7 Advancing together in Yorkshire and Humberside?

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Mutant planning: an introduction to the contemporary dynamics of planning

"Advancing Together" is the title of the high level policy framework for the Yorkshire and Humber region, produced on behalf of regional partners by the Regional Assembly. It provides a common vision and a set of key objectives that are intended to inform a range of other regional and local strategies. Advancing Together was first published in 1998 and it was reissued in a revised form in 2004. In both cases, the framework was endorsed by all of the key institutions in the region, a process of institutional collaboration which reflected the importance given to integrated policy making. This in turn reflects the political concern nationally to promote "joined-up thinking", one of the core political ideas of post-1997 "New Labour" administrations.

In analysing the shift towards integrated plan making, we want to examine in tandem how the scales and the scope of planning are being reworked. At a theoretical level this links to debates about rescaling (see Goodwin, Jones and Jones in this volume) and also what we refer to as the 'politics of scope' (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2004). We are concerned with seeing both policy scale and policy scope as political and social constructs that are highly contested. The politics of scale in planning requires analysis of how powers and responsibilities are being continuously reworked in non-linear, non-hierarchical ways across various 'governance lines', which run across neighbourhood, local, sub-regional, regional, national and supranational levels. For instance in the case of English planning, the powers of county level planning have recently been reduced as part of a shift towards giving regional planning frameworks a statutory status. In similar vein, all levels of English planning are now expected to pay attention to the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP). Powers are therefore being reworked in particular ways across the scales of planning as they relate to England.

The powers of planning are being dramatically rescaled at the formal level. But at the more informal level too planning is being rescaled, as new planning tiers are created; for instance, Regional Spatial Strategies can now involve the creation of new sub-regional strategies as part of their processes. The Sustainable Communities Action Plan (ODPM, 2003) announced four growth areas for the south of England, three of which involve new planning sub-regions to run alongside existing 'local' or 'regional' systems of planning. The same document created nine housing renewal 'Pathfinder' areas, again running outside of, yet alongside the formal boundaries of statutory local planning frameworks and Regional Spatial Strategies. As if that were not complex enough, we have seen the creation of the Northern Way and Midland Way, new meta-regional strategies that span existing regional boundaries, with the Northern Way covering Yorkshire and the Humber, the North West and the North East (ODPM, 2004).

Running alongside this shift towards multi-scale governance, there has been the move towards integrative planning, not least in response to the ESDP (Counsell et al., 2003; see Healey's contribution to this volume). It is these moves away from narrow sectoral models of policy formation towards more holistic, trans-sectoral policy making that are what we refer to as the changing scope of policy. These processes are not unproblematic, however. As Box 7.1 intimates, there are a variety of ways in which horizontal policy integration can be understood and pursued. At its very basic level, this policy integration imperative is about improving the links between land use planning strategies at various scales and the growing number of other, potentially related strategies, notably those for economic development, environmental and resource management, and transport.

Box 7.1 Dimensions of vertical and horizontal policy integration

**Vertical integration linking policy actors**
1. With UK national and European policy statements, in planning and related functional areas, such as environmental protection area designations
2. Linking regional strategies for planning etc. with e.g. county council, local authority and neighbourhood plans and strategies
3. Linking to strategies at 'new' flexible policy scales, such as the new sub-regional economic strategies and spatial planning studies, and new meta-regional strategies such as the Northern Way.

**Horizontal integration of policy domains**
1. Between places
   a. Administrative areas within an administration
   b. Adjoining regions/fractions e.g. border issues
2. Between policy themes/sectors
   a. Departments within an administration
   b. Other public bodies within the administrative area, for instance linking local plans to wider strategies of a local strategic partnership or municipal authority
   c. Other strategies and themes
3. Aiming for integration across the social, economic and environmental components of sustainable development
4. Building better integration between public, private, voluntary and community sectors
5. Linking the provision of infrastructure, services and investment, for instance involving transport planning, water management, industrial sites and spatial planning.
Our argument here is that we are witnessing a parallel and interconnected process to the rescaling of planning, involving major changes in the definition of planning in terms of its scope, and also its intended relationship with other sectoral strategies. In effect, different governments have had different views on what constitutes the legitimate scope of planning and the extent to which it should inform and be informed by, for instance, social policy. In the last ten years in particular, English planning has been reinterpreted once again, broadening our from the predominately land use focus imposed on it during the 1980s toward becoming a much more holistic policy arena. Planning has been positioned as a key sector in the government's pursuit of sustainable development, adopted in recent years as the formal goal for the planning system. This is not an apolitical act, however, as the government has adopted an 'integrative' definition of sustainable development which emphasises that it should not be seen as an environment-led agenda, but rather an agenda for integrating economic, social and environmental issues. Planning is therefore being used to pursue a particular political viewpoint, where integration has a particular political purpose.

We would argue that it is important to examine as interrelated processes both the scope of territorial structures and their scale - that is, geographical coverage. Referring to Box 7.1, we can see that the distinction between horizontal and vertical policy integration is actually a false one. It is a useful heuristic device at one level, but actually policy is always being reshaped and reformulated in ways that involve changing powers and responsibilities simultaneously across vertical and horizontal dimensions. In addition, our approach to the issue of policy integration is to bring to the fore that choices over policy scales and policy scope are inherently political, where powerful alliances are formed to shape policies in ways which best serve the interests of particular groups (Haughton and Counsell, 2004).

These are perhaps the defining characteristics of the emergent era of fluid and increasingly diverse planning regimes across the UK space. Planning powers are reworked extensively and intensively across policy scales whilst new ways are being opened up to ensure that land use plans and other sectoral strategies are, if not quite mutually constituted, then at least mutually informed; it is precisely these issues that we refer to when we talk of 'mutant planning'. There are new ways of undertaking planning that are emerging with amazing speed, involving planning powers being strengthened at some scales, reduced at others, reworked at all scales, and new scales of planning inserted, with sub-regional and metaregional strategies. The old rigid hierarchical systems of formal planning have been reshaped but nevertheless provide the skeleton of the formal planning system, but they are now overlain with a range of other informal and formal ways of working, involving interactions between other policy sectors and to new scales of planning with less rigidly defined statutory roles. These related strategies often work to different spatial and temporal horizons, creating an ever-more complex web of links, which can work to broaden and enable what it is to be a planner, or induce narrowness and conformity. The processes will work out differently in different areas. Those practices that work well will be evaluated, judged and presumably backed by new resources and directives by the state. Those new practices that fail to meet expectations can expect to be allowed to wither or to be closed down. This is the era of mutant planning, reshaping what it means to be a planner anywhere in the UK but also, crucially, in different ways in different parts of the post-devolution UK space, where how planning is constituted and performed in Wales will differ from Scotland, and what happens in London may well differ from what happens in Yorkshire and the Humber.

Using these insights, in this chapter we explore whether and how the main policy actors in the Yorkshire and Humber region are advancing together towards integrated regional policy. The chapter draws on data from a three year long study of regional planning guidance in all eight English regions carried out between 2000 and 2002 (see Haughton and Counsell, 2004). This is supplemented by the results of an in depth undertaken for regional bodies in Yorkshire and Humber on integrating regional strategies (Yorkshire Futures, 2003), an evaluation of the EU Objective 2 Programme in the region (by Leeds Metropolitan University and University of Hull, 2003) and by additional interviews undertaken in 2004. In total, 45 people involved with regional policy related issues in Yorkshire and the Humber were interviewed over the period 2000–2004.

Regional planning in Yorkshire and the Humber: historical perspectives

Regional policy in the UK in the three decades following the second world war focused on addressing the north-south divide using a variety of policy tools applied with varying degrees of enthusiasm and levels of financial backing. In essence, the dominant approach was one of 'carrot and stick', providing incentives for employment to move towards the less prosperous areas, such as Yorkshire and Humber, plus planning regulations to constrain growth in the more prosperous parts of the country. With major losses of traditional manufacturing jobs occurring, particularly in the northern industrial towns, the political imperative was to stem job losses and reduce outward population movement by bringing in new jobs, particularly through attracting in large factories and, to a lesser extent, offices. The other key aspect of most northern regional plans of the period was to address the problem of poor quality housing stock, seeking to upgrade, demolish and rebuild as appropriate.

The history of regional planning in Yorkshire and the Humber has been particularly well documented by Pearce (1989) and Roberts (1994). According to Roberts (1994: 214), up to the mid-1960s planning at the sub-regional and regional level created a legacy of parish-pump spatial policy which provided a powerful force for 'policy inertia'. The creation of the regional economic planning council signalled a shift towards a more regional strategic process, notably with the 1966 document A Review of Yorkshire and Humberside (Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Economic Planning Council, 1966). Whilst not a strategy in itself, Roberts argues that it had a stronger spatial development dimension than the actual 1970 strategy (see below). Interestingly, both the 1966 Review and the 1969 report Humberside - A Feasibility Study (Central Unit for Environmental Planning, 1969) focused on the potential of the Humber estuary to be developed as a major maritime industrial area. This emphasis on the Humber inevitably caused friction with the political authorities in the more urbanised western parts of the region, which wanted an emphasis on addressing their legacy of problems involving unemployment and poor quality housing stock.

The first formal regional strategy for the Yorkshire and Humberside region was published in 1970 (Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Economic Planning Council, 1970). Six broad planning objectives were identified, the first of which was the creation of new job opportunities, particularly in services and science-based industries.
Spatial development issues were addressed in the strategy, albeit in a mainly descriptive way, linked to infrastructure investment and providing land for industrial development. By and large the document avoided major strategic decisions on preferences for how development should be guided. So whilst the broader spatial strategy was to focus development on existing cities and towns, the strategy was keen to promote the potential of smaller towns too. As part of the overall strategy, detailed descriptions of sub-areas within the region were provided along with suggested goals in guiding future development.

The regional strategy was reviewed in 1975 (YHEDC, 1975) when the broad objectives of the earlier strategy were confirmed and three priorities were identified for implementation:

1. To encourage industrial investment.
2. To complete the basic communications infrastructure, and
3. To tackle environmental issues.

Environmental issues were defined as housing, water supply and sewage disposal, air pollution, health, education and training, and river pollution.

Looking back at the 1970 strategy, it is interesting to see how it manages to be both more 'integrated' in its concerns in some respects than contemporary regional strategies, but less holistic in others. For instance, the 1970 strategy shows a much more clearly articulated concern with aspects of health and educational infrastructure than its counterparts 25-35 years later. It also has a clearer spatial dimension to it, in terms of its understanding of the sub-regions. In terms of the policy process, it involved a wide range of partners from local authorities, businesses, universities, colleges, nationalised companies and utilities (rail, electricity, mining, docks, steel), and trade unions, with professional support coming from central government officials. Alternatively, it lacks many of the strengths of the 2001 Regional Planning Guidance for Yorkshire and the Humber, such as the enormous amount of consultation, its use of targets and its attention to a much wider range of environmental issues, such as biodiversity, and flood risk. The 1970 strategy was also very much the key regional document, which as we will see below compares with the contemporary proliferation of regional strategies.

By 1979, the political mood nationally had changed and one of the early acts of the new Conservative government was to dismantle the Economic Planning Councils, with regional policy residualised in the process to little more than a centralised function of allocating grants to mobile firms. After a decade of little or no strategic regional thinking, there was growing concern about the lack of regional cohesion amongst the main players (Leigh and Green, 1990). However, in 1991 the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Association published a detailed overview and outlook of the region's economy and infrastructure on behalf of local authorities. Reflecting the political climate of the times perhaps, it did not aspire to providing a strategic framework, but it did have a strong European dimension.

The European Commission came to the fore in 1993, promoting and indeed paying for the first regional strategy since 1970. Concerned that its Regional Structural Funds were being allocated in a strategic vacuum, the Commission required most eligible UK regions to develop across the 'social partners' an agreed regional strategy. In Yorkshire and the Humber the work involved a major overview by a consortium of regional universities and a firm of consultants. This work informed the resulting strategy. The strategy group was chaired by a representative of the regional Trades Union Council, with representatives from the various regional offices of central government, local authorities, and the regional groupings for universities and for Training and Enterprise Councils (Yorkshire and Humberside Partnership n.d., c.1993). The strategic element of this document covered just over six pages, focused mainly on economic development issues, with some attention to transport protecting sensitive environmental areas and protecting and developing the region's historic and cultural, scenic and wildlife heritage. It lacked a clear spatial development framework and had little substantive to say about improving the regional environment.

Following the revised fortunes of regional planning in the early 1990s, the first round of Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) for Yorkshire and Humberside was issued in 1996 (Department of Environment, 1996). This first version of RPG covered a wider range of issues than the previous regional strategies. The overall aim of regional planning policy was the pursuit of sustainable development, reflecting the emerging discourse of sustainability and the growing policy attention to environmental concerns. Nevertheless, within this broad aim two of the four objectives in the RPG still emphasised economic development (ibid.):

1. Promoting economic prosperity and achievement of a competitive position;
2. Conerving and where possible enhancing the region's environment;
3. Facilitating processes of industrial adjustment, economic diversification and urban and rural regeneration and renewal; and
4. Making best use of the available resources and encouraging efficient use of energy.

In contrast to the 1970 strategy, social issues such as health, and education and training had been relegated in importance, but environmental issues were given rather more prominence. The 1996 RPG was produced with advice from local planning authorities, but with final control resting with the relevant central government department. In essence, it was a document for the region more than a document from the region. In common with other RPGs of this period, it adopted a lowest common denominator approach, avoided making hard decisions, tended towards a bland repetition of government advice, and lacked a distinctive spatial strategy.

This was the state of regional planning policy in Yorkshire and Humbers when New Labour came to power in 1997. After its failing fortunes throughout the 1980s, by the early 1990s the main regional planning actors were starting to come together, albeit hesitantly (Green and Leigh, 1990), assisted by the creation of the Government Offices for the Regions in 1994 and the focus of the European Commission on the regional scale for its economic support programmes.

**Advancing Together: an integrated approach post-1997?**

The election of the Labour Government in 1997 saw a surge of interest in regional governance issues. As a consequence, the institutional architecture of regional governance has also expanded rapidly since 1997 with a range of new duties and responsibilities devolved to the regional scale. In the absence of political devolution, though, the English regional architecture appears somewhat
disjointed, with separate institutions responsible for producing different sectoral strategies emphasising the need for more integrated approaches. The Regional Development Agencies, established in 1998, were given the role of preparing Regional Economic Strategies, the first round of which were prepared in the period 1999/2000. Regional Chambers, which increasingly became known as (unlected) Regional Assemblies, were encouraged in each region to provide a link to local democratic systems, involving representatives from local authorities and a wide range of other key regional stakeholders. The Chambers quickly took on key scrutiny roles, not least in relation to the RDAs, but also in most cases becoming the Regional Planning Bodies, responsible for producing draft Regional Planning Guidance (RPG).

In 1998, the government introduced new arrangements for the production of Regional Planning Guidance. This led to a second round of RPG preparation over the following 5-7 years, with a requirement to include summary Regional Transport Strategies within the documents. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 replaced the RPG system with Regional Spatial Strategies that are intended to be both more comprehensive and possess statutory status. Responding to calls for clarity over how various strategies interrelated, the government issued advice on how to produce Regional Sustainable Development Frameworks (RSDFs), leading to England-wide coverage during 2000/2001.

Other strategies produced by a range of partnerships across the region in this period include Housing, Culture, Employment and Skills, Environmental Enhancement, Health, Sports, Innovation and International Trade, together with various regional action plans for tourism and sustainable communities; these are in additional to strategies prepared for funding programmes, such as the EU Objective 1 and 2 programmes.

In Yorkshire and the Humber, work on both RPG and RES was initiated in 1999 within the overall framework provided by its overarching strategy Advancing Together, first published the previous year (it was subsequently revised and reissued in 2004). The role of Advancing Together as a framework for policy integration is reflected in its use in the titles of the other key regional strategies. Talking about the role of Advancing Together, a senior regional planner we interviewed stated:

What we have is the Advancing Together objectives and the RSDFs are the intermediate ones providing the overarching objectives and the other a check-list to be considered at every level. If nothing else, as I’ve said, it means that we are not all sitting round asking what our objectives are, we are agreed now and set out so the focus of attention is on how can we ensure that these are brought about. So that’s where the RES starts from and it’s where the other strategies start from.

(Interview, 2004)

The Regional Development Agency Yorkshire Forward, published its draft Regional Economic Strategy (RES), Advancing Together: towards a world class economy, in mid 1999 and, after a period of consultation, the final version was endorsed by central government early in 2000. The draft RPG, Advancing Together: towards a spatial strategy, was published by the Regional Assembly for consultation in July 1999 and for submission to public examination in October 1999. It was not finally approved until October 2001.

Since 1999, there has been a requirement that RES and RPG should be subject to a process of sustainability appraisal during which their core strategies and policies are appraised against a set of sustainability objectives. As we have already noted, the New Labour government sees sustainable development as a concept that brings together social, economic, and environmental objectives in an integrated way, involving a search for policy solutions that benefit all three dimensions—known as ‘win-win’ solutions. This is not without its critics. The Campaign for Rural England (CPRE) for instance is very critical of the government’s preference for sustainability appraisal rather than strategic environmental assessment, arguing that in practice whilst ministers talk about balancing economic, social and environmental objectives, ‘traditionally this has meant that the environment almost always loses out’ (Hamblyn, 2004: 13).

Nonetheless, in England sustainability appraisal is the recommended method for achieving integration between objectives. Central government advice (DETR 2000a and 2000b) suggests that strategies are appraised against the objectives agreed to in each region’s Sustainable Development Framework. Whilst this creates some scope for some regional sensitivity, in practice all RSDFs necessarily reflect the government’s view of a ‘balanced’ interpretation of sustainable development. Unusually for this round of regional strategy documents in England, sustainability appraisals of the initial Yorkshire and Humber RES and RPG were undertaken in parallel, using the same appraisal criteria and the same consultants.

Although starting on a parallel timescale in 1999, the Yorkshire and Humber RES and RPG subsequently diverged (see Table 7.1), largely because of the different regulatory requirements for the two strategies. RESs are produced internally by RDAs, in this case Yorkshire Forward, which retain ownership despite the strategies having to be submitted to central government for endorsement. The preparation of RESs is relatively quick, the whole process taking less than a year to complete. RPG by contrast is subject to a lengthy process of public examination, followed by the Secretary of State taking ownership from the Regional Planning Body and issuing ‘proposed changes’ for consultation before publishing the final report; in the case of Yorkshire and Humber, this occurred in October 2001 through the Government Office for Yorkshire and Humber.

The timescales of RPG and RES did begin to move out of synchronisation as they developed at different paces. This convergence has continued during subsequent revisions to the agreed strategies. RESs are reviewed on a three-yearly basis, with the first review initiated in 2002 and completed in 2003. A partial review of RPG was begun in 2003 and was not completed until 2005. In the meantime, the Regional Assembly is already well advanced in its work on producing a Regional Spatial Strategy under the new arrangements introduced in 2004.

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Table 7.1 Diverging timescale for preparing RPG and RES
Despite these diverging timescales most stakeholders who were interviewed in a study of strategy integration in the region (Yorkshire Futures, 2003) felt that the 2003 version of the RES was better integrated with RPG than the earlier version, although some tensions still remained. Perhaps inevitably most of the tensions were between economic development policies in the RES and environmental protection policies in RPG. Environmental organisations in the region have consistently pointed out all iterations of regional strategy preparation and highlight that the promotion of development on greenfield sites next to motorway junctions, associated with the RES, conflict with environment and transport policies in RPG:

So, there are some critical things to deal with [in preparing the RSS]... things like the greenfield allocations next to motorway junctions... and also the approach that is being taken to the Humber Trade Zone in view of flood risk and other environmental impacts.

(Interview: Government Agency representative, 2003)

Whilst recognising that there were tensions, another interviewee suggested that these emerged more strongly down-stream when RES policies were being implemented:

I think there are bound to be tensions... its difficult to reconcile those isn't it... I don't think there are necessarily tensions with the words in the RES... but when those are translated into investment programmes and particular projects... that's when the tensions come out.

(Interview: Government Office representative, 2004)

Tensions such as these between the RES and some environmental policies in RPG are perhaps aggravated because many of the RES policies are not expressed in spatial terms. For example, tensions over the Humber Trade Zone (HTZ), a policy aimed at optimising the economic benefits to be gained from the Humber Ports, remain in part because the RES does not clearly identify the boundaries of the HTZ (Leeds Metropolitan University and University of Hull, 2003). In the absence of this spatial detail, those debating the impacts of development in the Humber Estuary on biodiversity and flooding can only speculate about conflicts which might occur, sometimes resulting in tensions which could have been avoided had more detail been available at the time.

Looking next at vertical integration between local, regional and national policies, recent research in the region has identified tensions between the different scales (Councils' and Haughton, 2002; Yorkshire Futures, 2003). One particular tension concerns the Sustainable Communities Plan (ODPM, 2003), an ODPM (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister) initiative to address shortages of housing land in the South East and low demand for housing in the North. There is a view amongst some regional stakeholders that this whole policy agenda is being imposed on regional planning bodies from outside normal regional planning processes. In Yorkshire and the Humber, tensions have arisen in particular over proposals for the Northern Way, a concept linking together the three northern regions and focusing on eight city-regions, which has arisen as part of the Sustainable Communities Plan work. The idea was launched by central government (ODPM, 2004) at a stage when the preparation of the new RSSs was well advanced, without any detail being provided about what it might entail for spatial development in the region, and the task of pursuing it was given to the three northern RDAs. Their report, Moving Forward: the Northern Way - first growth strategy (2004) was widely criticised for being prepared without widespread consultation and for its strong economic focus:

There are always going to be tensions between the national and the regional, just as the local. The current tension is the Northern Way... that's an RDA/ODPM driven initiative... it's not an RSS driven initiative... we are probably going to feel as though we have been handed something... that 'thou shall incorporate'. So there are a number of policy areas such as this where we feel that things are imposed...

(Interview: senior regional planner, 2004)

Another interviewee noted the problems of joining up policy at the regional level when nationally there were diverse agendas:

Well yes it's difficult... you can't argue it doesn't exist... You can talk about joined-up government, but there are such huge agendas and such a huge range of people it's inevitable there are differences. [Referring to the discussion on climate change at the RPG Partial Review EIF] On the one hand you had the government arguing that it wants to meet climate change targets [for reducing CO2] and on the other what is the Transport Strategy doing about this... Of the three main areas producing greenhouse gas, transport is the one that is growing... and how does that fit?

(Interview: Government Office representative, 2004)

Our recent work has revealed rather fewer tensions between the new regional scale policies and local policies, though undoubtedly these exist. It probably helps that political representatives of local authorities sit as members of the Regional Assembly, which may mean that controversial proposals are side-lined early on as the emphasis is on region building, involving a tendency to focus on developing areas of agreement rather than flushing out areas of disagreement.

Advancing Together: towards a sustainable region

As we noted earlier, RSDFs are intended to bring about greater coherence in approaches towards sustainable development in regional strategies by establishing a common vision for the region, providing common sets of objectives to address sustainable development, and common indicators to measure progress. Yorkshire and Humber's first RSDF, Advancing Together: towards a sustainable region, was adopted by the Regional Assembly in November 2000, and published in February 2001 (Regional Assembly for Yorkshire and the Humber, 2001). The vision statement contained in the RSDF is shared with the RES and RPG. Fifteen aims for sustainable development in Yorkshire and the Humber are identified in the RSDF. In addition, four cross-cutting themes were included in the revised RSDF, published in 2003 (YHA, 2003): social equity across all sectors; a partnership and participative approach; geographic adaptation to the needs of rural and urban communities; and creativity, innovation and the appropriate use of technology.
Worryingly, in view of its intended integrative role, interviews undertaken in early 2003 suggested that there was some confusion among regional policy makers in Yorkshire and the Humber about the status and purpose of the region's RSDF (Yorkshire Futures, 2003). Whilst staff from the Regional Assembly and RDA who had been involved with using the RSDF were clear about its important role in policy appraisal, other stakeholders, for example some of those preparing the Regional Housing Strategy, were largely unaware of its purpose. At the time these interviews were being undertaken, the RSDF was being reviewed and a new glossary version has now been issued, incorporating a guide to using the framework in sustainability appraisal. The role that the RSDF has played in achieving integrated policy will be more apparent when considering its use in sustainability appraisal of the RES and RPG.

Advancing Together through sustainability appraisal

Recent research (Counsell and Haughton, 2002) suggested that of all the English regions, the approach to sustainability appraisal in Yorkshire and the Humber most closely approximated to that recommended in the 'good practice guide' published by the government (DETR, 2000a and 2004b). Sustainability appraisal in many regions was criticised for being an 'add-on' at the end of the process but, in Yorkshire and the Humber, it began at the 'strategic options' stage of draft RPG and was continued throughout the other major stages in the process. It was also regarded as having pursued a more inclusive approach than elsewhere. Finally, the Yorkshire and Humber region was distinctive by virtue of setting in train a parallel appraisal for both RPG and RES, using the same set of objectives and the same consultants.

The first published sustainability appraisal of draft RPG was undertaken by the consultants ECOTEC at the time of the 'consultation draft' in July 1999 (ECOTEC 1999a). The draft Regional Economic Strategy was also published at this same time by Yorkshire Forward and ECOTEC was commissioned to undertake a sustainability appraisal of this using the same methodology as for RPG (ECOTEC 1999b). This 'twin-tracking' of RPG and RES appraisals was unique in the English regions, and resulted in a local government officer commenting:

I think we had a much better understanding of the RES because the two things were being appraised at the same time.  

(Interview, 2000: 14)

The sustainability appraisal for the 1999 version of the RES concluded that it was generally compatible with RPG, but on environmental protection issues, reflecting concerns of environmental bodies expressed earlier, it suggested that:

The thrust of the RES in 'getting the best out of physical assets and conserving environmental assets' may conflict with the stronger conservationist stance of the RPG natural resource use policies.  

(ECOTEC, 1999b: 24)

Despite the more co-ordinated and inclusive approach to Sustainability Appraisal in Yorkshire and the Humber, our research (Counsell and Haughton, 2002) suggested that it had had only a marginal effect on the policy context of RPG, limited in effect to policies on sustainable development itself. More particularly it appeared to have had little influence on the major policy debates on housing and employment land. A government agency official commented at the time:

I saw no significant change to RPG before and after the appraisal ... Well, perhaps no change is too strong, but there was no material change. The big issues were sidestepped.  

(Interview, 2000)

This research nevertheless pointed to evident benefits in the Yorkshire and the Humber approach:

The integrated approach to sustainability appraisal provided a thread of continuity throughout the RPG process and assisted in integrating policies in RPG and RES – at the very least these separate regional strategies have been appraised on the same basis and against the same criteria. It has also served to flag up conflicts between policies, but has been less successful in helping to resolve those conflicts.

(Counsell and Haughton, 2002: 35)

Interestingly, the conclusions of the most recent sustainability appraisal of the draft revised RPG (ENTEC, 2003) suggest that there is now a good synergy between the RES and the revised RPG. This document notes how some key RPG themes such as climate change, renewable energy and waste management were being referred to in the RES, and how its initiative on 'opportunities for a low carbon economy is an excellent example of how the RES can contribute to RPG objectives' (2003: 29).

Achieving integration: are the barriers being overcome?

It was always unreasonable to expect that the so-called silo mentality that characterised economic development and spatial planning (Vig et al., 2000, Haughton and Counsell, 2004) would suddenly melt away as regional institutions began to address policy integration. Indeed, to some degree, these barriers are likely to have increased with the expanding regional policy agenda and the growing number of organisations focusing on the regional scale.

We have already flagged up some key potential barriers to achieving better policy integration: different regulatory requirements; different timescales (both policy horizons and timescales for preparing and reviewing strategies); and different knowledge, expertise and professional cultures (Owens and Cowell, 2002). For example, on policy horizons, RPG covers a 20 year period, currently from 1996 to 2016 whilst the current RES covered the ten years from 2003 to 2012. Recent work in Yorkshire and the Humber has exposed considerable differences in the knowledge bases and professional cultures of those involved in the preparation of regional strategies (Yorkshire Futures, 2003). On the issue of sustainable development, for example, it has been suggested that planners involved in preparing RPG were much more aware and comfortable with addressing this concept than those involved with the initial RES, with these differing approaches creating the potential for tension (Bennworth, 1999; Gibbs and Jones, 2001). Differences are also apparent between the professional cultures of economic development staff and planners and housing
professionals (Yorkshire Futures, 2003). More worryingly, the strategies examined in the Yorkshire and Humber research appeared sometimes to be based on different data sets and assumptions resulting in an absence of shared common opinion on some key issues.

The messages from recent interviews are mixed on whether these barriers are being overcome. Certainly, in 2000 these we spoke to were encountering considerable problems, particularly around the issue of sustainable development, but three or four years later these seemed to have started to diminish. Some fairly typical comments in 2000 included:

I think that over time they will diverge [RPG and RES]. I think it very difficult to reconcile some of the objectives in the RES with the overall approach in RPG.

(Interview: pro-development lobbyist, 2000)

At the outset it was my perception that the RDA was reluctant about sustainable development - here we go again, it's just an environmental constituency trying to put the brakes on sustainable development.

(Interview: local planner, 2000)

But just a few years later, a different tone had emerged:

Our response [to the 2004 RES] was fully taken into account by the RDA the final RES document was signed off by the Assembly. So we do feel they are comparable.

(Interview: regional planner, 2003)

The different RPG and RES processes led to some diversion between the strategies ... But if you look at the most recent RES completed last year ... there was much more agreement ... and I think that reflects the agreement in the region ... and within Yorkshire Forward ... to actually carry that through. So they were prepared to change their RES to bring it into line with RPG as it had ended up being issued.

(Interview: senior regional planner, 2004)

On this evidence, some of the barriers do appear to be being addressed as regional bodies develop capacity and improve procedures for strategy preparation. This appears to support speculation by Owens and Cowell (2002: 66) that better integration is likely to arise gradually from a process of learning within and between coalitions. One of our interviewees in 2004 explained that one of the reasons for the current more positive relationship between RPG and RES is that the organizational arrangements for preparing RPG/RES have been devised to include those responsible for the other principle regional strategies:

Basically what we have is the full assembly with fifteen leaders (of councils) and twenty-two strategic and economic partners, and we also have a number of 'observer members' which include Yorkshire Forward (YF) and Government Office (GO), so in that sense, at full assembly level there is a link there to who we see as our main regional partners in terms of getting the joining up ...

between the membership of the assembly and the observer members, all of those responsible for drawing up those [main] strategies are all covered.

(Interview: senior regional planner, 2004)

Returning to the concerns identified in previous research (Cowell and Houghton, 2002; Yorkshire Futures, 2003), about the tensions between strategies, it is notable that the regional bodies have now commissioned work on the spatial implications of the RES which should help resolve issues such as the impact of the Humber Trade Zone on the environment. There was some consensus amongst people interviewed in the region that there is a need for greater clarity about policies such as the HTZ. The mid-term review of the Objective 2 Programme for the region reached a similar conclusion (Leeds Metropolitan University and University of Hull, 2003). Alternatively, it is widely acknowledged that consensus will not always be possible:

At the end of the day there are very different perspectives on the world ... and you are not going to get agreement on anything ... and there are going to be some pinch-points where it is very clear that you haven't got agreements.

(Interview: Government Office representative, 2004)

Perhaps what has changed since the earlier attempts at preparing regional strategies is that the main regional institutions are sharing knowledge information and language to a much greater extent, as they develop their capacity for joint working. Data and research, for example, are increasingly being collected and commissioned to standardised formats, managed by Yorkshire Futures, the regional observatory.

Conclusions

In drawing together our conclusions on regional policy integration in Yorkshire and Humber, it is useful to summarise the interaction between policy scales and sectors in the form of a chart (see Figure 7.1).

This clearly illustrates some of the complexity to be overcome to achieve policy integration. We say some, because this is a very partial picture looking at only five policy streams: The EU structural programmes; RES preparation; Sustainable Communities Plan: spatial planning and transport planning. On the other hand, it excludes the policy streams relating to sustainable development, culture, housing, health, and education. The picture is further complicated by the fact that the policy flow is not a simple cascade from top to bottom. Most policy processes at the regional scale inform and are informed by policy processes at the national and local scales. For example, while RPG is adopted by central government, it is prepared by the regional planning body (the Regional Assembly in Yorkshire) and is informed by work on local plans. Similarly, the RES is prepared at the regional scale despite having to be endorsed by central government and have its spatial implications tested in RPG. Thus, rather than flowing in one direction, the policy process ebbs and flows between the different scales and sectors.

What the experience of Yorkshire and the Humber demonstrates is how planning is being both re-scaled and its scope reworked in complex, non-linear ways. In an earlier chapter in this book, Goodwin et al. argued that we should
focus not so much on the so-called ' hollowing out of the nation state' as the processes of 'filling in'. They argue convincingly about the need to see how the new institutions are peopled. Our work goes further in suggesting that we need to see how the new territorial structures are being required to adopt and adapt to a range of new policy techniques, such as sustainability appraisals, which enforce powerful disciplinary effects on how actors work both within and across their individual sectors. In particular, our work helps to illustrate how new regional planning and economic development strategies have been introduced for the region, initially in rather poorly connected ways. But under pressure from central government to show greater evidence of policy integration, policed through the new policy techniques of Regional Sustainable Development Frameworks and Sustainability Appraisals, the processes of revising the RES and the RPG have begun to be better integrated in recent years.

In short, what we saw in the late 1990s was how the new regional governance systems were being used very cannily by powerful alliances to pursue particular sets of interests in the differing arenas of planning and economic development. Since then, the process of 'joining up' policy has begun to subvert, yet quite distinctively, rewrite the rules for those seeking to shape the new territorial structures at the regional level. This has forced those seeking to shape and engage with the new territorial systems to acknowledge - or to confront more explicitly - the legitimacy of alliances with alternative knowledges, techniques and cultures, of how planning and economic development might be practised at regional and local scales. These processes are inherently multi-sectoral and cross-sectoral in nature, involving a wide range of experiments, conflicts, challenges over institutional responsibilities, techniques and approaches, working in complex iterations which involve tangled networks and alliances operating across governance scales and across traditional sectoral boundaries.

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8 Spatial governance in contested territory
The case of Northern/North of Ireland

Geraint Ellis and William J.V. Neill

Introduction
Northern Ireland was born out of, and continues to suffer from, the consequences of a contested re-territorialisation (or perhaps more appropriately, a de-territorialisation) of the UK state. In this context, the devolution project in Northern Ireland and its consequences for spatial governance have been, and will continue to be, driven by a very different set of political objectives from those experienced in Britain. It would be wrong, however, to see Northern Ireland's tortuous path towards devolution (see Figure 8.1) as being profoundly exotic to New Labour's regional project in Britain. Indeed, like other UK regions, Northern Ireland has experienced a new phase of governance since 1997, and its experience of devolution dating back to the 1920s touches many of the policy debates now facing regional governance across Britain. Utmost amongst these issues, have been those related to contested territory and cultural identity. Although experienced far more acutely than in Britain, Northern Ireland may offer some important lessons on how spatial planning should respond to such tensions. Indeed, in a region where even self-ascription is hotly disputed, spatial governance continues to reflect territorial struggle, with the 'peace process' preceding and following the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, representing its most recent phase.

This chapter focuses on these issues by reviewing the history of regional spatial policy in post-partition North of Ireland, with particular emphasis given to policy debates of the last ten years. The argument is made that underlying tensions, coupled with overly technocratic approaches to planning, have not only shaped the way the region is framed in the territorial and political imagination, but have also thwarted open debate on serious matters of spatial governance (including those related to infrastructure and service provision, economic development policy and island-wide management of natural resources), resulting in a discourse of planning that too often resorts to fudge.

The beginning
The establishment of Northern Ireland by the Government of Ireland Act in 1920 was a process of re/de-territorialisation of the UK state, which satisfied neither Unionists nor Nationalists. Unionists, whose identity and sense of divine territorial rights ('God and Ulster') had been shaped by the 'heroic' siege of Derry ('No