and techniques

Jonathan French initiated this area of discussion, by saying that he ‘does not use techniques sufficiently to generate strategies’ and could be ‘more scientific’. The group referred to a common approach they take when faced with having to prepare a new policy document, to refer something similar and see if there is anything missed out, rather than go back to first principles. The group asked about the extent to which the ODF is new rather than being an existing model I have utilised. When I confirmed that, as far as I am aware, it goes beyond any existing dimensional framework they were interested in making links to my DBA work

This general point illustrates on the one hand the lack of connection between theory and practice which is commonly found in public sector policy-making, unless a particular approach is prescribed. On the other hand, it demonstrates a willingness by these practitioners when in a reflective mode to consider the use of tools and techniques underpinned by theory.

Point B - Potential use of the ODF categories in refining the Regional Economic Strategy cross-cutting themes

Simon Foy referred to a proposal in the paper for a new set of cross-cutting themes (Table 8.1). This proposal used the structure and terminology of the existing cross-cutting themes where possible, but aligned them to the seven Operational Dimensions. This approach links to my critique of cross-cutting themes in Chapter 6, where I make the point that any activity has effects across the full range of dimensions. The existing set of RES cross-cutting themes covered nearly all the dimensions in some form, but often mixed up categories from different dimensions in one cross-cutting theme. For example, Social Inclusion and Diversity included lifestyle issues as well as social groups/customers. Relatively small adjustments would need to be made to achieve a more logical structure for the cross-cutting themes.

Table 8.1 Revision of the cross cutting themes in the Regional Economic Strategy for Yorkshire and the Humber using the Operational Dimensions Framework

<i>Existing cross cutting theme</i>	<i>Proposed cross cutting theme</i>	<i>ODF theme and coverage</i>
Environmental good practice (part) Creativity, innovation and technology (part)	Use of Resources , (a more focussed cross-cutting theme than currently)	<i>Resources</i> eg energy, natural and man-made assets, use of technology to affect resource requirements
Creativity, innovation and technology (part)	Creativity and innovation (incorporates how technology affects the processes undertaken, alongside other aspects of creativity and innovation)	<i>Function</i> , dependent entirely on the nature of the activity and the processes used
Social inclusion and diversity (part)	Social groups (or could retain social inclusion and diversity title). Excludes lifestyle issues	<i>Customer</i> , ie gender, age, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation
Social inclusion and diversity (part), Skills and employment	Quality of employment and lifestyle Emphasis on employment theme, and includes lifestyle issues from social inclusion and diversity	<i>Theme</i> , ie economy, employment, education, skills, leisure, culture, housing, health, environment, crime, social/community, transport
Geographic adaptation	Geographic adaptation (no change)	<i>Space</i>
Environmental good practice (part) Also includes aspects of sustainability	Effects over time	<i>Time</i>
Partnership	Partnership (no change)	<i>Stakeholder</i>

Simon Foy said that he found the proposals on cross cutting themes particularly useful in the context of the forthcoming review of the Regional Economic Strategy (RES). He referred to some problems with the existing cross-cutting themes, which 'hang there' in the RES. He said that they had been revised in the first review of the RES, but there are still questions on how far they contribute to strategy development. Simon referred to problems with references to technology in the existing 'Innovation, Creativity and Technology' cross-cutting theme, and liked the change to 'Innovation and Creativity'. He also felt 'Use of Resources' was an improvement on

'Environmental Good Practice'. Simon felt that the proposals had some merit.

To follow up this opportunity, I applied the adjusted set of cross-cutting themes to a case study project – 'Social and Community Enterprise Support in South Yorkshire, 2005-8'. In the Business Plan which has to be prepared to obtain detailed approval for Yorkshire Forward Single Pot (and European Structural Funds if the project is joint funded from the Objective 1 programme) there is a section on the contribution to cross-cutting themes. I reworked this section, with the set of cross-cutting themes based on the ODF. I also tried to relate the new cross-cutting theme categories to the project outcomes, and generally to integrate this section more fully into the Business Plan(see Table 8.2). In this way the cross-cutting themes would become more integrated into the design of the project, and to its implementation.

It became apparent that the position of cross-cutting themes in the revised RES was the subject of much debate in the early stages of preparing the document. I had to bear in mind that fact that the organisation I work for on Investment Planning, the South Yorkshire Partnership, and the organisations within the partnership, were consultees on the RES, and I was not in a position to seek to get my ideas adopted as the policy of the partnership itself. I therefore waited until the revised RES came out as a draft for consultation, in late July, 2005, before taking this opportunity any further.

In the event, the revised RES had just three cross cutting themes,

- diversity
- sustainable development, and
- leadership and ambition.

These cross cutting themes were very wide-ranging, and collapsed different operational dimensions into individual cross-cutting themes. For example, diversity includes both the customer and space dimensions in one criterion that projects should 'actively seek to utilize and benefit the whole range of communities in the region (including BME groups, faith groups, deaf and disabled people, women, young and older people, deprived areas)' (Yorkshire Forward, 2005:23).

Table 8.2 Application of the Operational Dimensions Approach to cross-cutting themes, in the appraisal of 'Social and Community Enterprise Support in South Yorkshire, 2005-8'

<i>Cross cutting theme</i>	<i>Contribution of the project</i>	<i>Implications for project outcomes (Very, quite or not important)</i>
Use of resources eg energy, natural and man-made assets, use of technology to affect resource requirements	<p>The organisations delivering the project aim to use resources in an efficient way (cross refer to policies). It will also encourage all social and community enterprises to use resources efficiently (evidence).</p> <p>The project will also support enterprises which promote good practice in the use of resources (evidence)</p> <p>Cross ref. to role of Organisational Development Fund</p>	Quite important – the project needs to promote good practice, but it is not one of the main criteria for its success.
Creativity and Innovation, eg are there creative and innovative activities and processes built into the operation of the project. Are new technologies involved?	<p>The main innovation is the incorporation of new elements into the support package, eg joint ventures, bursaries.</p> <p>New technologies will be used to pull together different databases.</p>	Very important - effective integration of the different parts of the project is crucial if outcomes are to be achieved. See risk analysis for further details
Social Inclusion and Diversity, eg gender, age, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation (gender mainstreaming could be a separate sub-category)	<p>Diversity policies in project sponsor and organisations running the strands (cross refer)</p> <p>Promotion of diversity in social enterprises is key part of the project.</p> <p>Some social enterprises will focus on specific customer groups</p>	Very important to the outcomes of the project. Gender and ethnicity are particularly important. See risk analysis and project monitoring sections for further details
Quality of employment and lifestyle, ie effects on economy, employment, education, skills, leisure, culture, housing, health, environment, crime, social/ community, transport	<p>Criteria within the project and various measures within it will help to safeguard employment issues. However, social and community enterprises often survive because of the role of volunteers and others taking a low level of remuneration.</p> <p>The nature of the social enterprise supported will determine its implications for lifestyle – see xx for the sectors to be targeted for support.</p>	Very important – regarding quality of employment. see Risk Analysis

Table 8.2 Application of the Operational Dimensions Approach to cross-cutting themes, in the appraisal of 'Social and Community Enterprise Support in South Yorkshire, 2005-8' continued

<i>Cross cutting theme</i>	<i>Contribution of the project</i>	<i>Implications for project outcomes (Very, quite or not important)</i>
Geographic adaptation	Project operates across South Yorkshire. Any targeting of particular areas?	Quite important. Monitoring of location of project beneficiaries needed.
Effects over time	Long term survival and growth of social enterprises supported is critical to success of the project (cross refer to forward strategy section)	Very important – see Risk Analysis
Partnership	Project is based on new working arrangements for social enterprise support (cross refer to consultation and project delivery sections)	Very important - see risk analysis

It was clear that any further attempt to link the ODF to the cross cutting themes in the RES would put me in a position of potential conflict with Yorkshire Forward, so a potentially very significant use of the ODF had to be dropped. Instead, I concentrated on looking at the relevance of the ODF to one of the RES cross cutting themes, sustainable development, which led to Case Study 3 (Section 8.7).

Point C - Differences between health, transport and housing themes

In the meeting in December, 2004, I initiated some discussion on this point, because these three themes have been bracketed together in some of the work on investment planning, although there are qualitative differences in the contribution they make to economic development. Simon Foy confirmed that the bracketing together is only because at the moment they are all outside mainstream economic development. The three themes are acknowledged as being very different in nature, and in each case having many different facets relevant to economic development. There was a further debate about the nature of the housing market in different regions and the different kinds of relationship to economic growth. After the meeting, Martin Seymour suggested to me it would be useful to have a further individual discussion in the context of the Government's proposals for having devolved regional budgets for housing, transport and economic development.

Martin and I had a further tape-recorded discussion about the relevance of the ODF to the devolved regional budgets in the context of a consultation document issued from Whitehall to Government Offices and other partners on how these proposals might work in practice. No specific uses of the ODF arose out of this discussion, but our conversation moved into other areas where the ODF might be of more immediate relevance, for example, in Business Planning.

Point D - Partnership structures for integrated working

In the meeting in December 2004, Neil Heavens referred to problems being faced in West Yorkshire in avoiding creating silos through the sub-groups that had been set up for the purposes of investment planning. He felt it would be useful to have further discussions about how the ODF might help in devising integrated working group structures to support investment planning.

Neil and I had a one-to-one meeting, focussed on the partnership structures built up around investment planning in West Yorkshire. There were concerns that the sub-structure of different groups was too large and that silos were being created which prevented a coordinated approach. There was no single diagram which showed all the different groups, but Neil drew one during our discussion, explaining the role of each part of the sub-structure. The structure had built up incrementally, but there was a rough logic to it, based on

- the three Yorkshire Forward policy areas, concerned with urban and rural renaissance, business development/support and connecting people to opportunity.
- different roles in the hierarchy, eg decision making/advisory and representative/technical,
- function, with some groups relating to specific aspects of the Investment plan process, eg European funding, research.

I advised Neil that from the perspective of the ODF, the existing sub-structure could be justified as covering different parts of Investment Planning. While the work could be covered in a streamlined structure, this might have the danger of marginalizing key contributors. We discussed dimensions not currently featuring within the group structure, including diversity and some themes, eg environment, housing and health. Neil suggested how they were in fact being covered, but that in some cases a

strengthening of the current working arrangements was needed. For example, diversity was one of the topics highlighted by Yorkshire Forward in their guidance for the first 'Light Touch Review' of the Investment Plans in 2005/6, and further work was to be commissioned on embedding diversity into the approach to Investment Planning in West Yorkshire. To address the problem of silos building up, we discussed the arrangements for coordinating the work of different groups and cross-referring issues. For Neil, no specific new actions arose from our discussion, but it helped to confirm the reasons why a sub-structure had grown up around Investment Planning, in the face of disquiet in some quarters about its size.

I also used the ODF to prepare a paper for the South Yorkshire Partnership Officer Group on the structures for Investment Planning in South Yorkshire, where there have been fewer new groups created. The paper referred to the ODF dimensions, and suggested that they all needed to be covered in some way. The group is composed of high level officers from the partner organisations, and reports directly into the South Yorkshire Partnership Board. The discussion around the paper focused on one point, the need to get more consistency in the coverage of theme groups.

Summary of Case Study 2

The case study demonstrates how the ODF can generate interest amongst those working in economic development and regeneration. It was seen to be relevant to a number of pre-occupations of the officers working on Investment Planning in Yorkshire and the Humber. However, none of the areas I followed up with colleagues led to a practical use for the ODF. The most significant potential application was to the cross cutting themes in the Regional Economic Strategy (RES), but this opportunity receded when the RES Review went in a particular direction. The discussion I had with Neil Heavens was also interesting as it demonstrated that the support infrastructure for Investment Planning in West Yorkshire covered operational dimensions in a reasonably comprehensive way, and where I identified omissions Neil was already aware of them.

8.7 Case Study 3: The ODF and a new tool for Impact Assessment/Sustainability Appraisal

In Sections 7.6.4 and 7.6.5, the opportunities to use the ODF to develop new techniques for impact assessment and sustainability appraisal were identified. Impact Assessment tools have failed to bring together the various different types of impact into one method, covering environment, health, social impact and equalities. Sustainability appraisals have not managed to systematically integrate the various different sustainability measures, so one is usually left with a long list of unrelated criteria.

My initial appreciation of the need for new techniques in this area came from discussions with colleagues in Rotherham MBC, who wanted to develop a rapid sustainability tool, to apply to any strategy, as an adjunct to the sustainability appraisal of the various stages of the Rotherham Local Development Framework, the new statutory land use plan, currently being prepared. The emphasis was on a tool which could be used quickly, to get an appreciation of the main sustainability issues for any strategy or plan, rather than the extensive process, heavily constrained by Government guidance, required for a major land use plan.

I developed a list of questions for the rapid appraisal of sustainability (Annex 1 to Appendix 5). The initial questions are concerned with clarity as to what it is which is subject to the appraisal, and what the purpose of the work is. The main analysis is stakeholder-based, and addresses effects across ODF dimensions for each stakeholder group. This is because the problematic questions in sustainability usually arise from the differential impacts on different groups, which most appraisal techniques fail to address. Thus the amount of car parking provision at a workplace typically involves trade offs between the economic interests of the business, social impacts on staff, environmental impacts on local communities and environmental impacts on the global community. These trade offs need to be identified so clear policy impacts on different groups can be established and mitigating actions targeted in the right way. The sustainability appraisal also needs to address the effect on non-human resources.

The opportunity arose to apply the rapid sustainability appraisal to Sheffield Hallam University's outline Estates Vision. It arose not directly through DBA contacts, but in discussion with Professor Kevin Bonnett, who was for a time the local university

representative on the South Yorkshire Coalfield Partnership Board. In late 2005 Kevin was Acting Pro Vice-Chancellor for Strategic Planning and Sustainability, and had the responsibility for preparing an Estates Vision for the university.

The material for my analysis was very brief, consisting of three A4 sheets, covering

- a summary of HEFCE Guidance on Estates Strategies
- the vision in diagrammatic form, with a hub/core, spokes and a rim
- a diagrammatic plan, showing the main buildings complexes in the core.

The sustainability appraisal was completed in about 15 hours working time, so it was rapid compared to most such exercises. The method worked well, in that the main stakeholder groups were identified and the key impacts on them summarised.

Because the Estates Vision is focused on a core within the centre of Sheffield it meets sustainability criteria pretty well, but a number of trade-offs were identified, and, given the outline nature of the Estates Vision, issues for further attention as it is developed into a strategy were highlighted (Appendix 5).

The response from Kevin Bonnett was that the sustainability appraisal was a useful exercise for him. The analysis was felt to be wide ranging, systematic and easy to follow and the stakeholder dimension was felt to be valuable, particularly in highlighting the links with other policies (Appendix 6).

My technique is inherently flexible, in that the theme and social group impacts are determined outside the framework. It could therefore be combined with lists of sustainability indicators. However, the intention is to cut down on the endless lists of questions found in other impact assessment and sustainability tools. For example, the Integrated Impact Assessment Screening Tool for Promoting Sustainable Development in Northern Lincolnshire contains over one hundred questions (www.nelincs.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/E5E497A0-5531-4A22-A849-12F4AB9ED5C9/0/sustainabilityappraisaltool.pdf, viewed in June, 2006) and the Lancashire Integrated Sustainability Appraisal Toolkit about one hundred and fifty questions (Lancashire Partnership, undated).

The consultants working on the Rotherham Sustainability Appraisal method have been involved in some of these other exercises, and produced a draft pro-forma with a list of one hundred decision-making criteria, adapting the national and regional guidance to fit with Rotherham's Community Strategy. In April, 2006, council officers

guidance to fit with Rotherham's Community Strategy. In April, 2006, council officers in Rotherham were using my method in conjunction with their own internally-generated ideas in their negotiations with the consultants over a more flexible and concise approach.

In summary, the ODF provides the basis for impact assessment and sustainability appraisal tools which take a more comprehensive, yet more flexible approach than other techniques currently being used. A stakeholder-based method integrating all ODF dimensions has been successfully piloted, and endorsed by 'the client' for this piece of work.

8.8 General method for applying the ODF to management issues

The derivation of 'tailored' versions of the ODF produced in Section 5.4 provides the basis for a general method for applying the ODF to both analytical and management tasks. The examples given in Chapter 5 encapsulate a range of different contexts for using the ODF, some expressed in general terms and others more specifically. Table 8.3 summarises a step-by-step process which can be used to apply the ODF, with three examples, two from Chapter 5 and one from this chapter. The examples illustrate the iterative sequence of analytical and management tasks which will be a feature of many of the potential uses of the ODF.

8.9 Summary

For myself as an individual, the ODF is in constant use in the practical management situations I deal with, and sometimes finds written expression, where it can inform the strategic partnership work I undertake in the South Yorkshire sub-region.

In this chapter a number of applications of the ODF have been outlined, some of them brief and some of them quite detailed. I have often found interest from colleagues in the ODF which I have developed into potential applications, only to find that the opportunity to use the ODF to improve practice is closed off for one reason or another. However, the three main case studies in the chapter all provide evidence as to the usefulness of the ODF.

Table 8.3 Process Guide for applying the ODF

<i>Stage in the process</i>	<i>Example A</i>	<i>Example B</i>	<i>Example C</i>
1. Define issue to be addressed	Design of a Longitudinal Research Study	Changing modal split for transport usage	Sustainability of the Sheffield Hallam University Estates Strategy
2. Define objectives of the work process the ODF will contribute to	Design the study so it takes account of all relevant dimensions (Management Task)	Analyse the different factors affecting modal choice (Analytical Task)	Analysis of initial Estates Vision to assess sustainability and further issues to address in the strategy (Analytical Task)
3. Prepare tailored version of the ODF	See Table 5.7	See Table 5.8	Annex 1 of Appendix 4 and structure of Table A5.1 (Note 1)
4. Use tailored version of the ODF in analytical/management task	Apply questions in Table 5.7 to the research design	Apply questions in Table 5.8 to potential actions	Produce report (Appendix 5)
5. Produce recommendations/outcomes	Research design produced, covering sampling issues, survey process and content etc.	Identify nature of the evidence base required to determine actions	Conclusions on sustainability of the Estates Vision and recommendations on further issues to address
6. Implement recommendations	Study undertaken	Collect evidence base	Use report in development of the strategy
7. Return to Stage 2	Use of the ODF within the study (potential analytical use of the ODF)	In the light of the evidence base, identify potential actions (potential use of ODF in management task)	Develop detailed Estates Strategy (potential use of ODF in management task)

Note 1 : the third example is slightly different, in that the 'tailored version' of the ODF goes beyond the usual grid to encapsulate a wider method for undertaking sustainability appraisals

The main evidence as to the usefulness of the ODF for partnership working in Barnsley was demonstrated back in 2000, through the stakeholder workshop outlined in Sections 1.7 and 2.8, but Case Study 1 suggests that thinking in a dimensional way has had an impact on John Woodside's subsequent development of the Community Planning division in Barnsley, where he has used matrix management approaches to try to cover the dimensional implications of partnership working.

Case Study 2, on the relevance of the ODF to Investment Planning in Yorkshire and the Humber illustrates a number of potential uses, in particular as a way of making cross-cutting themes comprehensive and more relevant to project development and appraisal. Unfortunately the direction that the review of the Regional Economic Strategy took meant that practical opportunities to use my approach will have to wait for now.

Case Study 3, on the use of the ODF in impact assessment and sustainability analysis has had more success in finding practical applications. It has been successfully piloted in appraising Sheffield Hallam University's Estates Vision, and I have had feedback that the analysis I undertook was useful.

These case studies are mainly using the 'checklist' properties of the ODF. At a much deeper level, the Scientific Research programme outlined in Chapter 7 has the potential to develop theories on public policies and their implementation, which would have much wider practical uses. The ODF itself is an analytical tool, but it could be used in conjunction with existing management tools, or contribute to the development of new management tools.

Even with the ODF at the current stage of development, there is a method, outlined in Section 8.8, whereby it can be applied to any given management issue, in a context-specific way.

At the same time, some of the practical uses outlined in this chapter could be equally useful outside the public sector. For example, the sustainability appraisal method in Case Study 3 could be used by the private and voluntary/community sectors to help incorporate sustainability into their business plans.

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, the attempts to use the ODF in practical management situations go further than Danermark et al.'s six stage research model does in making the links between theory and practice. While it has not always turned out to be feasible to use the ODF to achieve practical benefits, nevertheless all the case studies contribute to the sixth and final stage in the six stage model, *Concretisation and contextualisation*. This is because even where there has not been an explicit task for it to be utilized in (for example in Case Study 2), the ODF has been accepted as an analytical tool with explanatory power.

9. Contribution to Knowledge

As a way of conceptualising the different dimensions involved in the delivery of public services, the ODF constitutes a significant contribution to knowledge. The thesis has compared the ODF with existing theories from a variety of sources and found that while there are examples of theoretical frameworks which attempt to identify the dimensions involved in delivering services, the ODF represents a significant advance on anything which has gone before. The thesis claims that, for anyone who holds to an objective ontology, the ODF represents faithfully the dimensional complexity of service delivery and organisational structures/work programmes. The form of the ODF derives from practice in the management of regeneration programmes, but in Chapter 5 it was demonstrated that it can also be built up from basic building blocks of human existence – people undertaking activities in time and space. The ODF therefore constitutes an important new resource to be used towards the elusive goal of holistic governance.

Furthermore, the methods used in the thesis are a contribution to knowledge in their own right, developing critical realist concepts in new directions and applying existing theories in new contexts.

In this summary of the contributions to knowledge arising from the thesis I will look first at the methods used (Section 9.1) and second at the ODF itself (Section 9.2). I will then look at the implications of my findings, suggesting why they are important (Section 9.3) and reflect on my 'research journey' (Section 9.4).

9.1 Contributions to knowledge through the methods used in the DBA

The influence of critical realist concepts upon the methods used in the social sciences is growing, but related to the totality of social science research it is still very much in its infancy. Danermark et al's six stage model of explanatory research based on critical realism is one of the few methods explicitly underpinned by a critical realist philosophy. Although 'Explaining Society' was first published in Swedish in 1997, and in English in 2002, the six stage model has had a limited impact upon social science research so far (Karlsson, 2006 private correspondence). Therefore, my use of Danermark et al's six stage model of explanatory research based on critical realism is important in demonstrating the utility of the model. The six stage model has led to an emphasis on reflection and reconfiguration of concepts and ideas within the thesis,

with the gathering of data being subsidiary, which is unusual in analytical research. The conscious use of different modes of inference, balancing deduction and induction with the less common abduction and retroduction, has in this instance helped with the pro-active development of the subject matter for the thesis – the ODF – during the research process, particularly in Chapters 4 and 5 on coherence.

Other developments of critical realist concepts in the thesis have been new formulations, rather than the application of other people's theories. The Institutional, Realist Account of the research process, introduced in Chapter 1, and the Forms of Research framework used in Chapter 3 are new models which have helped to frame my understanding of my research and carry out different tasks in a logical and coordinated manner. They have helped me to explain what I am doing in the research, and equally importantly what I am not doing, and to rationalise the constraints and frustrations I have faced as a researcher trying to promote his own ideas. The Institutional, Realist Account of the research process and the Forms of Research framework could have wider applicability in applied research contexts.

I have also given prominence to other conceptual frameworks, which may have been around for a long time, but fit particularly well with my interests. The main example is the rational abstraction/chaotic conception distinction, used briefly by Sayer (1992:138-139) but which I find of fundamental significance to management research. I have therefore used it extensively, particularly in Chapters 4 and 5 on coherence, as a test which could be applied to any management tool. By and large, the ODF is a rational abstraction when assessed against the criteria I devised to measure this. The methods I used to operationalise the rational abstraction/chaotic conception distinction could be applied to other management tools and aids. This, in itself, could be an important contribution to knowledge, given the huge reliance upon management tools and aids made across the private and public sectors on a global scale.

One of the theoretical claims I have made is that Pawson and Tilley's formulation, context + mechanism = outcome, needs to be adapted to reflect the dynamism of social processes, which mean that 'context' is too passive a term. Instead, the outcomes from public services need to be viewed as deriving from the inter-relationships between management processes and social processes (see Appendix 2).

Not all the sources which underpin my method are derived from critical realism. The four theories of truth derived from John Darwin's alethic pluralism have been used to assess the worth of the ODF. The translation of the theories of truth into criteria against which to evaluate a model or a theoretical framework has worked well here, and could equally well do so in other contexts. In the chapter on the consensus theory of truth I have also drawn on John Darwin's revival of Lakatos' Scientific Research Programmes to outline the potential for a new corpus of theory for public policy, based on the fusion of the ODF with systems theory, network theory, realist social theory and other related fields. Therefore the thesis has drawn on different elements of John Darwin's proposals for linking theory and practice in management research, in a way which I am not aware has been done before.

9.2 The ODF itself as a contribution to knowledge

The use of the four theories of truth to assess the ODF has provided a number of reasons to justify the ODF being viewed as a contribution to knowledge, as follows

- it has been exhaustively analysed for coherence, both as a whole and as a sum of individual parts. Many of the conceptual weaknesses or ambiguities have been largely resolved or explained by the end of Chapter 5, when I was able to get to the stage of producing versions of the ODF for different subject matter in a deductive way. Not every question is resolved, but the basic concept is comprehensive and consistent and aspects of it are elegant. The main outstanding problem concerns language – the impossibility of finding terms with exact and unambiguous meanings to represent all the categories in the ODF
- it helps explain the difficulties of joined up working, both at an intensive level (structures for regeneration in Barnsley around the turn of the millenium) and at an extensive level (government policy in Britain since 1997)
- some theoretical frameworks have included a similar dimensional approach to the ODF, including the influential public administration school in the US. There is a platform to build on to generate a consensus around the ODF. However, more significant than this is the potential to develop a Scientific Research Programme for holistic public policy based on a critical realist philosophy, which would incorporate the ODF.

- it is useful in practical management contexts, with a number of different uses for the ODF having been developed already. Most significant so far has been its use in sustainability appraisal, where a management tool based on the ODF has been successfully piloted.

Within the thesis I have been able to identify the ODF as a general descriptive theory and make explicit its limitations. What the ODF is not is as important as what it is. It is of universal applicability – any activity could be conceptualised in the terms of the ODF. However, it only covers those aspects of human experience which are at the level of analytical/rational social science, on the right hand side of Wilbur's four quadrant model – it does not cover the subject matter of the psychological and semiological sciences, such as behaviour and emotions.

While the thesis contains a powerful case for the ODF to become part of a Scientific Research Programme for holistic public policy based on realist social theory, it could also influence many other areas of management theory. In particular, it could be developed in tandem with the dimensional modelling techniques in data warehousing (see sub-section 7.5.6). As a way of thinking about the world, the ODF has the potential to influence almost any branch of social science theory.

9.3 Implications and significance of the contribution to knowledge

In Chapter 1 the ODF was referred to as a tool which could help with a variety of tasks, including

- preparing a strategy
- devising an organisational structure
- overcoming a problem in service delivery
- evaluating a service
- linking services together in a better way.

The thesis has confirmed that it should be a good analytical tool to use to help with these management tasks. It is not a model to tell you how to do something – rather it is a way of conceptualising and modelling any of these tasks. It does not provide the answers, but it helps to ensure that a balanced approach is taken, and highlights whether any obvious dimensions of a management problem have been underplayed. In Chapter 8 I have demonstrated how the ODF can assist with practical issues, to be used at different stages in an iterative sequence of analytical and management tasks.

The ODF's role in the critique of existing practice translates into practical measures. One of the points which arises time and time again in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 concerns the design of programmes. There have been thematic programmes, area-based programmes and social group programmes, without acknowledging that any policy intervention has impacts across all themes felt differentially by people from different social groupings and from different areas. The ODF helps to frame policy issues so that interventions can be made from this starting point.

The development of the ODF has been orientated to the delivery of public services. The efficient and effective delivery of public services which meet the needs of their customers and other stakeholders is one of the most critical questions at the moment, both in western democracies and in Third World countries. The ODF could help to make public services more efficient and effective. For example, the sustainability appraisal technique developed in Chapter 8, with its focus on the trade offs between the interests of different stakeholders, could have widespread uses. Across the whole world there is an increasing use of impact assessment techniques and sustainability frameworks, but as far as I am aware none of the appraisal tools have the coherence and underpinning theoretical rigour of the ODF.

There is an increasing acknowledgement in public service delivery of unintended consequences arising from new interventions. As a framework for looking at the effects of a policy intervention across different dimensions, the ODF could help to anticipate the consequences of policy interventions more comprehensively. Use of the ODF in this way would not eliminate unintended consequences, but it would allow some of the less obvious impacts to be anticipated.

The ODF is a tool that has scalability – it is equally relevant to global and local issues. It could help with the strategic planning of international programmes and also with the attention to detail needed to ensure a particular project meets its objectives.

9.4 Reflections on the research process

In Chapter 1, I introduced my Institutional, Realist Account of the research process. I would argue that this conceptualisation of the task I have been engaged in over a four year period has helped me to get through what has been a long and sometimes difficult research journey. It has helped me to understand the relations between my

role as a researcher and the object of the research, the ODF, in a context where I could easily have 'lost the plot' if I had not been clear about this relationship. It has assisted me to understand the lack of interest I have sometimes encountered amongst potential stakeholders in the DBA, which has limited the empirical content of the DBA thesis, and find ways around this problem.

The Institutional, Realist Account has been a flexible framework, able to accommodate both the setbacks and frustrations in the research process, but also the 'eureka' moments, when breakthroughs are made. For me, the 'eureka' moments have mainly been those when I have reformulated the ODF, often after months of prompting from my supervisors, Jim Chandler and John Darwin. One of the questions which we came back to repeatedly was whether I could reduce the different versions of the ODF down to a common basis. Eventually, I managed to do this, without compromising the context-specific nature of the ODF (Section 5.4).

In Section 1.6, I indicated my ambitions to use the DBA thesis as a launching pad for further uses of the ODF and development of the contribution to knowledge. My approach to the thesis has been influenced by these ambitions, for example in Chapter 7 when I set out the theories that might contribute to a Scientific Research Programme with the ODF at its heart.

Section 9.3 summarises the huge potential for using the DBA to address public policy issues. However, the difficulties I have encountered so far in engaging stakeholders in potential applications of the ODF warn against getting carried away.

In Section 7.2 I suggested some reasons why policies and programmes are often expressed in terms of a single dimension or sub-dimension. Further research might be able to probe into this issue in greater depth, perhaps asking decision-makers why they present public policy issues in particular ways. Such research would help to confirm the barriers which stand in the way of the utilisation of a full dimensional approach.

The uses of the ODF in public policy where there would seem to be the least barriers tend to be in the form of appraisal tools concerned with establishing whether all issues have been addressed in a policy or programme. Examples are impact assessment and sustainability appraisal. However, 'tick box' uses of the ODF bring with them a potential danger - that where the ODF is used, it will degenerate into a list of separate dimensions, viewed as silos by over-rigid bureaucrats. The aim is to

encourage agile thought processes, making connections between seemingly unrelated issues and joining up the implementation of different programmes, but it might not be used that way.

While the focus of the thesis has been upon public policy, it is important to recognise that the practical applications of the ODF could benefit all sectors. For example, the ODF could assist in the organisation and use of information, building upon the dimensional modelling concept in data warehousing (Section 7.5.6). This application might be attractive to the corporate private sector on a commercial basis.

The end of the thesis is just the beginning of the wider issue about the translation of knowledge into action.

Appendix 1 The Haldane Report – an influential example of dimensional thinking

The 1918 *Report of the Machinery of Government Committee*, usually referred to as the Haldane Report after the main author, had a very strong influence over the nature of Government in Great Britain in the twentieth century (Hood, 2005, Challis et al. 1988, Perri 6 et al., 2002). Three aspects of the report stand out as reinforcing the quest for rationality in decision making (Challis et al, 1988:8-9). These were

- the emphasis on the role of the Cabinet in coordinating and controlling the activities of Government Departments
- enforcing the principle that policy should flow from information
- defining a principle for the structuring of Government Departments.

The final characteristic of the Haldane Report links directly to the ODF. The Haldane Report recognised that there were different defining principles which could be used to organise Government, and considered the merits of three different approaches. Table A1.1 lists Haldane’s defining principles and compares them with terms used by Perri 6 et al (2002) and by myself in the ODF.

Table A1.1 Terms used to define different dimensions for delivering Public Services

<i>Haldane Report, 1918</i>	<i>Perri 6 et al, 2002</i>	<i>Operational Dimensions Framework</i>
'nature of the service rendered to the community as a whole' or 'purpose'	function or similar activity or service provided by related professions	Contains elements of both function and theme dimensions
'class of persons dealt with'	clientele	Customer dimension
'devolution' or a 'Federal System'	Terri-torially organised governance	Space dimension

The Haldane Report referred to the question of devolution as being beyond the scope of its reference (Haldane, 1918, Para 17). However, it noted that where there was a Federal Government system, as in the United States, the competence of Central Government Departments in specific areas of knowledge was essential to facilitate devolution of power (Para 16). Whatever the arrangements for allocating responsibility between different tiers of Government, there will be decisions to be

made about the organisational principle for differentiating the work of different departments at the centre.

The Haldane Report concluded that there were only two options for the organisation of Departments at Central Government level, according to the 'nature of the service rendered to the community' or 'the class of persons dealt with' (Para 18). Organising by the class of persons dealt with (paupers, insured persons, children, unemployed) would lead to a tendency to 'Lilliputian administration' - departments covering too few people but too wide a range of needs (Para 18). It was felt that organising according to the service rendered to the community as a whole would encourage greater clarity and minimize overlaps between departments (Para 19). One of the main advantages of such an arrangement were that it would encourage the development of specialised capacity and the acquisition of knowledge within the organisational structure (Para 20).

The Haldane Report acknowledged that there would be 'incidental overlapping' in the structure being advocated. The solution to this was for 'systematic arrangements for the collaboration of Departments jointly interested in particular spheres of work' (Para 19). It was also stated that the work of one department would sometimes be of secondary interest to another one, in which case there would need to be in 'close and constant touch'. Sometimes this would require 'standing joint bodies' (Para 27). The Haldane Report recommended that the business of government be divided up into the following main divisions,

- Finance
- National Defence and External Affairs
- Research and Information
- Production (including Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries), Transport and Commerce
- Employment
- Supplies
- Education
- Health
- Justice

Haldane's primary organising principle of 'the nature of the service rendered' is a combination of the function and theme dimensions in the ODF. Health, Education and

Employment are ODF themes, but Finance and Research and Information are functions. Production, Transport and Commerce includes concepts from both function and theme dimensions. If Haldane's organising structure had been fully implemented, it would have been important to recognise that the relationships between different divisions would have varied because of this. For example, Research and Information would have had a qualitatively different relationship to Health, compared to the relationship between Employment and Health. In practice, the Haldane Report was only partially implemented. A Ministry of Health was created, but not a Ministry of Production, a Ministry of Employment or a Ministry of Justice. This might be interpreted as technical efficiency taking second place to political expediency (Vernon and Mansergh, 1940:51).

Great Britain's adoption (albeit partial) of a functional/thematic structure for Central Government was not always mirrored in other countries. For example, in the United States 'clientele based government' has historically been used more than in this country, as a way of responding to particular interests. According to Perri 6 et al. (2002:11) the political culture in the United States is more amenable to this type of government than it is in Britain. However, the inter-war government structures in the United States seem to have suffered from the lack of a strong organising principle. The 1937 Report of the President's Committee on Administrative Arrangements found a multiplicity of agencies and lack of administrative management, creating waste and duplication. The solution proposed by the Committee was to create twelve major departments on the basis of 'purpose', mirroring very closely the Haldane Committee's proposals (Thomas, 1978:83-84).

The main significance of the Haldane Report to my case study lies in the way that the objective of coordinating the machinery of government incorporated an appreciation of choices in organising principles, which were expressed in ways which correspond to the dimensions in the ODF. Furthermore, communication within and between the major divisions of government was seen as an integral part of coordination. However, the Haldane Report is considered to have had limited impact in practice (Fry, 1969:425). Some of the key ideas, such as the need for prior research and thought prior to action, had little impact on central government policy (Fry, 1969:425-6, Vernon and Mansbergh, 1940:52). Therefore, it is not possible to evaluate how the package of rational structures for government proposed in the report might have had a bearing on coordination of government in practice.

As is referred to in Chapter 4, Haldane's significance for the thesis as a whole lies not only in the role of the report in developing the structures of government in Great Britain, but also in the influence which he and other administrative theorists in Britain had over the development of scientific management principles more widely, including in the US, where Gulick's principles of organisation drew on Haldane's work. It is no coincidence that Gulick was one of the principal authors of the 1937 Report of the President's Committee on Administrative arrangements.

Later commentators criticised the Haldane Report for only identifying a choice between two methods of organising government, and failing to justify the favoured option (Simon, 1976:33-34). Indeed, some of the conceptual ambiguities in Haldane's conceptualisations, such as in the definition of 'purpose', were replicated in the Gulick's principles of organisation. These weaknesses were recognised by Simon, which ultimately reduced the influence of the principles of organisation approach upon management theory (see section 4.3.1).

Appendix 2 Analysis of Pawson and Tilley's formula for causal explanation

In Chapter 3 I recounted how the discovery of critical realism in the early stages of the DBA course prompted me to relate my own conceptual frameworks to those social theories developed from a critical realist position. In Section 3.2 and Table 3.3 I referred to the paper I had prepared for the annual International Association for Critical Realism Conference in 2002, in which I proposed a modification to Pawson and Tilley's formula, Context + Mechanism = Outcome, from my analysis of the levels of scientific investigation (Breese, 2002, Pawson and Tilley, 1997). I felt that my approach was truer to the underpinning critical realist method promoted by Sayer (1992:109).

Comparing Pawson and Tilley's 'context + mechanism = outcome' formulation with Sayer's structures of causal explanation, there are some important differences. As well as the deeper notions of structure in Sayer's model, his reference to specific conditions for the activation of causal powers and liabilities is different from Pawson and Tilley's 'context', because it is specified that the conditions reside in 'other objects with powers and liabilities' (Sayer, 1992:109). While the elaboration on the term 'context' as 'pre-existing social context' (Pawson and Tilley, 1997:70), acknowledges a link with social processes, I would still suggest that the term 'context' is too passive, and that the examples Pawson and Tilley give of the application of the 'context + mechanism = outcome' formulation need scrutiny as to how far they reflect the nature of social processes within the explanatory framework.

One of the examples used by Pawson and Tilley is the installation of CCTV in a car park. They put forward a number of mechanisms through which such an act might affect car crime rates. Some of these are directly attributable to the CCTV itself, such as the fear of being 'caught on camera', whereas others rely on the linkages between the CCTV system and other services, such as the more effective deployment of security staff. Under 'context' are factors such as the offender:offence ratio and the existing patterns of usage of the car park. A series of studies would be required to connect complex patterns of mechanisms and contexts to each other and draw out the lessons for achieving policy goals. (Pawson and Tilley, 1997:78-82)

In my conceptualisation of types of research (see Table 3.3), I would suggest that the social processes involved in car crime are the secondary object of the research and

the primary object is the management process involved in the introduction and operation of the CCTV system, in conjunction with the other public policy interventions which combine with it. The social processes equate to Pawson and Tilley's 'context', while the management processes equate to their 'mechanisms'. I would suggest that it may lessen the explanatory power to describe factors such as the numbers of individuals committing the car crime and the patterns of usage of the car park as 'context', because they are dynamic factors, changing over time and influenced by the introduction of CCTV, and other management processes used to control car crime. The studies of the effect of the introduction of the CCTV system need to look at how its introduction changes the dynamic interaction between social processes and management processes, and track the changes over time. The ODF could be used to help to take a systematic approach to identifying and analysing the social and management processes involved when new public policy instruments are introduced. In this way it would be part of a method for applying Sayer's structures of causal explanation and Pawson's realist synthesis. The end result would be the pinpointing of causal relationships which would be specified in such a manner as to be transferable from one context to another. Using the example of CCTV and car crime, there might be factors for success which rely upon engagement of specific stakeholder groups, and specific functional combinations of public service interventions which reinforce each other in working towards desired outcomes.

Appendix 3 An example of the use of the operational dimensions model – analysis of the Community Cohesion (Cantle) Report.

In order to demonstrate the practical use of the operational dimensions model, I have undertaken a simple analysis of the Home Office publication, 'Community Cohesion : A report of the Independent Review Team, 2001', often referred to as the Cantle Report, after Ted Cantle who chaired the review team. The team's work was one of the investigations undertaken into the disturbances in the spring and summer of 2001 in parts of Bradford, Burnley and Oldham. The report is a high profile one, on an issue of very high concern, related to the regeneration/neighbourhood renewal field. A key feature of the report was that it argued for more thematic regeneration programmes rather than an emphasis upon geographical areas, hence making recommendations on the basis of what I would call operational dimensions.

The overall approach taken in the Cantle Report towards explanation and recommendations for future action could be subjected to analysis using a realist framework. The disturbances could be viewed as 'events' and be subjected to a variety of different realist theories, as I discussed in Section 3 above. My objective here is more modest, to look at the Cantle Report as a text and see how it deals with the seven operational dimensions. I have no knowledge of the areas where the disturbances took place nor of the work of Cantle's team, other than through reading the report. I am in no position to make value judgements about the report, except from the limited perspective of my own theoretical model.

The Cantle Report produced 67 recommendations designed to increase community cohesion, which is the central concept defining the investigation's purpose. The recommendations were set out under the following headings,

- people and values
- political and community leadership
- political organisations
- strategic partnerships
- regeneration programmes, initiatives and funding
- integration and segregation
- younger people
- education
- community organisation
- disadvantaged and disaffected communities
- policing
- housing
- employment
- the Press and Media

Immediately one can see that some of the headings fall within one or other of my seven operational dimensions. *Younger people* is a customer grouping, *housing* is a theme. The resources dimension is covered in *Regeneration programmes, initiatives and funding*, while the spatial dimension is included in *Integration and Segregation*. Some of the headings, such as *the Press and Media*, do not fall within any of the operational dimensions.

In terms of the operational dimensions model it is apparent that some dimensions figure more strongly in the headings than others. Some regeneration themes, eg environment, and customer groups, eg disability, do not feature. Furthermore, there is a real mixture of different dimensions in the headings. To go further into the content

of the report I have done an analysis of the 67 recommendations, in terms of the theme and customer dimensions (Tables A3.1 and A3.2). Because of the nature of the investigation ethnicity and community development figure throughout the recommendations, but for most themes and customer groups it is relatively easy to see where they are included. There has clearly been a process of prioritisation that has dictated which themes and customer groups are seen as the most important contributors to building community cohesion. However, the report does advocate a comprehensive approach, through general diversity training and the development of local strategies incorporating all relevant themes in that locality. The operational dimensions analysis would be a useful tool to aid the process of translating the recommendations to local circumstances in such a way as to cover all relevant themes and customer groups.

Although for analytical purposes the operational dimensions model is presented in linear terms, for explanatory purposes the power of the model lies in the inter-relationships between the dimensions. For example, in the Cattle Report, a key issue is the disaffection felt by many young people, and the recommendations aim to address the key reasons for this. Perhaps, using the operational dimensions model a very systematic approach to this issue could be taken which would produce a rigorous explanatory framework.

Table A3.1 References to customer groups and diversity issues in the recommendations from the Community Cohesion (Cantle) Report

	Main Heading	Other reference in the recommendations
Ethnicity		Throughout the recommendations
Gender		6.43 (Male teachers)
Age	Younger people, 6.29 – 6.35	6.2 (Younger people) 6.24 (Younger people) 6.49 (Youths of Pakistani origin) 6.51 (Young people) 6.57 (Youth provision)
Disability		
Sexuality		
Disadvantage/Poverty	Disadvantaged and Disaffected Communities, 6.47 – 6.49	6.3 (Disadvantaged and disaffected groups) 6.24 (Poverty and deprivation)
Diversity		6.12 (Diversity education and training) 6.17 (LSP Accreditation) 6.43 (Training for school teachers and governors) 6.55 (Models of diversity training - policing)

Table A3.2 References to different themes in the recommendations from the Community Cohesion (Cantle) Report

	Main Heading	Other reference in recommendations
Economic Development		6.59
Employment	Employment 6.61 – 6.65	6.9
Education/Training	Education 6.36 – 6.43	6.10, 6.25, 6.28, 6.34, 6.58, 6.61, 6.62
Environment		
Sport and Leisure		6.23
Culture and the Arts		6.23, 6.36, 6.37, 6.41, 6.44
Community development	Community Organisations 6.44 – 6.46	Many
Community Safety	Policing 6.50 – 6.56	6.65
Health		6.57
Housing	Housing 6.57 – 6.60	
Transport		

Appendix 4 Operational Dimensions Framework for Public Services – Issues for Community Partnerships as Potential Service Deliverers

Type of Dimension	Inputs	Processes	Outcomes	Outcomes	Contextual	Contextual	Contextual
Dimension	1. Resources - Combination of human and physical resources and funding	2. Functions - Breakdown of the different activities involved in delivering a service.	3. Customers - impacts on different groups in society	4. Theme - impacts on different aspects of life. What kind of changes in people's lives is the service aiming to achieve?	5. Time over which service processes and outcomes are delivered	6. Space – geographical area over which service is delivered	7. Stakeholders with an interest in the service Who are they? What are their interests in service delivery and achievements?
Categories within the dimension	Human Resources, Capital Resources, Financial Resources	Could be on the utilization of different resources, or by management and operations, or using the project cycle	Breaks down into 'diversity' groups – ethnic origin, age, gender, disability, sexual orientation.	Themes include housing, social care, health, crime, education, sport, environment, employment, transport, culture,	Different temporal units come into play in service delivery, eg day, week, month, year?	Different spatial units, both in administrative terms and in the perceptions of service users.	Internal stakeholders - involved in delivery of the service itself - and external stakeholders.
Questions for community partnerships as deliverers of public services	Other potential service deliverers usually have access to more extensive resources than community partnerships. How can community partnerships obtain the necessary resources? What compensating advantages might they have?	How might partnerships deliver services in different ways from other agencies? How efficient can they be? What opportunities are there to meet a number of different policy objectives through the core activities of the enterprise?	Service delivery often depends on differentiating the needs of different customer groups? How might community partnerships be able to do this? Does local delivery inhibit the efficient provision of services for minority groups?	Which particular customer needs are most appropriate for delivery through community partnerships? How would they deal with the joining up of services meeting different needs, eg for education, employment and housing?	Over what timescale is the service to be delivered? How long do contractual terms specify? What scope is there to build up the service over time?	What geographical units are used for organising the service? How do they relate to the area covered by the community partnership? How is provision across the whole administrative unit, eg the Borough or the sub-region, to be coordinated?	What stakeholders need to be represented in the overview of the delivery of the service? What are the implications for different stakeholders of the community partnership becoming involved in delivery of public services?

Richard Breese

1. Introduction

This report looks at the implications for sustainability of an outline Estates Vision, which is in the early stages of preparation by Sheffield Hallam University (SHU). It is based upon the Operational Dimensions Framework (ODF), a general descriptive theory about human activity, which is the subject matter of my Doctorate in Business Administration (DBA) thesis at SHU. The Operational Dimensions Framework can be translated into management tools for different purposes, one of which is to assess sustainability. Within its terms of reference, the ODF is comprehensive in its coverage of the dimensions affecting any kind of service to the public. It therefore provides a mechanism through which to address all the different aspects of sustainability.

The purpose of the report is to assist in the development of the outline Estates Vision into a more detailed strategy, which addresses all the key sustainability issues, and appreciates the areas where different stakeholders may have different interests which are potentially in conflict with each other.

First there is a brief review of the development of sustainability as a concept over the past 15 years, in Section 2. Then the series of questions which comprise the Rapid Appraisal Tool are applied to the outline Estates Vision, in Section 3. This section concludes with a summary of the main sustainability issues for the further development of the Estates Vision.

2. Sustainability

Sustainability has become increasingly used at different levels of government – global, European, national and local – as the key concept behind public policy. Thus in England the Government we have a national ‘Sustainable Communities Plan’ (ODPM, 2004). The local agenda for delivering sustainability was set out at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 and reaffirmed at the World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002 (Blair and Evans, 2004, P5). In the UK, the Government’s the definition of sustainable development is

‘meeting four key objectives at the same time in the UK and the world as a whole:

- social progress which recognises the needs of everyone;
- effective protection of the environment;
- prudent use of natural resources;
- maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth.

(A Better Quality of Life, DETR, 1999, P8).

Blair and Evans highlight the economic, social and environmental dimensions to this definition, and suggest that in practical terms sustainable approaches are those which

tie together all the dimensions in a joined up way. They give an example from Newark where this has been achieved. Blair and Evans sum up the challenge of sustainability as resolving the tension between ultimate ends (a good quality of life for everyone) and ultimate means (maintaining the life-support capacity of the earth) (Blair and Evans, 2004, P?). The UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy, launched in March 2005 has a goal for sustainable development which is similar to this, 'to enable all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life without compromising the quality of life of future generations' (ODPM, 2005, P7).

While the goal of sustainable development is straightforward, the indicators to measure it are not. The UK Sustainable Development Strategy refers to 68 of them. Between them, they cover a huge range of public policy concerns, reflecting the all-embracing definition of sustainability now being used.

In this context, the Operational Dimensions Framework (ODF) is a suitable tool for assessing sustainability because it identifies different dimensions and enables a systematic and comprehensive approach to be taken. Because of the complexity of the task, an ordering framework will help to break it down into logical parts. It enables the 68 indicators to be covered superficially, and identifies which ones might need more detailed assessment. It also enables the different dimensions to a sustainability issue to be analysed, in contrast to the one-dimensional list of indicators.

Using the ODF a list of questions can be generated, starting with very basic questions on what it is that is being assessed, what the purpose of the appraisal is and the stage reached. It then asks that the key stakeholders be identified. The appraisal of sustainability issues is differentiated by stakeholder, and generates a grid which covers thematic effects, effects on social groups, geographical effects and temporal (time) effects. The key sustainability issues are identified, followed by an assessment of how well they are met and any outstanding questions. The Rapid Appraisal ends with the key issues being identified.

In the case of the SHU Estates Vision, which is at a very early stage in its development, the Rapid Appraisal concentrates on those issues which will need further development, as the Vision is finalised and turned into a more detailed strategy.

3. Application of the Rapid Appraisal Tool (see Annex 1 for the list of questions on a single sheet)

1. What is it that is subject to appraisal? What is its coverage, in terms of client groups, themes, area covered, timescale?

The outline Estates Vision is subject to appraisal. Specifically, the subject matter is just 3 powerpoint slides, covering

- the 'Strong Core'
- Hub/Core – Spokes – Rim
- HEFCE Guidance on Estates Strategies (adapted).

The Estates Vision does not contain a lot of detail thus far. It is limited to an outline of various thematic functions of the university, some spatial concepts, and an outline of the nature of an Estates Strategy for a university.

2. How does it impact upon the world?

The Estates Strategy will be used by Sheffield Hallam University in its development and use of its property portfolio, and the way that services are delivered by the university and partner organisations.

3. What is the purpose of the appraisal?

The appraisal is taking place at a very early stage in the development of the vision. Its purpose is therefore to assist in the development of the outline Estates Vision into a more detailed strategy, which addresses all the key sustainability issues, and appreciates the areas where different stakeholders may have different interests which are potentially in conflict with each other.

4. Who are the key stakeholders?

- *those preparing the plan/delivering the service*
SHU Corporate Management, SHU Facilities Management,
- *those at whom it is aimed*
users of University buildings and services, ie SHU teaching, research and support staff, SHU students, both residential and non-residential, other users of buildings, eg for conferences
- *other groups putting resources into the plan/service*
other land and property owners, funders of investment in property, partners in learning provision, local authority regulatory functions,
- *other interested groups*
funders of learners, adjacent landowners, other HE Institutions, service providers, such as SYPTE, SY Police, strategic partners, general public (local), general public (global)

5. For each key stakeholder, what are the effects, in terms of

- *differential effects on social groups, eg by gender, ethnicity, disability etc*
- *what aspects of life (themes) are affected and how, eg work, income, learning and skills, active leisure, arts, home-based activities, community activity, travel patterns, environment experienced, health/welfare, being/feeling safe?*
- *where will the effects be felt (in geographical space)?*
- *how will the effects change over time?*

The key effects are covered in Table 1. Main issues are referred to first, followed by an assessment of the outline Estates Vision and/or further questions to do with that issue.

6. What are the non-human resources involved/affected, eg energy sources, raw materials, land, water, air, human artefacts (both heritage and waste),

biodiversity/natural environment? For each one, what are the issues for resource depletion or enhancement?

The effects on non-human resources have largely been covered in the effects on SHU Facilities Management and the General Public (both local and global) in Table 1.

7. From 5. and 6. above, what are the main sustainability effects? How might the plan/strategy or service be changed to mitigate the effects? What might be the other implications of making these changes? What further more detailed work is required to assess sustainability implications in further detail?

Essentially, the Sheffield Hallam University Estates Vision fits well with sustainability criteria. Based around a core in the City Centre, it fits with the policy emphasis on urban renaissance. Access by public transport is good and links with other urban centre uses is facilitated. Student accommodation is close to the university campus and to other facilities used by students, so there is no need to travel long distances.

The Estates Vision is based around existing buildings and aims to enter into partnerships with other agencies, minimizing the need for new buildings and using the potential of ICT. The spoke and rim areas will provide access to university services without having to travel into the core.

There are key inputs needed to underpin an Estates Vision, which may, or may not be in place, such as an audit of the condition of buildings and their lifespan, the energy efficiency of existing buildings and access for people with disabilities. There are other University buildings, such as the Psalter Lane Campus, whose position is unclear in the documentation supplied.

It is inevitable, given the stage reached so far, that there will be outstanding questions about the sustainability of the vision. Often the issues involve a trade-off between the interests of different stakeholders. They include

- the potential for using renewable energy and increasing energy efficiency (in the interests of global stakeholders) which may not recoup the capital costs (in the interests of the economic viability of the university)
- the implications of the partnership approach, in terms of the geographical extent of the spokes and rim. Does the rim extend to international partnerships? What are the implications for quality standards for university services. For example, if the buildings used to access SHU services are owned by other agencies, what, if any, standards are mandatory for access by people with disabilities? How might the interests of partners diverge from those of SHU, and what are the implications?
- While the Estates Vision is clearly anticipating the increased use of ICT in learning in the future, there are a number of different aspects to this, such as the implications for university teaching and research staff and for student accommodation, which need to be covered.

- While the Estates Vision is clear on the geographical implications for learning and research, it says less about accommodation for students. There are a number of issues here, for example concerning the current level of housing development in the City Centre, which could present opportunities for the university.
- The implications for residential areas in Sheffield and how SHU's approach links to Sheffield University's student village needs to be worked through. The potential conflicts with other residents in certain locations needs to be addressed.
- The current stage reached in the new Sheffield Local Development Framework presents opportunities to link the Estates Vision to emerging land use planning policies.
- The Estates Vision needs to have a time dimension built into it, which acknowledges the potential conflicts between short and long term sustainability. This would lead into an Implementation Plan.

Annex 1 – List of questions in the Rapid Appraisal of Sustainability

1. What is it that is subject to appraisal? Is it

- a strategy or plan
- a service to the public
- some other kind of activity or project?

What is its coverage, in terms of

- client groups
- themes
- area covered
- timescale

2. How does it impact upon the world?

Eg in the case of a strategy/plan it might be through identifying priorities for public investment or acting as a control over the type and location of development

3. What is the purpose of the appraisal? At what stage is it taking place?

4. Who are the key stakeholders? The list needs to include

- those preparing the plan/delivering the service
- those at whom it is aimed
- other groups putting resources into the plan/service
- other interested groups

5. For each key stakeholder, what are the effects, in terms of

- differential effects on social groups, eg by gender, ethnicity, disability etc
- what aspects of life (themes) are affected and how, eg work, income, learning and skills, active leisure, arts, home-based activities, community activity, travel patterns, environment experienced, health/welfare, being/feeling safe?
- where will the effects be felt (in geographical space)?
- how will the effects change over time?

6. What are the non-human resources involved/affected, eg energy sources, raw materials, land, water, air, human artefacts (both heritage and waste), biodiversity/natural environment? For each one, what are the issues for resource depletion or enhancement?

7. From 5. and 6. above, what are the main sustainability effects? How might the plan/strategy or service be changed to mitigate the effects? What might be the other implications of making these changes? What **further more detailed work** is required to assess sustainability implications in further detail?

Table A5.1 Stakeholder analysis of the sustainability of the outline Sheffield Hallam University Estates Vision

	<i>Thematic interests</i>	<i>Effects on social groups</i>	<i>Geographical effects</i>	<i>Temporal effects</i>
Those preparing the plan/delivering the service SHU Corporate Governance	Economic viability of the University <i>The Estates vision fits in with an economic strategy based on making the most of existing assets. It has potential to contribute to an economically viable approach</i>	Range and balance of groups served by the University <i>The partnership approach and hub-spokes-rim concept provides a good basis for a diverse customer base locally. On an international scale, does the strategy fit with the expectations of foreign students?</i>	Area served by the University <i>The partnership approach and hub-spoke-rim concept provides a strong local identity and also flexibility in extending the sphere of influence of the university. How far does the 'rim' extend – is it global?</i>	Short and long term objectives <i>The Estates Vision needs a temporal dimension and an implementation plan to demonstrate it can meet both short and long term objectives</i>
SHU Estates function/ Facilities Management	Efficiency of the property portfolio for management purposes <i>The focus on a core area where most of the property management responsibilities lie should help efficiency. Links to buildings audit.</i>		Land recycling – new development on previously developed land <i>The strategy makes it likely that any development by the university itself would meet this criterion</i> Minimize risks of environmental hazards, eg flooding <i>Key risk management issue – probably can be dealt with as a site specific matter</i>	Lifespan and maintenance requirements of buildings <i>Estates Vision needs to be backed up by a Buildings Audit</i> Practical implications of building programmes for facilities management <i>Dependent on timetable for major investments in existing buildings</i>

Those at whom the service is aimed	Thematic interests	Effects on social groups	Geographical effects	Temporal effects
SHU teaching, research and support staff	<p>Quality and practicality of working environment <i>Do the existing buildings provide this? Will the Estates Vision fit with new teaching and research methods?</i></p>	<p>People with disabilities <i>How accessible is the university for staff with different disabilities? How would the Estates Vision improve access?</i></p>	<p>Travel patterns <i>Concentration on core area assists with access by non-car modes. How does working from home fit with the Estates Vision? What travel patterns for university staff are associated with the spokes and rim?</i></p>	<p>Short and long term perspectives <i>Links to the issue on changes in teaching and research methods over time</i></p>
SHU residential students	<p>Quality and practicality of studying and living environments <i>How good are the existing buildings for studying? Are there areas where improvement is needed? What is the balance in the types and tenure of residential accommodation? How does this fit with current trends in the housing market, eg city centre residential development, high density housing. What are the implications against sustainability criteria?</i></p>	<p>People with disabilities <i>How accessible is the core to people with different disabilities? What requirements will partners of the university have to meet in this regard? How can the needs of students with disabilities be met in their living accommodation and travel to and from the university?</i></p>	<p>Location of university accommodation Core area includes residential as well as learning facilities, reducing travel distances and access by non-car transport. The Estates Vision as it stands is less clear on the spatial strategy for residential accommodation than it is for learning facilities. <i>What is the policy – is it further concentration in the core area or dispersal? What are the implications for the quality of the living</i></p>	<p>Short term perspective (length of course) <i>One aim of the university could be to encourage students to stay in the area after they finish studying. How might the Estates strategy contribute to this aim – is concentration or dispersal of students more effective in this regard?</i></p>

SHU Residential Students continued	<p><i>Is it intended that students should work from their residential accommodation, through remote access, or not? What are the ICT implications?</i></p> <p>Quality and practicality of working environment <i>How good are the existing buildings for studying? Are there areas where improvement is needed? How far will these students work from their residence, through remote access? To what extent will they use spoke and rim facilities, rather than the core? What are the ICT implications?</i></p>		<p><i>environment for students, their interactions with local communities and the journeys students make for different purposes?</i></p>	
SHU non residential students		<p>People with disabilities <i>The core-spoke-rim strategy should assist with access by students with physical disabilities. The partnership approach needs to be accompanied by quality standards for access to facilities.</i></p>	<p>Travel patterns <i>The core-spokes-rim strategy has the potential to minimize distances travelled. The core is accessible by public transport – will there be requirements on spoke and rim facilities in this regard? To what extent will distance learning reduce the need for travel?</i></p>	Short term perspective (length of course)
Other users of buildings	<p>Quality of environment/ costs for use <i>The University is competing with other venues for conferences etc., so 'value for money' is key. The concentration on a core area should help to enhance quality and minimize costs</i></p>	<p>People with disabilities <i>Accessibility of buildings in the core is critical</i></p>	<p>Travel patterns <i>The good accessibility of the core area in relation to public transport networks, eg Sheffield Railway Station, is advantageous for sustainability</i></p>	

	<i>Thematic interests</i>	<i>Effects on social groups</i>	<i>Geographical effects</i>	<i>Temporal effects</i>
<p>Other groups putting resources into the plan/service</p>				
<p>Other land and property owners</p>	<p>Economic implications of purchase/sell/lease land and property <i>Implications of the Estates Strategy for the University's physical asset base and the financial implications of property sales and acquisitions will affect economic sustainability</i></p>		<p>Where the transactions take place</p>	
<p>Funders/developers of investment in university facilities</p>	<p>Economics and wider benefits/disbenefits of investment <i>The Estates Vision should put the university in a strong position to bring in funders, but it needs to be related to the type of funding arrangements the university wants to pursue. The partnership emphasis could lead to mixed funding arrangements, with shared benefits and risks</i></p>		<p>Where the investment/disinvestment takes place <i>Core area locations should be well placed to enhance their value in future, and there is an active property market. Thus the assets of the university should form a strong property portfolio.</i></p>	<p>Long term view on economics of investment</p>

	<i>Thematic interests</i>	<i>Effects on social groups</i>	<i>Geographical effects</i>	<i>Temporal effects</i>
Partners in learning provision	Economics and wider benefits/disbenefits of investment <i>The Estates Strategy provides scope for partners in learning provision to work with the university</i>	Access for range and balance of social groups <i>The flexibility in the Estates Strategy provides scope to work with different learning providers focussing on different groups in society</i>	Geographical locations <i>The main uncertainty in the Estates Strategy concerns the geographical boundaries of the spoke and rim areas</i>	Affected by the nature of the investment made
Local authority regulatory functions	Alignment with planning policy, compliance with regulatory standards		Planning policy <i>Sheffield City Council are developing preferred options for their new Local Development Framework. The Estates Strategy should fit well with it, but liaison with the Council may be beneficial at an early stage</i>	Timing of Estates Strategy in relation to plans and policies
Other interested groups				
Funders of learners	Quality/cost and mode of provision of learning <i>The Estates Vision should help SHU to be in a good position to provide competitive products</i>		Where learning takes place <i>The flexibility in location may enable different types of funders to work with the university, eg different types of firm are interested in different types of work-based learning</i>	
Adjacent occupiers	Effects on amenity <i>Mainly a consideration for residents living close to concentrations of students. Concentration on core area will help to minimize conflicts, but more clarity is needed</i>		Effect of estates strategy on land values	

	<i>Thematic interests</i>	<i>Effects on social groups</i>	<i>Geographical effects</i>	<i>Temporal effects</i>
Other HE Institutions	<p>Implications for collaboration/competition <i>There are obviously implications for Sheffield University at all levels. The spoke and rim areas will see the university's sphere of influence overlapping with other providers, with scope for both collaboration and competition</i></p>			
Service providers	<p>Effects of Estates Strategy on their service delivery <i>Will vary according to the service. Examples include bus operators, SY Police, Waste and Recycling services</i></p>			
Strategic partners	<p>Contribution from SHU to local economic, environmental and social objectives, alignment to partnership strategies <i>The Estates Vision needs to be related to the new Sheffield First Strategy for the city, recently launched</i></p>		<p>Geographical area, eg local community, City of Sheffield, South Yorkshire, City Region etc. <i>The Estates Vision links to strategies at different spatial levels, eg sub-region, region, and to other local authority areas outside Sheffield. The geographical extent of the spokes and rim is significant in this regard</i></p>	

	<i>Thematic interest</i>	<i>Effects on social groups</i>	<i>Geographical effects</i>	<i>Temporal effects</i>
General public (local)	<p>Quality of the built and green environment</p> <p><i>The University is a key part of the image of the city and its buildings and open spaces are an important part of the cityscape. Maintaining and enhancing their quality therefore has a beneficial effect.</i></p>			
General public (global)	<p>Effect on greenhouse gas emissions, energy use, use of other natural resources</p> <p><i>The Estates Vision provides a good basis for minimizing traffic emissions. There is also scope for a much wider approach to energy conservation and use of renewable energy sources in university buildings. In some cases this might be able to be linked to research being undertaken in the university. However, the capital costs involved in such investment may be difficult to recoup through lower energy use</i></p>			

Appendix 6

To: Richard Breese
From: Kevin Bonnett, Acting Pro Vice-Chancellor, Strategic Planning and Sustainability, Sheffield Hallam University

December 21 2005

Response to your Rapid Appraisal Study on the Sustainability of the SHU Estates Vision

1. Your approach proved to be wide-ranging and systematic, providing an objective perspective.
2. This was a valuable corrective to the risk of basing policy ideas on purely internal concerns of the organisation.
3. However, one health warning: the material I provided was so brief, sketchy and preliminary, that this case can only be a partial test of the value of your approach. In this instance you were necessarily limited as to the depth and detail of analysis that was possible or appropriate.
4. Your conceptual and policy contextualisation concerning sustainability was concise and valuable.
5. Your analysis was systematic and easy to follow. I was pleased to see the positive conclusions about many dimensions of the Estates Vision. However you were right to lay strong emphasis on the issues concerning a variety of stakeholders, and the potential social impacts (positive and negative). I would also see strong economic and cultural impacts in prospect, though these need much more elaboration than I have so far done.
6. Your notes on the policy context in the city and sub-region were also very useful reminders, and I shall need to take action to engage further with those, and to build on positive relationships with policy-makers.
7. Overall, your report was illuminating despite the limited materials from me that you had to work with. Given that my ideas area at such an early stage of development, your input will help to broaden and deepen my perspective, while confirming the viability of the Estates Vision's basic approach in terms of sustainability.

So many thanks indeed for devoting your time to this, and I look forward to discussing things further as the vision crystallises, if you have the time.

With best wishes

Kevin

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