

# **INTEGRATING SPATIAL PLANNING POLICY: THE ROLE OF THE REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY**

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by

Andrew Thomas Joseph Moore

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## ABSTRACT

Since 1997 central government has sought to join up public policy in its development and delivery. Concurrent to this a range of drivers such as sustainable development and the EU have influenced a move from land use to spatial planning in England. These issues coalesced in 2004 with the introduction of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, which created a new system of spatial planning with the purpose of delivering sustainable development. At the regional level this led to the replacement of Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) with statutory Regional Spatial Strategies (RSSs), which have required regional spatial planners to integrate a wider range of spatial policies and stakeholders than they had previously.

This study examines the role played by the RSS development process in integrating regional spatial planning policies and their respective actors/organisations. A case study approach examines this process in two English regions, namely the North West (NW) and East Midlands (EM) and uses methodological tools such as institutional mapping, documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews. Both cases are examined through a conceptual framework consisting of policy and actor integration typologies, along with governance, new institutionalism and culture change lenses.

The RSS processes were shown to have coordinated a range of spatial policies and stakeholders, both within their draft RSSs and between these and other regional strategies. This was facilitated by important drivers such as Sustainability Assessment and spatial concepts such as city regions. Concurrent work on Regional Funding Allocations was found to be moving regional spatial policies and stakeholders from coordination to integration in terms of delivery. Institutionally both RSS development processes were found to be complex, building on an existing cultural capital from previous RPG experiences. In governance terms a further blurring of the boundaries between policy areas was noted, with the emergence of new networks, such as those relating to health. The manner in which networks can be constrained and facilitated provides important lessons for regional spatial planners in the current climate of developing Single Regional Strategies. This can be facilitated by an emerging culture of spatial planning that was observed in both regions.

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## **Acronyms**

4NW	North West Local Authority Leader Board
AA	Appropriate Assessment
AfS	Action for Sustainability (NW RSDF)
AGMA	Association of Greater Manchester Authorities
AWM	Advantage West Midlands
CASE	Collaborative Studentship of Economic and Social Research Council
CLCR	Central Lancashire City Region
CO	Cabinet Office
Co. Co.	County Council
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CPRE	Campaign to Protect Rural England
CsA	Countryside Agency
DA	Regional Development Agency
DCLG	Department of Communities and Local Government
DBERR	Department of Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform
DBIS	Department of Business, Innovation and Skills
DCMS	Department of Culture, Media and Sport
DEE	Department of Education and Employment
DEFRA	Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DETR	Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions
DoE	Department of Environment
DIUS	Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills
DoT	Department of Transport
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
EMC	East Midlands Councils
DTLR	Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions
EA	Environment Agency
EE	East of England Region
EIP	Examination in Public
EM	East Midlands Region

EMDA	East Midlands Development Agency
EMHB	East Midlands Housing Board
EMRA	East Midlands Regional Assembly
EN	English Nature
ERN	English Regions Network
ESDP	European Spatial Development Perspective
ESPON	European Observatory Network on Territorial Development and Cohesion
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
EU	European Union
GMCA	Greater Manchester Combined Authority
GO	Regional Government Office
GOEM	Government Office East Midlands
GONW	Government Office Northwest
HBF	Home Builders Federation
IP	Implementation Plan
IRS	Integrated Regional Strategy (EM RSDF)
JTPC	Joint Town Planning Committees
LA21	Local Agenda 21
LALB	Local Authority Leader Board
LDD	Local Development Document
LDF	Local Development Framework
LGA	Local Government Association
MAFF	Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
MKSM	Milton Keynes South Midlands
NE	North East Region
NEW	North East Wales
NW	North West Region
NWDA	North West Development Agency
NWHB	North West Housing Board
NWRA	North West Regional Assembly
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
PCA	Planning and Compensation Act 1991
PCPA	Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004



PIU	Performance and Innovation Unit
PPG	Planning Policy Guidance
PPS	Planning Policy Statement
RA	Regional Assembly
RCEP	Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution
RCS	Regional Cultural Strategy
RCU	Regional Coordination Unit
RDA	Regional Development Agency
RDAA	Regional Development Agencies Act 1998
RED	Regional Emphasis Document
REPC	Regional Economic Planning Council
RES	Regional Economic Strategy
RFA	Regional Funding Allocation
RHB	Regional Housing Board
RHS	Regional Housing Strategy
RIU	Regional Intelligence Unit
RPB	Regional Planning Body
RPG	Regional Planning Guidance
RSDF	Regional Sustainable Development Framework
RSS	Regional Spatial Strategy
RTPI	Royal Town Planning Institute
RTS	Regional Transport Strategy
RWS	Regional Waste Strategy
S-RS	Sub-Regional Strategy
SA	Sustainability Assessment
SE	South East Region
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SEP	Social and Economic Partners
SEU	Social Exclusion Unit
SoS	Secretary of State
SPD	Single Programming Document
SPG	Strategic Planning Guidance
SRS	Single Regional Strategy
SW	South West Region

TCPA	Town and Country Planning Association
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
WC	West Cheshire
WM	West Midlands Region
Y&H	Yorkshire and Humber Region

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

This PhD has been funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and by a Collaborative Studentship (CASE) award from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG - formerly Office of the Deputy Prime Minister) through the Government Office North West (GONW). The CASE award was granted on the understanding that this study would focus on the emergence of regional spatial planning in England, in the context of general central government public sector 'joining up' reforms. Specifically this study was intended to examine the manner in which regional spatial planners and their respective policies and organisations are coming together within a regional context, in order to provide findings for dissemination to spatial policy practitioners across all scales of governance.

This chapter therefore provides a general introduction to the manner in which the New Labour government, since its election in 1997, has set about integrating a wide array of public policies in order to bring about more effective public policy development and delivery. Against this background, a brief overview is then provided of how planning became a central tenant in this 'joining up' public policy project, as it was transformed from a narrow land use perspective to include much broader spatial concerns. Following this the overall aim and objectives of this study are set out, before providing a brief outline of the structure and content that follow.

### **1.2 INTEGRATING PUBLIC POLICY**

Over the course of the twentieth century, traditional British government has been contextualised by Rhodes (1997) as the 'Westminster Model'. Integral to this view is a departmental or 'silo mentality' in relation to public policy and a preponderance of vertical policy networks that emanate from a central, cabinet government (Flinders, 2002; Ling, 2002). Both factors led to weaker horizontal integration at national,

regional and local levels of government, creating fragmentation in terms of policy development and its implementation (Healey, 1998).

With their coming to power in 1997, New Labour set about 'modernising' the public sector through a range of reforms. One of the central tenants of this agenda was the need to address fragmentation through integration or 'joining up', in effect a response to the 'silo mentality' of the 'Westminster Model' (Ling, 2002). This desire to join up policy was emphasised in the White Paper *Modernising Government* (Cabinet Office (CO), 1999), which stated the need to address strategic and cross-cutting issues and achieve policy coordination and improved delivery, with an emphasis on the end or service user. To illustrate this, the White Paper pointed out that there were one hundred different sets of regional boundaries in England (CO, 1999). This integration desire was further underlined by government publications such as *Reaching Out: The role of central government at the regional and local levels* (CO, 2000a), which stated that the 'joined up' approach was not just about efficiency, but also about effective implementation of policy. The intention here was not to end departmentalism, but to better align it (Hammond, 2003), as there are always certain benefits to be had from specialisation (6 *et al.*, 2002).

According to 6 *et al.* (2002), there were a number of reasons why New Labour took this approach, including:

- Initial civil service advice to pursue this course of action due to the inheritance of experiences from the previous administrations, such as urban programmes and electronic government;
- New Labour policies such as social exclusion required such a cross-cutting approach;
- A wish by the new administration to avoid previous criticisms of over spending and therefore a desire to rationalise public spending and gain efficiencies, as citizens were unwilling to support increased taxation for public service provision;
- A conscious effort to address criticisms of fragmented government that emerged in the 1990s, due to the New Public Management reforms of the 1980s, which had separated policy making from service provision;

- International public policy influences on New Labour from New Zealand, Australia and some US states.

(6 *et al.*, 2002, pp. 19-21).

Tied up in this general rationalising and joining up of public sector policies were a number of other New Labour policies relating to democratic renewal, devolution to the regions, and community engagement and empowerment (Hammond, 2003). Such policy reforms were also playing out against a broader background of increased globalisation over the latter decades of the Twentieth Century, which brought about an international change in economic and social relations. As a result Western economies were opening up to the world market, leading to a general focus on regions rather than nation states as the most appropriate units to compete in this new economic paradigm, requiring greater horizontal integration in public policy at the regional level.

A number of factors led to fragmentation in public services, which 6 *et al.* (2002) classify as benign and self-interested behaviours. The former centre around management controls, levels of accountability and the mismatch between functional policy delivery and citizen's more complex needs; while the latter acknowledge political, professional and managerial capture that seek to secure closed autonomy over policy development and implementation. These factors created a number of problems that constitute fragmented government, including conflicting programmes and goals, lack of or poor sequencing, confusion regarding the availability of services or how they work, duplication, and gaps in service provision or interventions (6 *et al.*, 2002).

In order to address fragmentation, one of New Labour's first approaches was to set up cross-cutting units under the CO. Early examples were The Social Exclusion Unit (SEU), established in December 1997 and the Performance and Innovation Unit (PIU) set up in July 1998. The latter published a number of reports discussing integration, such as *Wiring it Up: Whitehall's management of cross-cutting policies and services* (CO, 2000b) and *Reaching Out* (CO, 2000a). While the former report discussed the need to join up at the centre, the latter led to the strengthening of regional Government Offices (GOs) and the establishment of Regional Development Agencies (DAs) in 1999 and a Regional Coordination Unit (RCU) in early 2001, to

coordinate area based initiatives. Similar 'joining-up' approaches were also pursued at local level, through for example Part One of the 1999 Local Government Act, which placed a duty on local government to promote or improve the economic, social and environmental well being of their areas.

The overall thrust of these reforms required public policy officials to think outside their policy sector and begin to develop an understanding with officials from other sectors of the joint impact of their policies. Such broader considerations were underpinned by new monitoring and review procedures to assess the performance, which found expression, for example, in the introduction of best-value at local government level or the mainstreaming of sustainable development throughout a raft of government policies, strategies, and initiatives.

While strong emphasis came to be placed on active integration or 'joining up' at local and regional governance levels, it is not clear that this was reflected in Whitehall. This was exemplified by an ever changing landscape of central government departments, as policy areas relevant to planning were moved around departments with regularity, especially over the last twelve years. The Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) brought together a large range of planning functions in 1997, but this came to an end in 2001, as functions were redistributed and new departments created. Environment was grouped with the Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF), to form the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), while the DETR's remaining planning functions were brought together under the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR). Regional economic issues such as DAs, however, were still the responsibility of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), while the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) looked after the RCU, GOs, the SEU and the CO. With barely one year to bed down, planning functions were again redistributed in 2002. At this time, the ODPM became a separate department from the CO, taking on the local government and regional remits from the then disbanded DTLR, while transport became a department in its own right (DoT). In the summer of 2006, all regional and local government planning duties of the ODPM passed to a new Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), while the ODPM became a department without portfolio. A year later in 2007 the DTI was

renamed the Department of Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (DBERR). Only two years later the DBERR was merged with the Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) to form the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (DBIS).

Such constant reorganisation suggests that integrating public policy at the national level is a never ending approximation for central government, a view supported by Healey (1998) who suggests that there is never an end state. This is because policies and their prioritisation are always changing, a factor compounded by public sector reforms such as 'joining-up', which can have many unintended outcomes and/or failures (6 *et al.*, 2002). For example, Pearce & Mawson (2003) point to how the next steps programme, which led to agencies for service delivery, was supposed to mitigate the 'silo' problem and allow for more indirect government control. In practice, however, this did not occur, as complex negotiation and compromise in service delivery partnerships led to more complex bureaucracy, which was made more difficult by the centre's indirect control through performance monitoring. Similar problems have been encountered in relation to the integration of regional spatial planning, which are discussed in detail in Chapter Two.

In concluding this brief introduction to New Labour's public sector 'joining up' reforms, it appears that central government's approach has not yet achieved its intended results. 6 *et al.* (2002) point to this fact, suggesting that there has been an excessive hierarchical bias in the design of integrated policy programmes, exemplified by the weight of effort directed to central accountability requirements and the hogging of intelligence at the centre. In addition, central government is described as being impatient and having an 'intolerance of failure' attitude, as opposed to accepting failure as an opportunity to learn (6 *et al.*, 2002). This echoes planning perspectives such as Faludi's 'planning as learning' approach to the assessment of planning performance (Faludi, 2000).

### 1.3 INTEGRATING SPATIAL PLANNING

Against this background of public policy integration, planning initially and officially continued to operate in its land use silo, taking a narrow view of the range of policy issues and actors/ organisations that impinged on planning matters (Hammond, 2003). In the run up to the late 1990s and early 2000s, however, planning practice had been undergoing a gradual evolution from a land use to a spatial perspective. This was influenced by a whole range of factors, not least the gradual mainstreaming of sustainable development in planning issues through Local Agenda 21 (LA21) after the Earth Conference in Rio in 1992 (Danson *et al.*, 1997). Over this same period, the European Union (EU), with no explicit spatial planning competency, gradually began to develop policy in this direction, stemming from its environmental competency and a general growing concern for the spatial impacts of a whole range of EU policies and funding streams. In particular, there was an emerging awareness that the investment of European Structural Funds in disadvantaged regions was leading to a series of intended and unintended spatial impacts (Glasson & Marshall, 2007). As a result, it became a requirement for disadvantaged regions receiving funding to draw up Single Programming Documents (SPDs) in relation to the spending of Structural Funds. This was influential in England at this time on the re-emergence of a regional spatial planning competency that had lagged behind for nearly two decades. Also influential was the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) (CEC, 1999), which was developed and agreed upon by member states over the course of the 1990s as a non-binding, common approach to spatial planning across the Union. This document emphasised the importance of a regional level in spatial planning and underlined the strategic benefits of taking such an approach. The ESDP also provided useful conceptual tools in this regard, which included an emphasis on city-regions and polycentric development (CEC, 1999). This spatial planning emphasis of the ESDP has subsequently been reiterated and expanded upon in the Leipzig Territorial Agenda (EU, 2007).

The approach of spatial, as opposed to land use planning, gradually became recognised by central government in England as a useful means to assist in its 'joining-up' of policy within the context of modernising public sector service provision. This resulted in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act of 2004



(PCPA), which introduced a new system of spatial planning into England with the primary purpose of contributing to the delivery of sustainable development. A large part of this new approach to planning was the consideration of a much wider range of public policy than had previously been the case and the manner in which such policies interacted to make 'place'. At its basis this involved a more holistic approach to the development of spatial planning strategies and the general operationalisation of the system by spatial planning practitioners. In particular, the Act brought about changes to the way spatial strategies were developed at a local and regional level. This resulted in a stronger emphasis on regional planning as strategic planning functions were taken away from county and metropolitan authorities and passed to regional planning bodies (RPBs). At the regional level, non-statutory Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) was replaced with statutory Regional Spatial Strategies (RSSs) that emphasised the spatial integration of a wider array of public policies than RPG. RSSs also subsumed structure plans and part one of unitary development plans to bring about greater strategic coherence in spatial policy at the regional level.

The 2004 reforms have resulted in a flurry of spatial planning activity within the English regions as RPBs have raced to produce the new RSSs within the tight timescales set by national government. RSS production has placed great demands on the abilities of regional spatial planners in integrating public policy, as they have grappled with the exact meaning of spatial planning in relation to policy coverage and depth (Pearce & Ayres, 2006), particularly in terms of integration and sustainable development. The process has proved even more difficult for new regional spatial policy stakeholders from policy sectors that have not been traditionally connected to regional spatial planning (Snap *et al.*, 2005), such as for example health.

The requirements of the new system have pushed spatial planners in the direction of developing new ways of working and acting, requiring a cultural change within the profession (Shaw, 2006). Such changes have resulted from the development of new networks that draw in new stakeholders and their respective policies, involving planners in an expanded system of regional governance, raising questions regarding the quality of networks and therefore institutional capacity (Healey, 2006). In this

way, planners are influencing and being influenced, resulting in the new approaches to practice.

Since this research was undertaken, English regional spatial planning has undergone further changes, as RSSs are now to be combined with Regional Economic Strategies (RESs) to create an integrated Single Regional Strategy (SRS) from 2010, with executive responsibility passing to the DAs. Although this development does not directly impinge on the examination of the RSS preparation process undertaken in this research, it will, however, be taken into consideration later in discussing the research's findings.

It is within the context of this brief overview of regional spatial planning reforms that this study's aim and objectives are set out. These are:

#### **Aim**

**To examine the role played by the RSS as a process of integrating regional spatial planning policies and their respective actors and organisations.**

#### **Objective One**

**To explore the emerging concept of spatial planning and its role in public policy integration within the English regions, against a background of historical and contemporary developments.**

#### **Objective Two**

**To develop a conceptual framework and methodology appropriate to examining the integration of regional spatial policy and actors in RSS development.**

#### **Objective Three**

**To examine the manner in which regional spatial policy has been integrated in RSSs.**

#### **Objective Four**

**To consider the experiences of spatial planning actors and organisations in mediating and negotiating the RSS preparation process.**

## **Objective Five**

**To assess through the prism of governance, the role of regional spatial planners and their organisations and culture, in developing and delivering the RSS, along with the consideration of potential future developments.**

### **1.4 STUDY OUTLINE**

This chapter is followed by six others which together address the study's objectives and overall aim. In general, each chapter is more or less concurrent with an objective. Chapter Two, therefore addresses the first objective and part of the second. It begins with a discussion of the meaning of spatial planning in the context of current English practice and addresses prominent drivers and influences in this regard, namely Europe and sustainable development. The region as a context for spatial planning is then considered, offering a brief overview of how the region has long been a scale within English governance for defining socio-economic problems and has often been used as a prism through which to address such policy concerns. The meaning of integrated spatial planning is then considered within the regional context, in order to bring about greater conceptual and linguistic clarity. The approach here is to offer a number of general lenses, policy and actor/organisation typologies and theoretical concepts, so as to develop a conceptual framework appropriate to the study of regional spatial planning. Following from this, a historical overview is offered of previous episodes of regional planning in England in order to understand whether contemporary regional spatial planning practice in England is something entirely new or rather an evolution of ideas that have built on previous practice experiences. The chapter then concludes with a consideration of current regional spatial planning practice in England, in particular the strengths, weaknesses and barriers experienced in this regard.

Chapter Three addresses the methodology used in this study and therefore meets the second part of Objective Two. It begins with an overview of the interpretative approach which underpins the methodology and links it to the conceptual framework of Chapter Two. The chapter then proceeds with a discussion and justification of the case study approach used in this study, before discussing the various methodological

tools that have been employed, which include institutional mapping, documentary research, and the execution and qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews in the two case study regions. A discussion of the ethical considerations in executing the methodology is also offered.

Chapter Four begins to discuss the research findings and addresses the third objective of exploring the integration of regional spatial planning policies. This begins with a description of the institutional maps through which the RSS processes occurred. Following from this, the level of spatial policy and its integration within the RSS is explored, in addition to the value of Sustainability Assessment and the integration of spatial policy in terms of delivery. Further clarification is then offered within this discussion, considering the evidence for spatial policy integration through the spatial policy typologies developed in Chapter Two.

Chapter Five considers the fourth objective regarding the integration between spatial planning practitioners and their respective organisations in the RSS preparation process. This begins with a narrative of each RSS preparation process, drawing on official documentation from each region, which in turn is tempered by the interpretive perspectives of the stakeholders involved. The dynamics of horizontal and vertical integration are also considered, in addition to delivery issues that are expected to result. The actor integration typology developed in the conceptual framework is then utilised in order to bring a clearer conceptual understanding to types of actor/organisation relationships experienced in the preparation of each RSS.

Chapter Six then sets out to meet the final and fifth objective, exploring the cases studied through the lenses of governance and cultural change. The first part of the chapter examines governance by networks, which considers the existence of governance networks within both cases and explores these in relation to their style and depth. This provides an overall view of the quality of such networks, allowing for a commentary on the overall institutional capacity within and between each case. The second part of the chapter explores cultural change through the self-descriptions of actors, examining the barriers that were generally regarded as existing. The degree to which cultural change is actually taking place is also explored. The final chapter then offers conclusions in light of the research presented and discusses these in

relation to the new spatial planning regional arrangements that are currently emerging. It also considers possibilities for future research.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

# **INTEGRATING SPATIAL POLICY IN THE ENGLISH REGIONS: CONCEPTS AND CONTEXTS**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter discusses the integration of regional spatial policy in England. Through this discussion it builds a conceptual framework consisting of a number of typological and theoretical lenses that can be used in order to better frame and understand the issues surrounding the integration of English regional spatial planning, in both historical and contemporary contexts. In doing so, this chapter is intended to assist in meeting objective one and partially meeting objective two. The remaining part of this study's second objective will be fulfilled in the methodology chapter that follows.

With these objectives in mind and against the background set out in Chapter One of New Labour public sector 'joining up' reforms, this chapter examines the meaning and drivers of spatial planning. The role of the region and its relationship to spatial planning is also discussed; in particular, how regions are utilised as a means for framing responses to spatial and related public policy concerns.

This leads to an examination of the concept of integration in terms of spatial planning. Firstly, some basic broad meanings of integration are discussed in an effort to begin to unpick some of its components, providing a basis for the conceptual lenses that are then developed. The first set of lenses consist of typologies relating to the substantive (policy) and procedural (actor/organisation) tendencies generally observed in the integration of spatial policy, while the second set consider broader theoretical lenses dealing with the regional governance structures of planning and the cultural change the profession is experiencing in integrating spatial policy.

With this conceptual framework set out, the chapter will then progress to consider public attempts to integrate planning at the regional level over the course of the

1900s and into the 2000s, culminating in the introduction of RSSs. The chapter then concludes with a critical overview of the main integration challenges faced by the emerging regional spatial planning system, which will provide a broad context for considering the detailed case study that is presented in later chapters.

## **2.2 DEFINING SPATIAL PLANNING**

Spatial planning as a planning concept in the UK came to the fore against the background described above, as central government looked for ways to improve the horizontal integration of policy at regional, sub-regional and local levels. In this way it sought to recast the concept of land use planning as spatial, focusing on the integration of spatial goals, the joining up of their delivery and effective engagement with communities and appropriate stakeholders (Glasson & Marshall, 2007; Nadin, 2006).

As a practice, however, it has long been pursued in other European countries such as the Netherlands and Germany, and has more recently become an EU wide concern (CEC, 1997). It is this influence, along with others discussed below, such as sustainable development and changing realities of space and place, that have gradually brought spatial planning to the fore in the UK over the course of the 1990s and 2000s, leading to a rebranding of land use planning and a broadening in understanding of the contributions it could make in relation to integrated policy development and delivery, in the making of 'place' (ODPM, 2005a). It is important to note here that planning has always been about integration, ranging from nineteenth century physical urban reforms that assisted in public health improvements, to twentieth century approaches of urban containment and environmental protection. While these examples represent a never ending shift in the range and type of public policies involved in these joined up concerns, at no point until the PCPA, was land use planning ascribed officially as 'spatial' in remit, allowing it to achieve the aspirations of founding fathers such as Abercrombie and Howard, and truly become an integrated practice that contributes to the making of 'place'. Nadin (2006) put this succinctly, describing the planning reforms as placing planning at the centre of the spatial development process, as a pro-active and strategic co-ordinator of all policies

and actions that influence spatial development and to do so in the interests of sustainable development.

This integrative and strategic approach can clearly be seen from the definition of spatial planning provided by central government in *PPSI: Delivering Sustainable Development*.

“The new system of regional spatial strategies and local development documents should take a spatial planning approach. Spatial planning goes beyond traditional land use planning to bring together and integrate policies for the development and use of land with other policies and programmes which influence the nature of places and how they can function. That will include policies which can impact on land use, for example by influencing the demands on or needs for development, but which are not capable of being delivered solely or mainly through the granting or refusal of planning permission and which may be implemented by other means.”

(ODPM, 2005a, para. 30)

From this statement one can see the potential wide ranging considerations that spatial planning should, to varying degrees, take into account, when drafting and implementing spatial strategies.

It had taken some time, however, for the Labour government to recognise this integrative potential of spatial planning in public policy terms. So although there were strong spatial dimensions to many of the cross-cutting problems they first sought to tackle after coming to power, such as for example social exclusion, spatial planning was not initially nominated as a powerful tool in addressing policy fragmentation. The result of this earlier oversight was limited attention to the spatial dimension of sectoral interests, creating a situation where initial late 1990s public sector joining up reforms produced a plethora of collaborative and partnership initiatives that often by-passed siloed land use planning (Hammond, 2003).

A sign of change, however, came with the 2001 planning Green Paper and the reissue in 2000 of Planning Policy Guidance 11 (PPG 11) (DETR, 2000a), suggesting a more central role for spatial planning in assisting joining up through,



among other approaches, the development of territorial strategies with wider and more inclusive remits.

This broader approach to planning was strongly influenced by the EU and the historical experiences of planning practice in other European member states. Such influences interacted and coincided with the need to plan for a sustainable society and a growing awareness of the changing realities of space and place. Before turning to these non-mutually exclusive influences in the next three sub-sections, it is important to acknowledge that such drivers have played out against a number of broader, macro forces, such as changes in government, economy and society, broad forces of globalisation and shifting relations between the state and the market (Nadin, 2006).

### **2.2.1 European Influences**

Since the European Economic Community was established by the Treaty of Rome in 1957, balanced economic development across Europe's regions has been a priority, emphasised through assisting the economic and social development of less favoured regions. This is pursued through the use of structural and cohesion funds, such as the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund, which are allocated to support poorer regions of the EU, integrate European infrastructure and encourage territorial and cross-border cooperation (INTERREG). The pursuit of balanced regional development, along with those of additional EU competencies that have expanded and evolved over time, has led to an increasing recognition of the spatial impacts of such policies and the need for mechanisms to coordinate such impacts.

During the 1970s the correction of regional imbalances across the EU received greater emphasis as an important measure in achieving economic and monetary union (Glasson & Marshall, 2007). At this time the UK government began to operate its regional policy and selective assistance along the lines of EU criteria, as well as ensuring general geographical concurrence between UK and EU assisted areas (Glasson & Marshall, 2007). The EU requirement for SPDs, which are integrated plans setting out problem areas and spending intentions, was also influential on British planning. SPDs ensured some continuance and semblance of strategic

planning as the Conservative government in the 1980s dismantled most of the domestic regional and strategic planning structures.

Questions have emerged among planning academics as to whether EU regional policy is still seeking to achieve balanced regional development. Glasson & Marshall (2007) for example have pointed to the primacy of business as a tendency in European planning, referring for example to the possible hidden regional policy agenda in the UK, which allows the South East region (SE) to be the economic power house that should not be held back by government policy. Previously Brenner (2004) had alluded to this, noting that there was a shift in Europe in the 1990s from disadvantaged regional support to that for winning regions on an international stage, a move that has been subsequently reinforced in the Leipzig Territorial Agenda (Naylon, *et al.*, 2007). More recently, this approach has been explicitly emphasised in Ireland in relation to the Dublin region (NCC & Forfás, 2009).

Shortly after coming to power in 1997 the New Labour government began to place increasing emphasis on the recognition of the European agenda within British planning (Shaw & Sykes, 2003). This was expressed in the DETR publication *Modernising Planning* (DETR, 1998), drawing particular attention to European cross-border and trans-national planning issues and the impact of these influences on spatial planning. In a more explicit manner in the same year the DETR set out in detail the impact of the EU on the UK planning system (Wilkinson *et al.*, 1998). These influences were divided into direct impacts such as regional funding, environmental legislation and the ESDP (CEC, 1999), and indirect impacts such as the Common Agricultural Policy and the Common Fisheries Policy.

Within a regional context PPS11 (ODPM, 2004a) has emphasised the important relationship of European policies to RSSs, stating that they should take account of EU legislation, policies, programmes and funding regimes. Examples include SEA of plans, the ESDP and the provision of a spatial framework for DA administered Structural Fund programmes and their associated SPDs. These main European influences are also reflected in strategic planning in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, which as pointed out by Shaw & Sykes (2003) represents a sub-national or

'infranational' operationalisation of European policy in the UK, due to the absence of a UK national planning framework.

European funding programmes and initiatives and even the SEA of plans can all be seen as very explicit influences of EU policy on British planning, however, the direct influence of the ESDP is not so clear (Glasson & Marshall, 2007), even though it was credited with direct influence on the UK planning system by the DETR over ten years ago (Wilkinson *et al.*, 1998). In order to consider the degree of influence of the ESDP, it is first necessary to briefly examine the document and the context of its formation.

The ESDP was developed over the course of the 1990s on a voluntary basis through member state cooperation (Faludi, 2003), even though the EU has no spatial planning competency (CEC, 1997). The intention was to provide a 'framework' to be taken into account by those involved in spatial planning (CEC, 1999). In this sense the ESDP would help coordinate the spatial impacts of domestic and European public policy, from European to local level, avoiding the costs of not coordinating policies, such as duplication, conflicts or mutual neutralisation (CEC, 1999).

As a non-binding document, the ESDP provides guidance to member states on the development of their spatial structure. It aims for balanced and sustainable spatial development across the Union's territory and involves three main objectives of economic and social cohesion, sustainable development and balanced competition across territory. In this respect, the document recommends three spheres of action:

- 1). Developing balanced regions through polycentric city systems and new urban relationships;
- 2). Securing parity of access to infrastructure and knowledge;
- 3). Sustainable development and the prudent management and protection of natural and cultural heritage.

The ESDP proposes a national spatial framework, which involves vertical and horizontal linkages. Vertical links are proposed to integrate various spatial tiers, from local to regional levels and so on up; whereas horizontal links are intended to integrate inter-sectoral and cross-boundary issues, within the framework. In this

context it proposes the development of integrated, multi-sectoral development strategies (CEC, 1999).

The *EU Compendium of European Spatial Planning Systems and Policies* (CEC, 1997) was published around the same time as the ESDP was being finalised. It provides an overview of European planning systems and a perusal of this document gives a clear indication of the types of European planning systems that strongly influenced the ESDP. In terms of the ESDP's broad thrust to integrate a range of public policy, the Austrian, French, German and Dutch systems have had a long experience in integrating social, economic, environmental and infrastructure planning, where as in other European planning systems these sectors tended to be separate. In terms of National level planning, the Danish and Dutch experience was influential, and they, along with their Nordic neighbours and Germany and Austria tended to have strongly integrated systems in a vertical and horizontal sense. The impact of the British land use planning system on the ESDP at this time would have been limited and indeed the compendium only describes the British system as spatial in terms of its town and country planning system, together with environmental policy and regulation and the spatial aspects of regional policy (CEC, 1997). Since this time, however, the British government appear to have adopted many ideas from the ESDP such as spatial planning, spatial strategies at regional and local level and explicit efforts to integrate spatial policy in a vertical and horizontal sense, along with any associated cross-boundary issues. But can this adoption be read so literally? To answer this one must consider the manner in which the ESDP has influenced European planning systems and the British context.

The ESDP was never intended to be a spatial planning blueprint to be adopted by European member states in order to harmonise EU planning systems. Instead, it provided a set of core ideas that have disseminated (Böhme, 2003). Indeed the ESDP stated that it aimed to provide "...a general source of reference for actions with a spatial impact, taken by public and private decision makers." (CEC, 1999, p.11). As a result, authors such as Faludi have described the ESDP as becoming instrumental in decision making (Faludi, 2000) through shaping the minds of the actors involved in planning (Faludi, 2001) and the discourses in which they engage (Böhme, 2003). In this sense, the ESDP is seen as a framework that does not impose itself and does

not pre-empt decisions that individual planning actors may make (Faludi, 2003). This point has been reinforced more recently through research carried out by the European Observation Network on Territorial Development and Cohesion (ESPON, 2007), which found that there has been limited direct application of the ESDP in member states.

In relation to RPG in the England, the precursor to RSSs, Shaw & Sykes (2003) observed this influential tendency of the ESDP in the North West (NW) of England, although they also noted that the overall influence was difficult to disentangle and very much depended on the empirical reality of the region and the individuals involved (Shaw & Sykes, 2003). This perspective is supported by Glasson & Marshall (2007) who suggest that although New Labour has been keen to promote the ESDP principles, the UK's substantive and procedural regional planning elements have been generated internally up to now.

This internal development is explored in detail later. At this stage it is sufficient to say that British planning has previously had a wide and varied experience in integrating a range of spatial policy concerns, in both a vertical and horizontal sense. In light of this point, the apparent direct adoption of ESDP principles based around the integration of spatial planning becomes less clear, pointing to a more indirect adoption, drawing upon the ESDP's principles, which have then been localised.

This view is supported by Kunzmann (2009) in relation to the influence of Europe on Britain's adoption of spatial planning. He proposes that the general idea of spatial planning was adopted in Britain as a means of reinventing and rejuvenating the discipline, through localising the concept with native desires for planning and then using this new 'planning' to address planning problems that previously could not be addressed (see also Haughton *et al.*, 2010). In this way, just as the ESDP offers broad brush spatial planning concepts that have been localised differently in member states, so the British adoption of spatial planning is different in connotation to spatial planning approaches that have been pursued for much longer, in for example Germany (Raumplanung) or France (Aménagement du Territoire) (Kunzmann, 2009).

In 2007 the principles of the ESDP were taken further and expanded on in the Leipzig Territorial Agenda (EU, 2007). In many respects the Agenda attempts to combine the ESDP with economic and social cohesion policy, emphasising the fundamental importance of territorial cohesion as a third strand in overall regional cohesion policy. It also represents the paradigm shift in EU regional policy described above, from focusing just on weak regions to focusing on developing the potential of all regions (Naylon *et al.*, 2007). In addition to the ESDP principles described, it also emphasises:

- 1). New territorial governance partnerships between rural and urban areas;
- 2). Promoting clusters of cooperation and innovation;
- 3). Strengthening and extending trans-European networks;
- 4). Trans-European risk management.

At the same time as the Agenda, member states also agreed on the Leipzig Charter, which emphasised the importance of coherent city regions and the inclusion of urban policy concerns in all levels of public policy in member states (Naylon *et al.*, 2007). As with the ESDP, both the Charter and the Territorial Agenda are intended to be 'localised' in member states through voluntary cooperation. To date it is too early to say the impact that both will have, although it is clear that the EU will continue to emphasise the importance of spatial coherence in its policies and those of its member states.

### **2.2.2 Sustainable Development**

Sustainable development has played a key role in the evolution of land use planning into spatial planning. Indeed, the PCPA which redefined planning as spatial, also stated that its primary purpose was to contribute to the delivery of sustainable development. At a basic level sustainable development is about balanced development and inter-generational equity within the planet's carrying capacity (Doyle & McEachern, 2001), but it has come to encompass many different perspectives, from ecological modernism to deep green thinking (see for example Naess, 1998). Danson & Lloyd (1997) say that the origins of sustainable development can be traced back to the origins of regional planning and the need to balance economic, social and environmental concerns and that it was the Brundtland Commission, which added the idea of contemporary and inter-generational equity.

As with the ESDP or the concept 'spatial planning', there is always room for interpretation and in most western countries, including Britain, sustainable development has been interpreted by what has come to be termed ecological modernism. This interpretation of sustainable development tends to give primacy to the economy, reducing other sectors to economic values (Danson & Lloyd, 1997) and engaging in quick fix solutions and short term balancing acts that do not fully respect inter-generational equity, although there are acknowledged difficulties in ensuring this, due to an ever present ignorance of future human values (Hall, 2007).

This first major influence of sustainable development on British planning was the introduction of LA21, after the UN Rio Earth Summit in 1992. LA21 involved addressing cross-cutting themes by drawing sectors and actors together to identify sustainable development indicators. Such work required a gradual chipping away at siloed policy views that had existed within traditional disciplinary, professional and administrative boundaries, leading to greater collaboration in policy formulation, implementation and evaluation. This approach, for example, was emphasised by the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution (RCEP) in 2002, which called for a radical reform of the planning system involving a widening of its scope and the introduction of new methods and principles that recognise and challenge fundamentally well established ways of working (RCEP, 2002). In reply the following year, the government stated their support for such moves (ODPM, 2003a), which came to fruition in the PCPA.

Part of the reason for this call by the RCEP, among others, was that over the course of the 1990s and into the early 2000s, although there had been an increase in government guidance and advice regarding sustainable development, such as for example, *A Better Quality of Life: A strategy for sustainable development* (DETR, 1999a), there was still general confusion regarding the concept, due to a lack of contextual knowledge and a lack of clarity regarding its implementation (Danson & Lloyd, 1997). Joining up and working in new ways was therefore 'key' to overcoming this and planning provided a valuable spatial or place lens to focus these efforts. Indeed, as Danson & Lloyd (1997) point out, the concept was ideally suited to regional planning, helping to increase ownership, vital to the success of territorial integration. But this implied changes in terms of the philosophy, value and priorities

of planning (Danson & Lloyd, 1997), suggesting the need for a much more comprehensive view of the spatial implications of policy, across the economic, social and environmental sectors. In this way, the increasing influence of sustainable development on planning throughout the 1990s could be described as having helped lay the groundwork within British planning that allowed it to rediscover the spatial (Vigar *et al.*, 2000), embrace sustainable development as its purpose and achieve the broader aspirations that the nineteenth century founding fathers had for English planning practice.

### **2.2.3 Changing Realities of Space and Place**

Nadin (2006) provides an interesting view of how the changing realities of space and place have been a driver in the transformation of land use planning into spatial planning. Indeed, over the course of the twentieth century there have been major changes in the geography of society and economic relations, leading to stronger interconnectedness between places, resulting in a greater range of networks and flows. This has created ever more complex problems for planning, requiring solutions to be more integrated than previously. Nadin (2006) suggests sample problems within this context, such as:

- The importance of proximity and how sometimes it can be accompanied by lower accessibility;
- Planning happens within boundaries, but networks and flows cross these.

As a result spatial strategies need to consider such networks and flows and of late, useful 'spatial concepts' have come into greater vogue, such as 'functional territories' like city regions, development corridors and polycentricity (see for example ODPM's 2003b *Polycentricity Scoping Study*). The adoption of these concepts has been influenced by the experience of spatial planning in other European countries and the ESDP. In addition, sustainable development is also providing increasingly useful tools, from Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to ecological footprints, which assist planners in achieving a more joined up approach to the interconnectedness of economic, social and environmental policy areas.

This increasing range of spatial and environmental concepts and tools have encouraged joint working across boundaries and sectors, enabling spatial planners to



better understand the interconnectedness of places and assisting other policy sectors to:

“...understand the spatial dimension and impacts of their activities; how this interacts with other activities to create outcomes; and how a coordinated approach can help to achieve their goals.”

(Nadin, 2006, para. 3.15)

The above discussion offers a broad overview of factors that have influenced the emergence of spatial planning in Britain and some of the problems that spatial planning is intended to address. This is set against a background of wider public sector policy reform, which has similar goals of efficiency and effectiveness, through integrated policy development, delivery and monitoring. With this in mind it is now necessary to expand the discussion and define more clearly what exactly one means by spatial planning and integration. Nadin (2006) provides a useful direction in this regard.

“Whilst there are numerous commentaries on what the spatial planning approach entails, the reality is that it will be built and defined in practice through the creation of regional spatial strategies and local development frameworks, and in the way these tools shape decisions.”

(Nadin, 2006, para. 1.4)

This approach concurs with the discussion above, in that the particular form of spatial planning adopted in England will be specific to its own context (Kunzmann, 2009).

In the context of this study, this entails examining the way in which regional spatial policy is integrated in practice and the role played by a range of spatial actors and organisations in this regard. With this in mind, spatial planning and the region will now be considered before providing an overview of a range of different conceptualisations that will provide an overall framework to assist in understanding the integration of spatial policy. Following this, the experience of regional planning in England to date will be reviewed.

## **2.3 SPATIAL PLANNING AND THE REGION**

After the PCPA, the regional level achieved greater significance in the national spatial planning hierarchy. Since the 1990s it began to increase in prominence for the first time since the 1970s, from a national as opposed to EU perspective, as a useful means for co-ordinating spatial planning at a level above local government. This shift provided a more strategic view in relation to spatial policy, particularly that which crossed local boundaries. This regional reemphasis was initially addressed through a gradually expanding non-statutory RPG, which brought together national and regional planning issues, as a means of ensuring intra-regional consistency across constituent local planning authority plans and development control and their involvement in other strategic planning issues such as regeneration. After the PCPA, this strategic guiding role of the English regions was strengthened, as RPG was replaced with statutory RSSs. In many respects this change represents a reassertion by central government of vertical integration in spatial planning, from national to local level, represented by a redistribution of the strategic planning remit from local to regional level. At the same time, the very nature of the broader remit of spatial as opposed to land use planning required the development of stronger horizontal (intra- and inter-regional) integration of the spatial aspects of a broad range of public policy. In this respect the region provides a very interesting case study as a means of investigating the integration of spatial policy and actors/organisations. As it lies at the middle level of English governance, examining regions provides an opportunity to study the manner in which vertical and horizontal tensions play out. This leads to the question of what one means by a region in this context, and how it has come to be seen as a way of defining economic, social and environmental problems and a way of framing their respective public policy responses?

### **2.3.1 Understanding the Region**

The role of regions as centres of specialisation and innovation is nothing new and has origins in the nineteenth century (Benneworth *et al.*, 2006). Since then academic interest in regions has waxed and waned, in terms of theory and implementation (Roberts & Baker, 2006), coming back into vogue as an academic concept in the 1970s and 1980s, particularly in relation to the increased importance of understanding economic development (Benneworth *et al.*, 2006) and the need to

build regional institutional capacity in this respect (Mawson, 1998) through institutionally mediated forms of selective cooperation between actors (Tewdwr-Jones, 2002). In Britain this has been described as part of the neo-liberal agenda (Benneworth *et al.*, 2006; Hardill *et al.*, 2006). Such economic concerns were also related to the need to manage the implementation of European Structural Funds by central government officials at the regional level (Glasson & Marshall, 2007; Batchler & Turok, 1997, in Mawson, 1998), a European driver, which as discussed, has also influenced the development of spatial planning in England and perhaps helps explain, in part, why regional spatial planning was given greater prominence by central government (Tewdwr-Jones, 2002). Other influential factors, in socio-political terms have been the greater importance attached to place and regional identity, influenced by the ESDP (CEC, 1999); devolution to the Celtic nations and London (DTLR, 2002); and increased attention to regions, sub-regions and city-regions (DTLR, 2002), among others, which has occurred in a context of increased globalisation (Hardill *et al.* 2006). To these reasons for the re-emergence of regions, one can also add concerns regarding 'undemocratic' agencies between local and national government, linked to the discussion of the need to overcome fragmentation in the public sector (Mawson, 1998). In spatial planning terms the region has also become important due to a re-emphasis on place and territory and the manner in which this has been driven by environmental sustainability (Glasson & Marshall, 2007; Vigar *et al.* 2000). Together, all of these drivers towards a regional renaissance, in addition to many others (see for example, Dimitriou & Thompson, 2007; Glasson & Marshall, 2007; Baker 1998) influenced central government's view of the region as having the potential to coordinate national policies and tailor them to strategic and local circumstances through networks of sectoral stakeholders (Tewdwr-Jones, 2002).

Critics have suggested that the contemporarily evolving version of the English region is a form of lowest common denominator, providing a means for the centre to exert greater control over the region and below, through utilising the power of local networks (Benneworth *et al.*, 2006); a point that will be given greater consideration later.

The increase in prominence of the region has led to much dispute regarding the application of the concept. In basic terms, however, one can understand regions as being smaller in spatial terms and political remit, than the nation state, having elements of territorial commonality and relative homogeneity (Healey, 2007; Roberts & Baker, 2006; Massey, 2005). Outside this there is no universally applicable definition and indeed it would be unrealistic to superimpose a universal model (Glasson & Marshall, 2007), as regions succeed and fail for very different intrinsic reasons (Benneworth *et al.* 2006). Taking account of this, Massey (1986) provides a useful general definition of a region in planning terms as being:

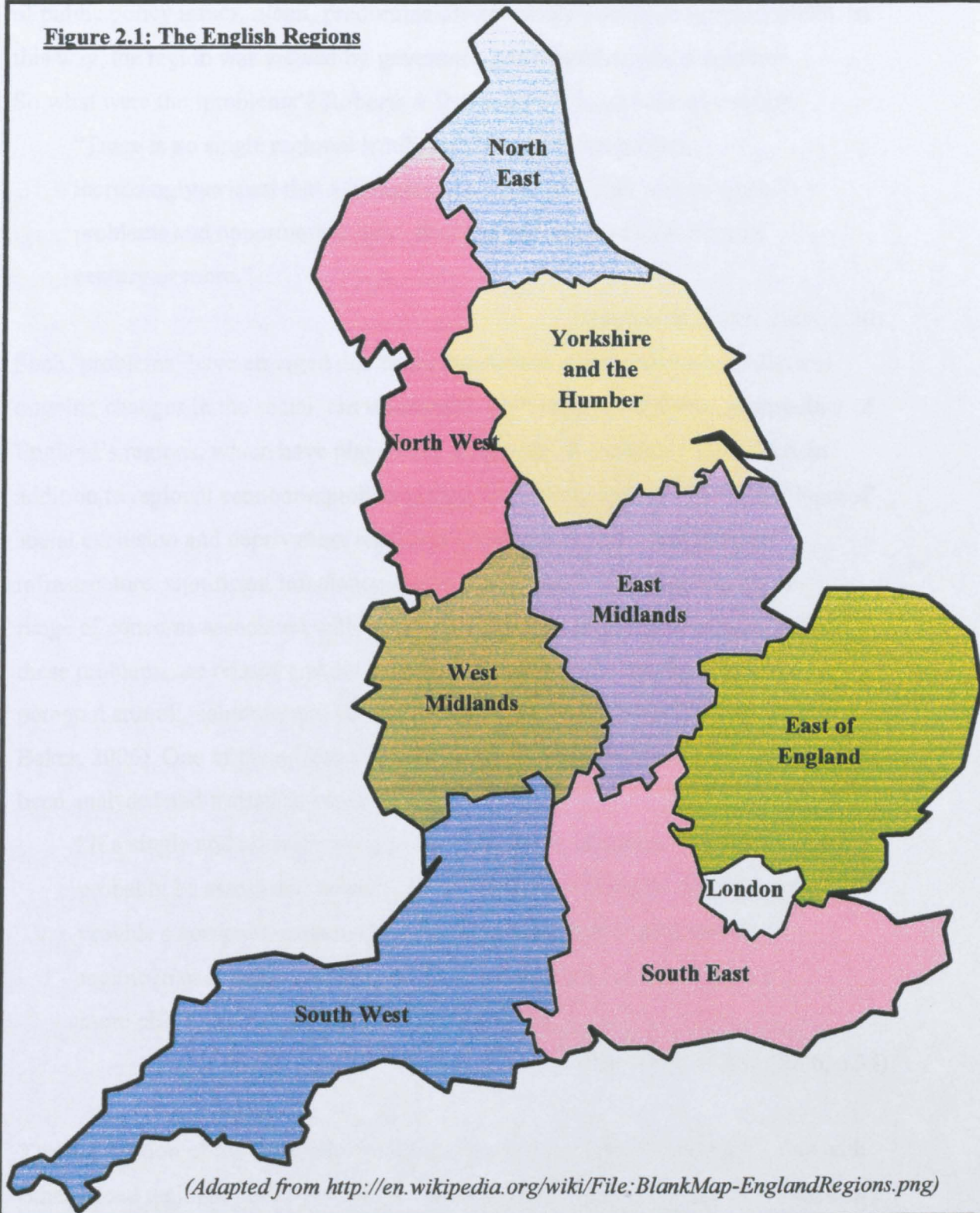
“....a type of spatially-defined administrative unit....[that does] not necessarily fit into other definitions of functional, natural or geographic regions,....”

(Massey, 1989, p. 59)

In an effort to define regions more specifically, academics have developed typologies covering a range of social, physical, economic, environmental and cultural attributes (see for example Jacobs, 1984). These attributes intermesh in formal and functional ways, representing ideas that can be traced back to the early work of Geddes in 1915 (Glasson & Marshall, 2007) and reflecting the ‘blend’ that exists in contemporary regional arrangements in England (Roberts & Baker, 2006). This ‘mix’ of regional arrangements, so often described as specific to England (Roberts & Baker, 2006), helps explain why English regions (illustrated in Figure 2.1) are not always easy to define, due to a lack of concurrency in the strategic policy views and resulting territorial bounding of these by central government agencies across a range of public policy sectors, such as agriculture, transport, planning (Tewdwr-Jones, 2002) and environment. For this reason, the make-up of the English regions is often described as “....a means to an end, rather than an end in themselves....” (Glasson, 1974, p.22). Suffice it to say that the ongoing use of the regions as a policy delivery tool by central government since the early twentieth century has helped ensure their survival; in essence, Wannop’s now widely used phrase of the ‘regional imperative’ (Wannop, 1995). Other influential factors in this regard include the presence of certain economic, social and cultural bonds and the fact that in the absence of an alternative, such regions have been defaulted to, and indeed reinforced through successive

rounds of European and central government investment, such as infrastructure (Glasson & Marshall, 2007; Roberts & Baker, 2006).

**Figure 2.1: The English Regions**



Such central government investment has a strong lineage back to the 1920s and was reinforced by the Barlow Commission in the 1940s, recognising the region as a useful strategic perspective through which to analyse, understand and tackle a range of public policy issues, *albeit*, predominantly economic (Baker & Roberts, 2006). In this way, the region was viewed by government as a problem and a solution.

So what were the 'problems'? Roberts & Baker (2006) have pointed out that:

"There is no single regional 'problem'. Rather, it has become increasingly evident that a complex and often confused web of spatial problems and opportunities have emerged and evolved over the past century or more."

(Roberts & Baker, 2006, p.30)

Such 'problems' have emerged due to the interaction of a number of parallel and ongoing changes in the social, environmental, political and economic geographies of England's regions, which have played out differently in different regions. So, in addition to regional economic problems there have been, among others, problems of social exclusion and deprivation, disparities in access to and the quality of infrastructure, significant imbalances in the availability of quality housing and a range of concerns associated with planning, management and governance. Each of these problems are related and act as issues to be solved in their own right and as potential stimuli, solutions and causes of other associated problems (Roberts & Baker, 2006). One of the related difficulties with such problems is that they have been analysed and treated as separate issues. Indeed,

"If a single and all-embracing problem has been identified, it would probably be associated with the difficulties encountered in attempting to provide a comprehensive and integrated planning and management regime in each region, together with the desirability of introducing a more effective system of regional management."

(Roberts & Baker, 2006, p.34)

The domination of the regional economic issue and the failure to integrate this with other siloed regional policy problems, which were ill-defined and often regarded as a secondary matter, has resulted in conflict regarding the scope and responsibility for different aspects of regional public policy, further limiting integration and coordination between policy areas (Roberts & Baker, 2006).



As will be reviewed in the historical and contemporary overview section below, the integration of regional policy problems has been an ongoing and difficult issue to grasp for successive national governments, irrespective of the varying levels of enthusiasm with which this has been approached. Therefore the introduction of regional spatial planning represents a concerted attempt by central government to tackle this, through utilising spatial planning as a policy sector to assist in its overall drive for the more effective and integrated development and delivery of public policy (ODPM, 2004a). Recent work on the preparation of RSSs and the integration of spatial policy and actors involved, provides an ideal opportunity to consider the barriers, problems, strengths and opportunities encountered during integration efforts. Before examining this, however, it is necessary to conceptualise approaches to integrated spatial planning.

## **2.4 CONCEPTUALISING INTEGRATED SPATIAL PLANNING**

When considering spatial planning and integration together, *i.e.* integrated spatial planning, it is clear that they are synonymous with each other, in that spatial policy should inherently be integrated policy. Therefore, the move in England from land use to spatial planning reflects an approach to planning that is *becoming* spatial; that is *becoming* integrated; a process described in this study as integrating or integrated spatial planning. As discussed above, however, this does not mean that there is an end point at which integrated policy is achieved, as the process of integrating all spatial considerations into the guiding of public and private policy decisions will always be dynamic (Haughton *et al.*, 2010; Glasson & Marshall, 2007; Healey, 1998).

An important point in this regard is that public policy integration will always be necessary, as public policy sectoralisation is an inevitable and beneficial approach to government (Hammond, 2003); it allows specialisation and concentrated pursuit of detailed objectives and encourages beneficial competencies among sectors. Sectoralisation of public policy is therefore useful and robust, dispelling the idea of comprehensive integration (Nadin, 2006) and lending further weight to the point that

integration is an ongoing and never ending process of coordinating different policy strands.

As planning attempts to integrate a wider range of spatial policy, there is a tendency for planners to see their work as central to public policy integration, rather than as a sector in itself. This is also the way other policy sectors perceive it; even those with relatively close relationships to planning such as transport and environment (Nadin, 2006). So for example, when health professionals work with planners on spatial issues, they see the spatial as a useful additional policy dimension to their work, among a whole range of other non-spatial policy concerns (Plowden & Greer, 2001). Following from this, integrated spatial planning is not taken to mean something that creates the impression of spatial planning as having a special right or position to act as an integrative focus for sectoral policy as a whole (Nadin, 2006). In this sense integration would imply that as much as spatial planners need to learn the spatial implications of other policy sectors, such policy areas also need to become aware of the spatial implications of what they do (Pearce & Ayres, 2006). Integrating spatial policy is therefore a mediated process, involving coordination across policy sectors, in terms of policy learning, development and implementation. This is implied in government policy which talks of complementary strategies and two-way actor relationships, which are interactive and iterative (DETR, 2000a, 1999b, 1999c, 1997).

Supporting the above perspective, Healey (1998), describes integration in the context of spatial planning as encouraging planners to think differently and to open up their policy discourses. As there are many ways to interpret integration, depending on policy community, she suggests understating it in terms of being a relational word. This implies understanding the integration of spatial planning in terms of the policies and actors/organisations being linked and the quality of these links throughout the policy process.

The above discussion offers a clearer, but still general conceptualisation of what integration means in terms of spatial planning and what general policy and actor processes this may imply. In order to broaden our understanding, it will be useful, despite the fact that explicit integrated spatial planning practice has only recently



emerged in England, to tease out from academic and professional literature, useful conceptualisations that can help one to better understand this dynamic practice. This will assist in developing a framework that will first consider general, but useful lenses of integrated spatial planning, before developing more detailed typological models of integrated spatial policy and actors/organisations. The framework will then be expanded to consider relevant theoretical perspectives regarding the culture of spatial planning and the system of governance through which it mediates. It is intended that together, these conceptualisations of integrated spatial planning will provide a framework to guide a more targeted examination within this study of the integration of regional spatial planning in England. This conceptual framework will be apparent throughout the rest of this study, but particularly in the case study chapters that follow later. It also guides, in part, the discussion in the section following this, which will consider historical and contemporary experiences of integrated regional spatial planning in England.

#### **2.4.1 General Lenses of Integrated Spatial Planning**

##### **A). *Territorial Integration***

Territorial integration is the space across which integration is played out and as discussed below, can take place across two or more spatial scales (vertical) or within just one spatial scale (horizontal). In this sense, the region, for example, operates as a territory, within which the horizontal and vertical dimensions play out to create a form of place focused integration, as described for example by Vigar *et al.* (2000) using the example of the West Midlands region (WM). Ravetz (2000) also described such territorial integration in terms of the integration of agencies at a regional level.

Territorial integration can also be conceptualised through networks and flows that represent the interconnectedness between places. Indeed, as discussed earlier, this approach is part and parcel of spatial planning, leading to an increasing recognition in British planning of the importance of functional territories. This acknowledgement is evidenced through the use of concepts such as city regions and polycentricity, which have also been promoted through the ESDP (CEC, 1999) and by central government.

While these perspectives give a spatial understanding of territorial integration, one can also understand it as being non-spatial. In this sense Healey (1998, p.10) has described territory as 'a field of action', against which "...ideas about integration are played out." In the context of this study, the regional territory is therefore contextualised in both a physical spatial sense and in socio-spatial sense, neither being mutually exclusive. In this way the case study regions will be examined spatially to consider the integration of spatial policy within each of the regions and between these and central, sub-regional and local scales. In addition the case study regions will be perceived as 'fields of action' so as to consider the manner in which spatial policy actors mediate in order to pursue the goal of sustainable and integrated spatial development. A more theoretical consideration of this socio-spatial perspective is offered later in this section through the discussion of planning practice culture and governance.

In addition to the strength of the relationships between spatial policy and spatial actors/organisations, one can also consider the direction of territorial integration. This is usually discussed in the sense of two dimensions, namely horizontal integration and vertical integration. The former is taken to mean integration of policy sectors and actors across the same level of governance or spatial scale, be it at local, regional or national levels, and although this most commonly occurs within territorial boundaries, such integrative work does cross them. Vertical integration on the other hand is taken to mean integration across levels of governance, including local, regional, national and/or supra-national. In this sense vertical integration is integration across two or more spatial scales. The strength of horizontal integration derives from the closeness of its policy and actor relationships within a spatial scale, while the vertical integration draws its strength from emanating at higher levels in the hierarchy of governance. As a result, integrative policy and actor relationships in the vertical dimension tend to be driven from higher to lower levels, within policy sectors and have a tendency to be one way (6 et al., 2002). This can impact on the horizontal integration of lower levels, as their joining up task is made more difficult by vertical delivery expectations that can conflict with those agreed between, for example, regional spatial planning stakeholders. This points to an inherent tension between the vertical and horizontal dimensions of integration (Healey, 1998) and a realisation that one cannot have, for example, full horizontal integration across a

region, if one also wants full vertical integration from national to local level. In a sense there is always a trade-off between these dimensions of integration (Healey, 1998), where stronger vertical integration will weaken horizontal integration within the spatial/governance scales that exist below the level from which the vertical drive emanates.

This recognition can be illustrated by the way in which spatial planning policy is decided, namely different aspects of spatial policy at different spatial scales, with a distribution of the powers of scrutiny and enforcement across these. The balance of these powers is acknowledged as lying with national government (Cullingworth & Nadin, 2006) who ultimately decide on spatial planning policy and its execution at the regional, sub-regional and local levels. Although 'localisation' of policy must happen to some degree at the lower spatial scales, control of its development, execution and performance is maintained by central government, through a series of regulations, performance targets and budgeting regimes. In this sense, one can see that vertical integration is strong in English spatial planning. It will therefore be interesting to see how regional spatial policy actors perceive this tension between vertical and horizontal integration and how they think it will and/or should play out.

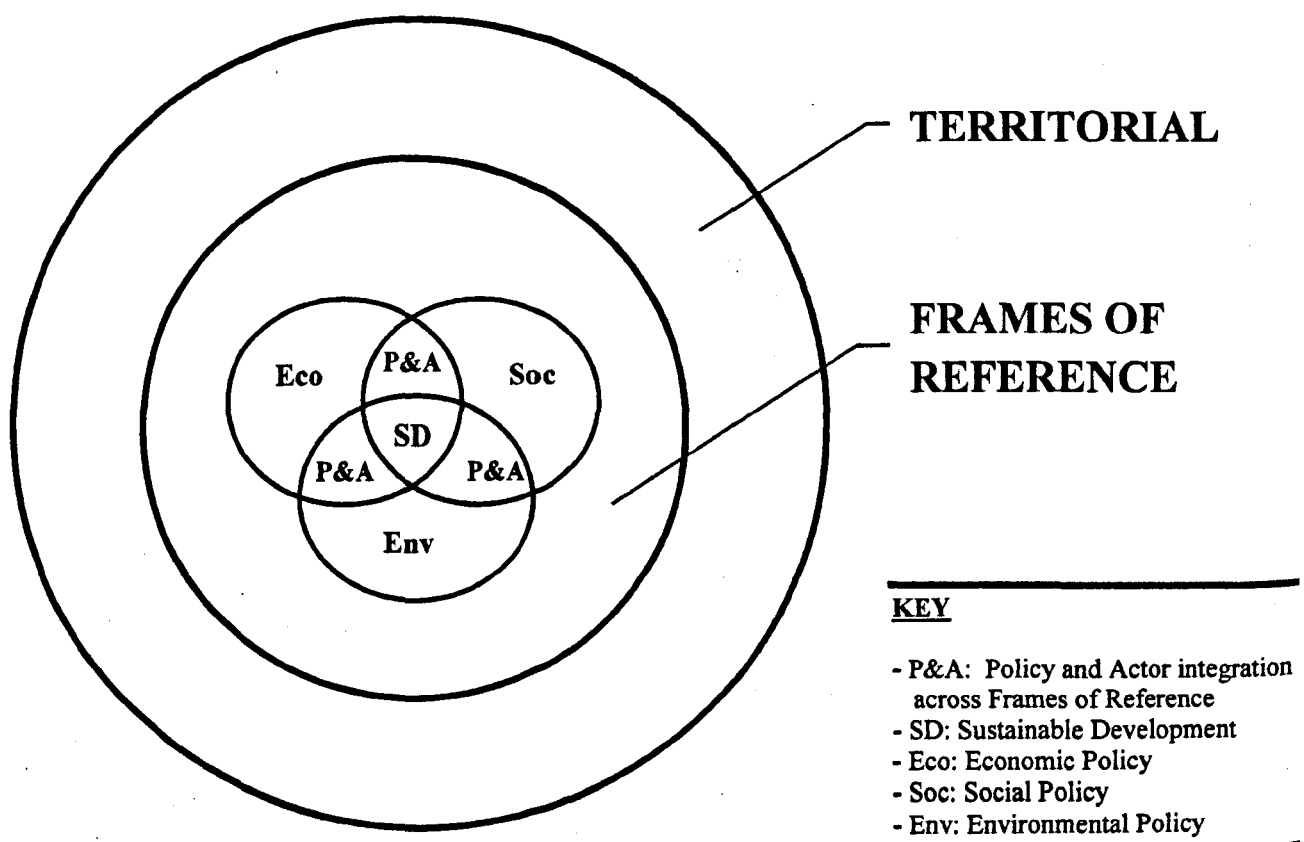
### ***B). Frames of Reference***

According to Healey (1998), 'frames of reference' refers to the range of policy silos or sectors, within and through which spatial policy actors and their respective organisations mediate in order to develop and deliver spatial policy. Such frames of reference therefore require examination in order to make sense of the types of integration existing between spatial policies and actors.

Within spatial planning and the context of this study, frames of reference are understood as addressing and relating to the economic, social and environmental spheres i.e. sustainable development, and it is the core spatial linkages between these that are important when integrating spatial policy and actors. As discussed previously, the driver for such policy tends to be from the top-down, on the advice of central government, but can also evolve *via* the development of coalitions of interest and governance processes and through shared understandings derived from such processes (Healey, 1998), as for example in the case of LA21 discussed earlier.

Structuring the above discussion in diagrammatic terms, Figure 2.2, illustrates a loose and basic description of the relationship between frames of reference and territorial integration. Spatial actors interact with each other and mediate the mutual aspects of each other's policy. This occurs within and across a range of frames of reference, which provide a way of structuring and understanding the nature of these interrelationships. At the centre of this, from a spatial planning perspective lies the goal of sustainable development, where the economic, social and environmental frames of reference are integrated to achieve balanced spatial development, now and in the future. Together all of this ongoing activity is played out horizontally and vertically against a territorial background, which is both a physical space and a field of social action. Having set out this basic overview of integration and spatial planning, the next subsection turns to typologies of integrated spatial planning policies and actors/organisations.

**Figure 2.2: Conceptualising Integration and Spatial Planning**



## **2.4.2 Typologising Integrated Spatial Planning**

Integrated spatial planning means many things to many people (Healey, 1998), encompassing actors and their respective policy areas, organisations, resources and professional cultures, across a spectrum from policy development to its delivery, within and across scales of governance. It is therefore necessary to bring further coherence to this discussion of integrated spatial planning and develop greater linguistic clarity within the more general lenses of territory and frames of reference. It is proposed to achieve such illumination through the consideration of three different typological approaches which draw on existing academic literature (primarily Hammond, 2003; 6 *et al.* 2002 and Healey, 1998). The first of these considers styles of integration and defines in a relational manner, the widely and often interchangeably used concepts of coordination, integration, joining up and holism, all of which can apply to integration of spatial policy and/or actors/organisations. Following from this the second and third typology groupings will consider some of the main approaches to operationalising spatial policy integration and spatial actor/organisation integration respectively.

It is important to note that although distinctions are offered within each of the three typologies, this in no way means that the individual approaches within each typology are mutually exclusive, as any combination of these approaches may be possible in reality. The typological part of the framework is therefore not intended as a rigid measure or scale against which to examine the cases studied. Instead it will be used to allow for a more fluid contextualisation of tendencies towards coordination and integration that have been observed in the cases studied, which will assist in understanding the strength of integration between regional spatial policies and between regional spatial actors/organisations.

### ***A). Style of Integration***

Style of integration gives us an indication of the overall closeness of practice, be it policy or actor or both. This can be conceptualised as a spectrum from loose to tight links, offering useful descriptive tools to better understand the other typologies of integration in spatial planning that are discussed below. 6 *et al.* (2002, p.34) break styles of integration down into four main approaches:

#### ***1). Joined up Coordination***

2). *Holistic Coordination*

3). *Joined up Integration*

4). *Holistic Integration*

These approaches distinguish on one hand between integration and looser coordination and on the other hand between the types of government activity that these may involve, *i.e.* joined up or holistic. At the basic level one has joined up government, where objectives and means are mutually consistent and supportive, and where policy and actions are operated so as to avoid conflicts and ensure the minimisation of negative externalities. At the holistic level of government, objectives and means are mutually reinforcing and supportive. In this sense policy and actions operate in a more coherent manner, going beyond action aimed just at avoidance, to achieve other possible synergies (6 *et al.* 2002). Both styles of governance vary in intensity, ranging from coordination that is typically based around policy consistency, to integration, which additionally involves policy delivery. This distinction between integration and coordination is an important point to note and helps to further understand the idea of *integrating* spatial planning as planning that is *becoming* spatial, both in terms of its policy coordination and its delivery. This difference will be explored further in the policy and actor/organisation integration typologies discussed below.

These four descriptive approaches to integration serve as a general typology that helps to better understand the approaches to or 'styles' of integration. As full holistic integration is not an end point in the sense that this will never be achieved, the practice of spatial planning is therefore more likely to sit under one or more of the other integration and coordination categories.

**B). *Mechanisms for Spatial Policy Integration***

Mechanisms for spatial policy integration address the most common approaches to the integration of spatial policies and plans and are often strongly influenced by national government policy steers (Galsson & Marshall, 2007). The four approaches, which are drawn from Hammond (2003), are arranged across the same hierarchy as styles of integration, ranging from looser coordinated to more tightly integrated policy and plan relationships.

### *1). Cross Referenced Regional Strategies*

Cross-referencing involves a policy in one sector acknowledging a shared interest with a policy in another sector and is regarded as one of the most basic ways in which policies can relate to each other (Hammond, 2003). PPS11 (ODPM, 2004a) for example, proposes this as one of the main approaches to linking Regional Spatial Strategies (RSSs) with other regional strategies. The shared link between the policies can be acknowledged through a number of ways, ranging from simply taking account of each other to actual joint working in developing the policies, between their respective parent organisations (Hammond, 2003).

### *2). Integral Coordinating Mechanisms*

Integral coordinating mechanisms are used to coordinate different spatial policies and plans, through the use of shared policy approaches such as visions, aims and objectives. The use of visions, often with strategic aims and objectives attached (Tomaney, 2002a) that are common to a number of spatial plans and policies, has become more widely used in English planning practice (Glasson & Marshall, 2007). This approach was long suggested by non-governmental bodies that campaign on planning issues (see for example LGA, 2000; TCPA, 1999; CPRE, 1998; RTPI, 1998).

The development of visions, aims and objectives that can coordinate a number of spatial plans and policies usually requires collaboration between a range of spatial planning stakeholders (Glasson & Marshall, 2007). This type of cooperation has been promoted by central government in the development of RSSs, as a means of ensuring consistency with other regional strategies such as the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) and the Regional Sustainable Development Framework (RSDF) (ODPM, 2004a).

Sustainable development as a purpose for English spatial planning has in itself become an integral coordinating mechanism for all spatial policy. The government has therefore also promoted consistency across visions, aims and objectives as a means of achieving sustainable development (DTLR, 2002; Roberts & Benneworth, 2001), as well as the use of SA/SEA (Glasson & Marshall, 2007). This is exemplified in the regional context through the promotion of RSDFs, which were developed

through regional partnerships in order to set out an agreed vision, aim and objectives, within which regional strategies would sit (DETR, 2000b). Although intended to be overarching, the RSDFs have tended to act as more general integrated regional frameworks (Snape *et al.*, 2005).

The use of integral coordinating mechanisms and even more general cross-referencing achieves the coordination of spatial plans and policies on paper. As a result, even if both approaches are used and have been built from cooperation between spatial planning actors and organisations (Hammond, 2003), this does not mean that the intentions of the coordinated approaches will be achieved by the different actors and organisations that are separately implementing their respective spatial policies.

### *3). An Overarching Regional Strategy*

An overarching regional strategy that uses the spatial dimension as the primary integrating factor between regional strategies will bring regional spatial policy closer together, beyond coordination on paper to broader integrative concerns of delivery, monitoring and evaluation. This approach was often mooted in the flurry of normative planning writing in the run up to the PCPA (see for example Roberts, 1999; TCPA, 1999; Baker, 1998; RTPI, 1998).

One of the main advantages of an overarching strategy is that it can be more efficient in dealing with conflicts when compared to sectoral spatial plans and policies that can have a long time frame, a wide selection of policies and minimum reference to implementation (Hammond, 2003). An overarching strategy would therefore identify areas with problems, pressures and opportunities and deal with avoidance measures. In addition to cross-referencing and integral coordinating mechanisms, it would also set out targets and indicators driving all regional strategies (Hammond, 2003). This was suggested in the regional White Paper in 2002 (DTLR, 2002).

Roberts & Benneworth (2001) have suggested that in the absence of overarching regional strategies in England, RSDFs could be satisfactory substitutes. This is despite the fact that such strategies are very general frameworks and also presumes that RSDFs are able to integrate all regional spatial strategies, even though RSDFs



have no statutory status. Such a barrier, however, has not stopped some English regions developing overarching regional strategies from their RSDFs, as observed by Snape *et al.* (2005) in the South West (see also Galsson & Marshall, 2007). They note that the approach in this region borders on being an Integrated Regional Strategy.

4). *An Integrated Regional Strategy*

This strategy, as the title suggests, combines sectoral regional strategies into one comprehensive regional strategy and would include spending plans and specific proposals for schemes of action. This was previously proposed by Baker (1995) for RPGs, and by the LGA (2000) and Roberts & Lloyd (1999a & 1999b) in the context of just one over arching regional strategy. The value of such an approach has also been exhorted by others (Baker & Roberts, 2006; Roberts & Sykes, 2005) and was proposed in 2007 government reforms for the English Regions, in the form of Single Regional Strategies (SRSs), which will integrate RSSs and RESs in each region.

**Figure 2.3: Approaches to Spatial Policy Integration**

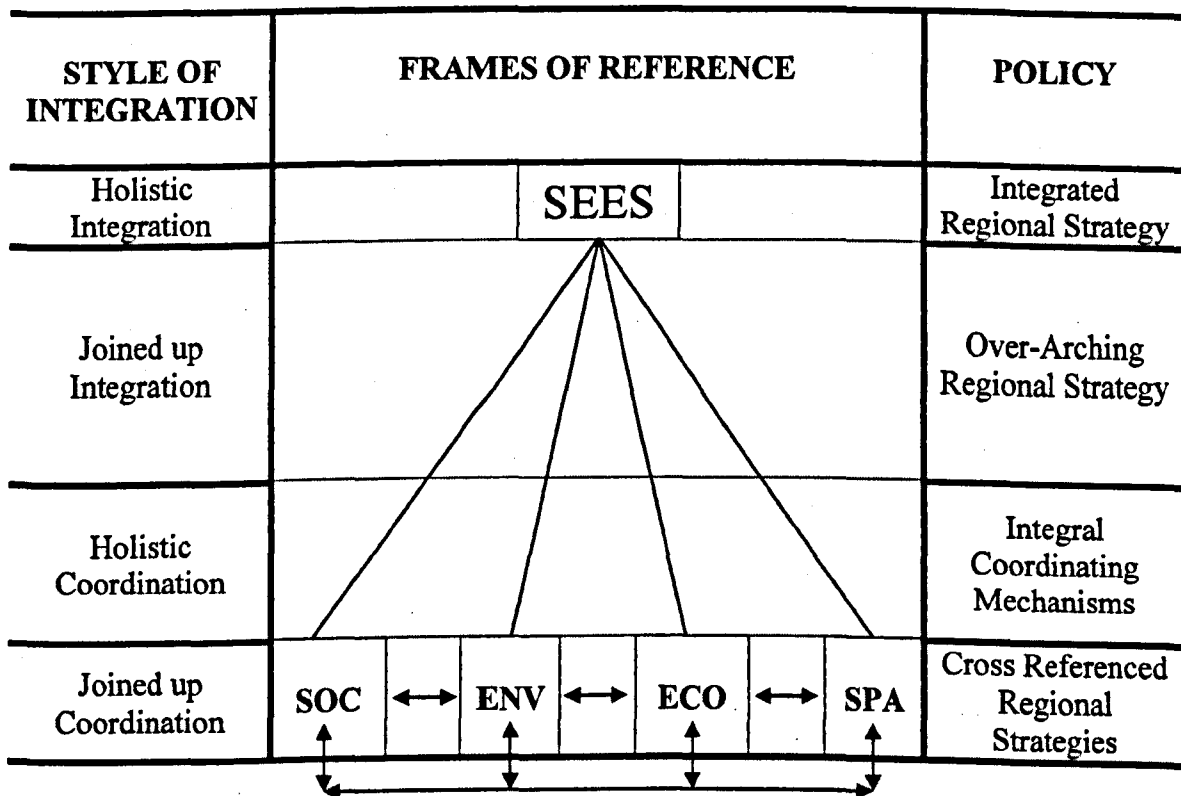


Figure 2.3 illustrates the four main approaches to policy integration in the context of frames of reference and styles of integration. The approaches have been placed in a rudimentary hierarchy, from cross-referenced regional spatial plans and policies that provide the minimum level of coordination, to integrated regional strategies, the most integrated form, combining social, economic, environmental and spatial policy (SEES).

In relation to frames of reference one can see that the four spheres, which all have relationships to one and other, become more joined up as one progresses up the policy integration hierarchy. A similar relationship can be observed in relation to styles of integration, where cross-referencing and integral coordinating mechanisms are effectively coordination, in that they relate policy. This is different from the overarching and integrated strategy approaches, which in addition to coordinating policy also have integrative roles, such as implementation and delivery.

### ***C). Mechanisms for Spatial Actor/Organisation Integration***

The integration of spatial actors and organisations goes hand in hand with the integration of spatial policy, as tacitly acknowledged in the previous discussion. As with the development of more coordinated and integrated spatial policy, increasing engagement between actors and organisations with spatial planning remits has been driven by a wide array of factors, in particular the desire for better engagement and empowerment of stakeholders as promoted by sustainable development (Healey, 1998) and New Labour's modernisation agenda (Allemdinger & Tewdwr-Jones, 2000). The success of such collaboration is very much dependent upon the degree to which relevant spatial actors and organisations perceive a benefit from working together (6 *et al.*, 2002; Tewdwr-Jones & McNeill, 2000; Vigar *et al.*, 2000).

This coordination and integration of actors and organisations takes many forms depending on purpose. The purpose will influence the breadth and depth of linkages that result and these measures will vary over time if the purpose changes (Hammond, 2003). The most common approaches to the coordination and integration of actors and organisations are now discussed. These draw on 6 *et al.* (2002, p.53) and as with the mechanisms for policy integration, have been arranged across the same hierarchy

as styles of integration. Both sets of mechanisms are then brought together below with styles of integration to enable an overall hierarchical comparison.

### *1). Consultation in Policy Development*

Consultation in policy development occurs when spatial planning actors from different sectoral organisations come together to engage in each other's policy process. The most widespread approach to consultation is dialogue and information sharing, which helps to gradually link spatial policy actors and organisations in loose ways, facilitating a cross-fertilisation of ideas and language (Glasson & Marshall, 2007; 6 *et al.*, 2002; Healey, 1998). Integral to dialogue should be an acknowledgement of conflicts, as they arise, enabling a starting point for further dialogue (Hammond, 2003). The strength of links that are developed from the consultation process are dependent on the quality of the process (Healey, 1998), which is influenced by a genuine or a tokenistic willingness on the part of the spatial actors and organisations involved and the way in which these stakeholders perceive their experience of consultation (Hammond, 2003).

### *2). Informal and Formal Joint Working, and Formal Partnerships*

This category of joining up spatial actors and organisations entails several overlapping approaches that straddle the distinction between coordination and integration. These working relationships build upon basic consultation in policy development (6 *et al.*, 2002) and their emergent forms tend to be defined by the degree to which they become embedded or internalised within the spatial policy culture of a region generally and within the policy cultures of different organisations and their respective actors more specifically.

Within this categorisation looser working relationships tend to involve informal joint working that entails short term coordination in policy development. Such relationships can, however, become closer over time and develop into more formal joint working, which moves beyond policy coordination and takes in the broader integrative concerns of implementation and delivery. As a result of these longer term concerns, formal joint working may develop into more permanent formal partnerships (Hammond, 2003).

Formal partnerships are defined as:

“...focusing on the mechanisms used by two or more organisations to work together on a shared agenda, while keeping their own identity and purpose.”

(Ling, 2002, p.625)

Partnerships can take the form of satellite bodies or strategic alliances. These terms will be explained further below in relation to a spectrum of possible governance relationships that bring together the practical approaches to policy and actor/organisation integration discussed here.

### 3). *Organisation Integration*

Organisation integration involves the joining up of the administrative functions of different organisations. Such integration can take the form of unions or mergers (6 *et al.*, 2002). Tomaney (2002b) defines a union using the example of the integrative regional policy intentions of central government. This encourages regional organisations to integrate their common administrative functions, from evidence bases and consultation to policy delivery and evaluation, while continuing to maintain distinct identities.

Mergers take a union one step further and are the ultimate form of actor/policy integration, bringing together actors/organisations and their respective policy and administrative functions to create a new organisation with a new identity (6 *et al.*, 2002). Mergers can therefore be compared to New Labour’s original intention for directly elected regional assemblies (Roberts & Baker, 2006; Cowell & Murdoch, 1999).

Figure 2.4 illustrates the approaches to actor/organisation integration in terms of their hierarchical positions from basic consultation in policy development, involving coordinating policy; through to spatial policy integration in formal partnerships and the integration of organisations. As noted above, joint working straddles the boundary between coordination and integration, again emphasising that these categorisations are not mutually exclusive and that their real value lies in their ability to illustrate tendencies.

**Figure 2.4: Approaches to Actor/Organisation Integration**

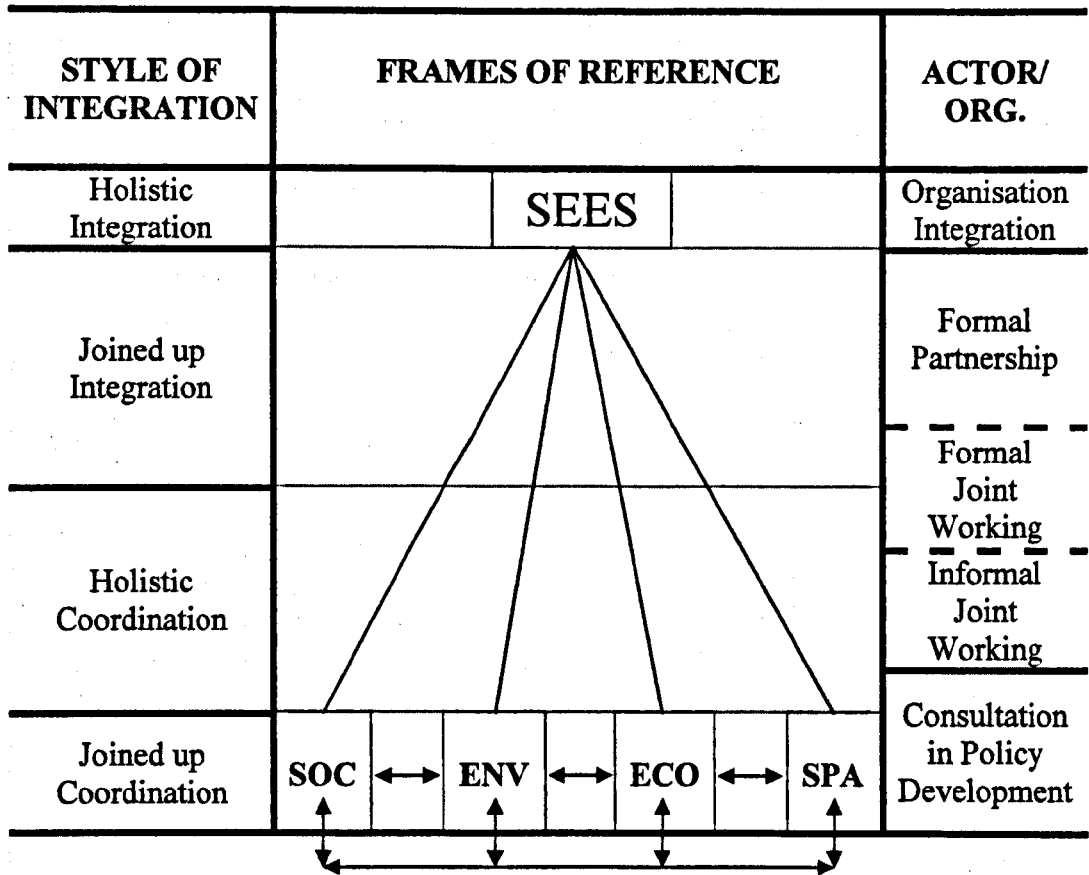
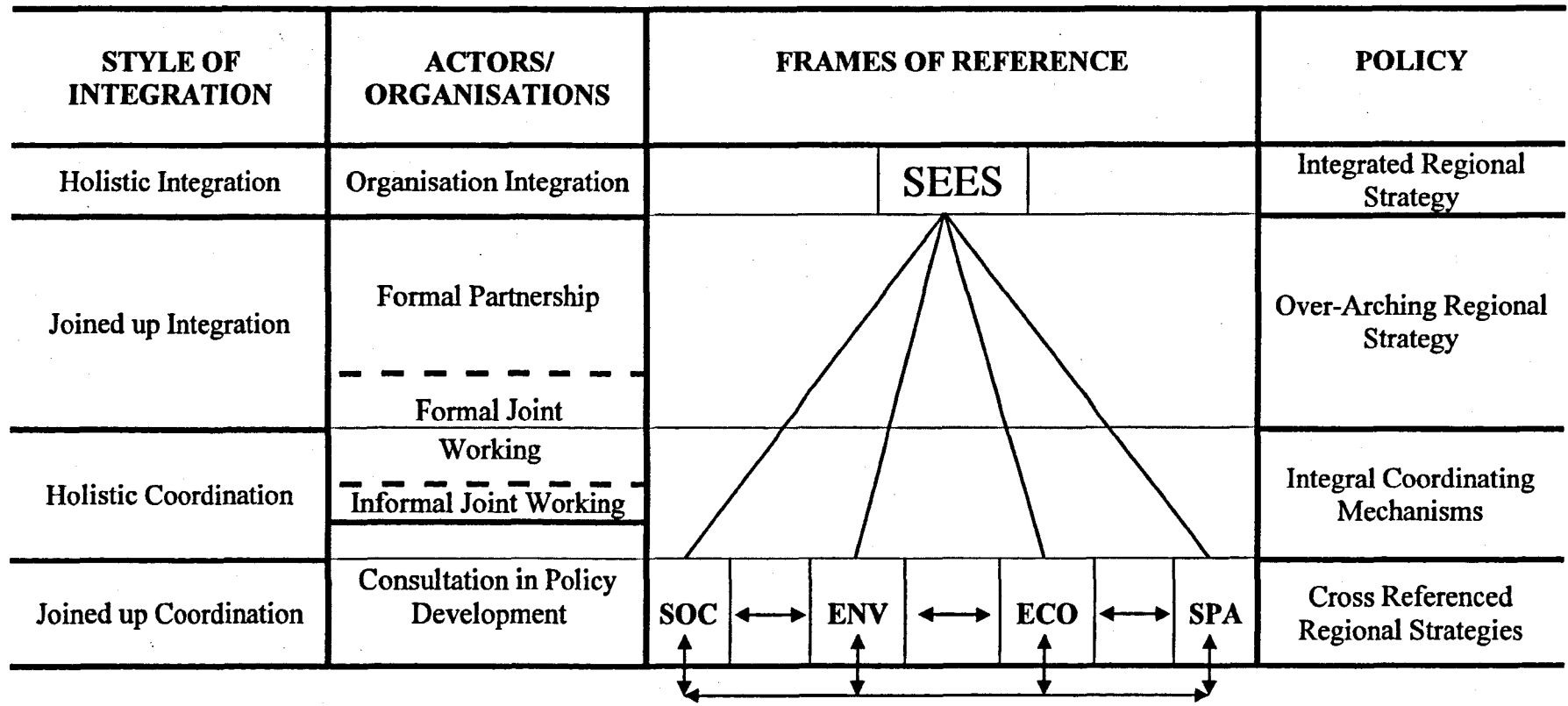


Figure 2.5 brings together the actor/organisation and policy typologies into one table that illustrates their relationship to one another and to the styles of coordination and integration. As one can see, basic forms of consultation and joint working tend to result in policies and strategies that are integrated in a cross-relational or integral mechanism manner, where as overarching and integrated strategies tend to be concurrent with partnerships and more formal organisational unions and mergers.

Both the actor/organisation and policy integration approaches presented here will assist in framing the analysis and discussion of the cases studied. The discussion of these typologies has referred in passing to other related lenses that are important to consider, when examining the new regional spatial planning system. This is because the wider integrative aspirations inherent in spatial planning requires the development of closer governance relations and requires changes within the cultures of spatial planning actors and organisations that are expected to operationalise spatial planning in practice. The next section will therefore consider

**Figure 2.5: Style of Integration, Related to Spatial Policy and Actor/Organisation Integration**



theoretical perspectives relating to governance and culture change. Following this, the historical and contemporary experiences of English regional planning will be considered in light of the typological and theoretical perspectives discussed.

### **2.4.3 Theorising Integrated Spatial Planning**

Having established typological approaches to the coordination and integration of spatial policies and actors/organisations, this sub-section turns to consider theoretical perspectives that will assist in understanding the system of governance through which spatial planners are attempting to coordinate and integrate spatial policy. This is followed by a reflection on the professional cultural change that may be involved in this work of joining up the spatial aspects of public policy.

#### **A). Governance**

##### *1). Governance as an Analytical Lens*

Governance has become a popular and widely used conceptual lens to understand the manner in which spatial planners and other spatial stakeholders relate to each other in the development and implementation of spatial policy. It provides a means to bring together the integration concepts of actor and policy (Roberts & Baker, 2006), along with the frames of reference this involves and the territory in which this is played out. Styles of integration help give an indication of the depth of governance, along with other factors such as intensity, scope, breadth and exposure (6 *et al.*, 2002), which are discussed below.

The wide coinage of governance has resulted in an enormous array of definitions, typologies and theoretical perspectives, ranging from new public management to self-organising, inter-organisational networks (Bevir & Rhodes, 2003; Pierre & Peters, 2000). This has occurred across a range of academic disciplines from political science and urban studies (Stoker and Wilson, 2004; Stoker, 1998) to spatial planning (Vigar *et al.*, 2000; Healey, 1998).

A crucial distinction in the use of governance has been a tendency to see it in a normative way, as a panacea to the problems of the market and general civic disengagement, what Jessop (2002) refers to as

“...a solution to the perennial ethical, political, and civic problems of securing institutional integration and peaceful social co-existence.”

(Jessop 2002, p.2).

In planning terms this can be seen for example in the communicative planning approaches proposed by Healey (1997). In the context of this study, it is not intended to conceptualise governance in this manner, but rather use it as a lens to try and understand the experience of integration in regional spatial planning.

Common to many definitions of governance is the idea of the ‘hollowing out of the state’, where there is less direct control by central government, as more decisions are increasingly shared with public and private actors and organisations (Rhodes, 1997), from international to local level. Such commonalities have led Stoker (1999; 1998) to describe governance as a general organisational framework for the study of policy development and implementation, stressing the *guiding* aspect of governance as a lens for research, as opposed to anything normative. In setting out the framework, Stoker describes governance as acknowledging actors and institutions drawn from beyond the traditional structures of government, which blurs the boundaries between actors tackling social, economic and environmental issues. This blurring results in new types of relations between the actors involved, relations which governance identifies and studies in the sense of self-organising networks, recognising the capacity of such networks for effective action, separate from traditional ideas of government power and authority (Stoker, 1998).

From this framework one can see the importance of the ‘self-organising network’ concept within governance in general and it’s parallel to the hollowing out of the state (Rhodes, 1997). But there are problems with this conception of governance, as the apparent independence of networks fails to acknowledge spatial and temporal variations, a problem described by Jessop (1997), as ‘over-rigid flexibility’ (see also Whitehead, 2003; Davies, 2002). Vigar *et al.* (2000) acknowledge the importance of such local variation in histories and geographies, in institutional relations and in governance capacities. Meegan & Mitchell (2001) have also noted such variety regarding the transformation of EU policy by local geographies, such as for example the adoption of ESDP principles discussed earlier. Variation also occurs in relation to direct lines of control from central government, resulting in policy decisions where



there may be little scope for negotiation (Whitehead, 2003; Davies, 2002). This directly questions the idea of the hollowing out of the state, a view supported by Jessop, who argues that the state is still more than able to directly influence the context in which apparently independent networks are operating (Jessop, 1997). Such central control is clearly seen within the context of spatial planning, where although decision making has become more diffuse, it is still highly regulated by the centre (Glasson & Marshall, 2007; Benneworth *et al.*, 2006). As a result there is a continual payoff between central control and variations in local network autonomy, what Pierre (2000) refers to as the difference between old governance and new governance. Acknowledging the importance of vertical lines of control allows this conception of governance to complement the horizontal emphasis of the spatial policy and actor typologies discussed above.

## 2). *The Value of New Institutionalism*

Institutionalism also supports this dual acknowledgement of the horizontal and the vertical and assists in dealing with the above criticisms of governance. As a theory it is also relevant to this study's need for institutional maps of the RSS policy process in different geographical areas, in order to get a sense of the structures within which regional spatial policy has been integrating.

Traditionally, institutionalism tended to offer descriptive accounts of institutional settings from which actions could be explained (Lowndes, 2001). More recently, however, what has been termed new-institutionalism has encouraged a focus on informal structures of interaction, in addition to more formal rules, which may impact on the behaviour of actors within institutions over time. In this sense one gains a fuller context in analysis (see for *e.g.* Whitehead, 2003; Quilley, 2000). It is important to note, as discussed by González & Healey (2005) that institution is taken here to refer to the system of spatial planning, with its norms, rules and principles that shape action, as opposed to individual planning organisations that operate within this and which together bring the system to life. In this way the institution of spatial planning is a dynamic human creation, as opposed to a static artefact; an idea that relates to the conceptualisation of cultural change below.

New institutionalism helps to deal with the governance by networks critique described above, of just focusing on actors in fluid self-organising networks, as opposed to considering how working structures created by actors and by hierarchical control can shape and constrain behaviour and influence attitudes. In this context institutionalism offers understanding regarding the various ways in which institutions 'shape' actors and *vice versa*.

Institutional structures influence the types of decisions that are made, which actors are involved and the outcome of those decisions. It also makes one or other decision more or less attractive than its alternatives (Vigar *et al.*, 2000). In this context path dependency can come to exist as institutional structures are formalised (Kay, 2005), whereby previous decisions can structure and possibly even determine the range of future choices, which then feed back into the institutional form, further influencing and/or constraining future action. Such patterns have been noted within spatial planning regarding the manner in which existing networks can facilitate or thwart new initiatives (Allemdinger & Tewdwr-Jones, 2000).

Therefore strategic action by actors, coupled by an understanding of the structures they inhabit and the manner in which those structures influence their understandings, possibly in ways they may be unaware of, is essential to understanding the policy process (Hay & Wincott, 1998). This allows for a better understanding of how power relations or structural constraints, enter what Healey (2006, p. 5) calls the "fine[-]grain of practices", which in turn "structure the public policy game and inhibit the assertion of many stakeholders." As a result institutional forms will have impacts on actions, which in turn will have impacts on a given institutional form.

Lowndes (2001) brings together these main foci of new institutionalism and summarises them as:

- 1). Focusing on the roles of behaviour taking place in informal institutions and how institutions allow actors to construct particular sets of values;
- 2). Institutions are dynamic and capable of change, which is influenced by internal organisational decisions and external pressures;
- 3). Institutions are also embedded in nature and their form is dependent on their context, such as previous choices by actors, path dependencies that may

- result, the narratives of and responses to external pressures, and the character of particular local institutional structures (see Meegan & Mitchell, 2001);
- 4). Institutions are differentiated, consisting of actors and interactions which overlap the boundaries of state, market and civil society, fitting together imperfectly with power imbalances.

Institutionalism therefore offers a 'conceptual framework' (Lowndes, 2001) of governance, which complements Stoker's (1998; 1999) guiding framework of governance. So rather than collapsing the state into market or network, institutional studies suggest that forms of policy process occur in various institutional settings from hierarchies and partnerships to networks and market mechanisms, all composed of a variety of different actors (Whitehead, 2003; Davies, 2002); in many respects an apt description of British spatial planning.

### 3). *Governance, New Institutionalism and Spatial Planning*

The tempering of governance with new institutionalism relates to discussions within the social sciences since the late 1970s regarding structure and agency or structuration theory (Giddens, 1984). In spatial planning terms structure refers to the institutional structure, the rules and norms, both formal and cultural, (Healey, 2006) of spatial planning, through which actors such as spatial planners mediate, *i.e.* agency. In this way spatial planners through practicing their profession, play a major role in bringing the institution of spatial planning to life, by interpreting it in particular ways, "...while themselves being simultaneously challenged by the thought patterns which these 'thinking resources' provide." (Vigar *et al.*, 2000, p.47). In this way spatial planners draw upon and reinterpret the formal and informal rules that govern their professional relations, taking decisions and deploying resources in a complex socially structured interaction between perceiving problems, acting, and justifying that action, while knowingly and/or unknowingly exercising their power of agency to reshape institutional structure (Vigar *et al.*, 2000).

This can be seen, for example, in the Regional Spatial Strategy preparation process, which is constraining as it is a process set out in central government legislation and regulation, while also being enabling, as the newness of this process allows for some degree of agency in its interpretation and implementation within individual regional

contexts (Galsson & Marshall, 2007). Such freedom allows opportunistic planners to break new ground and develop new practices in light of their ever widening spatial remit. The operation of such agency is also tempered structurally by existing cultural practices and norms (discussed in greater detail below, pp.57-61) and a system of governance, represented by the range of public, private and voluntary sector organisations and actors, from a variety of institutional settings, who are involved in the regional planning process.

From this description of the regional spatial planning process, one can see that the system is

“....not changed merely by law makers or the pressures of broad external forces, but evolve[s] through complex interactions between localised practices, ‘ways of thinking and ways of interacting’ which build up over years, and broader forces which introduce new players, new ideas and new forces to be recognised, interpreted, mediated and struggled over.”

(Vigar *et al.*, 2000, p.5)

This suggests an ever evolving narrative of spatial planning which can be illustrated through the study of any mediated spatial planning process, such as the production of a Regional Spatial Strategy. But rather than looking at tools and competencies, which emphasise formal procedures and institutional responsibilities, this study examines the practices and relationships in two cases of regional spatial planning, which are contributing to the never ending process of regional spatial policy integration and possibly the development of a stronger regional competency within spatial planning institutionally. Governance is therefore an important dimension in understanding how this process is taking place (Roberts & Baker, 2006).

Drawing on these ideas and the work of Healey (2006) and Vigar *et al.* (2000), a number of governance and new institutionalism sign posts can be read, offering direction and focus regarding the study of a process of RSS development. These include:

- Identifying the actors and networks involved in the process of developing the RSS and how these work together and learn, suggesting a focus on the dynamics and qualities of these relations. In essence, this assesses institutional capacity;

- The policy communities that these actors belong to, ranging from spatial planning and environmental protection to economic development and health;
- The policy arenas which act as nodal points for actors to articulate their ideas, such as the various forums for consultation in RSS development;
- The policy discourses and agendas that dominate and shape the RSS, such as existing plans and policies, the culture of the spatial planning profession or central government's drive for joining up public policy, among numerous other national policies; and
- How all of the above are pushed and pulled in horizontal and vertical ways in the attempt to integrate regional spatial policy.

Two clear cross cutting concepts bring together all of the above foci. These are the substantive policy context and the social relations that bring this about (Glasson & Marshall, 2007). The former reflects how various policy, professional and individual stakeholder discourses come together to produce the RSS, while the latter considers the quality and breath of the relations between the stakeholders involved. This relates to the policy and actor typologies presented above, which are returned to in the next sub-section. This is necessary, as although the conceptualisation presented here of governance tempered by new institutionalism provides useful direction for this study, it does not give a real sense of how one can assess the depth, breath or quality of governance. More detailed descriptive tools are required to assess these aspects of governance, and this will be achieved through relating governance to the general policy and actors lenses already discussed.

It would be remiss in this discussion of the value of governance and new institutionalism as conceptual tools for studying the integration of spatial planning, not to recognise the common planning theory inheritance within which this conceptual framework sits. Such recognition allows for clear parallels to be drawn with other conceptualisations of the product and process of planning. In the 1960s and 1970s for example, urban regime theories were popular, particularly in North America, where planning was commonly conceptualised as a network of elites that came together to execute their functions as managers of the urban environment (DiGaetano, 1989). Such governing coalitions would be studied from the perspective

of how they would emerge, consolidate, dissolve or transform (Lauria, 1997). One can see parallels here with the network concept of governance, but these only go so far, as urban regime theory's rigid focus in the UK on political coalitions (Dowding, 2001) and preoccupations with business (Jones & Ward, 1998) lacked the openness and recognition of fluidity inherent within network governance and new institutionalism perspectives that have grown in popularity since the 1990s.

The 1960s and 1970s were also a time of greatly increased local activism which was paralleled within more normative theories of planning as an activity and the role of the individual planner. The 'strategic choice group' (see for example Friend & Jessop, 1969) attempted to propagate the idea that planners should be catalysts, bringing together all the actors with influence and resources, through a consciously designed process, setting out who to include and when and who gets to influence. This approach exhibited parallels to normative pluralist and advocacy theories that were popular in North American planning at this time (Vigar *et al.*, 2000) and in many respects places the benevolent planner as a balanced arbiter and as a solution to the concentration of planning within the hands of a limited coalition of elites. According to Galsson & Marshall (2007), the 'strategic choice' perspective was not widely followed, but has been influential in the UK. One can see echoes of this approach in current normative planning theories such as collaborative and communicative practices, promoted by academics such as Healy (2006; 1998) and Vigar *et al.* (2000). In this approach planners are urged to manage the shared arena of spatial planning, through open and honest communication, bringing together all voices within an area into a common narrative that will provide the basis for strategies. Others, however, such as Rydin's (2003a) use of discourse based approaches, have criticised the idea that true consensus is possible in planning, stressing that conflict is both common and inevitable.

Together these other previously and concurrently popular planning theory perspectives, share a number of elements that are also common to the governance and new institutionalism conceptualisation used in this study. Galsson & Marshall (2007, p.49) summarise these commonalities as:

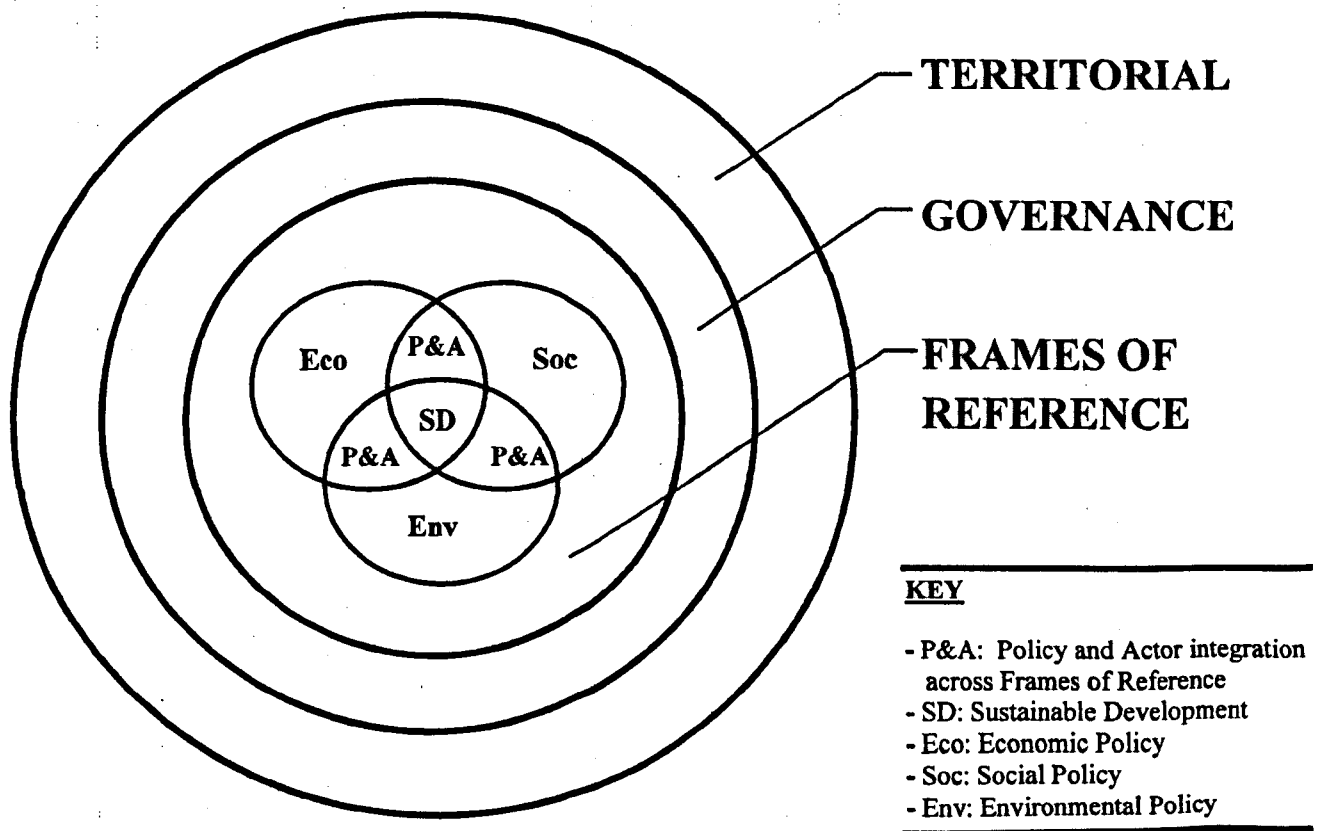
- 1). Making clear links to all relevant actors;

- 2). Specifying the roles that different interest groups or individuals have in planning exercises;
- 3). Giving a sense of conventional wisdom in the 2000s, regarding the characteristics a planning process might have;
- 4). Having to some degree influenced legislation and guidance within planning, particularly in relation to consultation.

4). *Relating Governance to General, Actor and Policy Integration Typologies*

Structuring the governance discussion in diagrammatic terms, Figure 2.7 illustrates a loose and basic description of the relationship between governance and the general lenses of integrated spatial planning. Spatial actors interact with each other and mediate the mutual aspects of each other's policy. This interaction and mediation occurs within and across a range of frames of reference, which provide a way of

**Figure 2.7: Governance Related to General Lenses of Integrated Spatial Planning**



structuring and understanding the nature of these interrelationships. From a spatial planning perspective at the centre of these interrelationships lies the goal of sustainable development, where the economic, social and environmental frames of reference are integrated to achieve balanced spatial development, now and in the future. Together, all of this ongoing activity constitutes a system of governance, which helps to further conceptualise such policy and actor interrelationships and the changes which these bring over time. All of these dimensions exist against a territorial background, which is both a physical space and a field of social action.

Governance can be further operationalised through a general consideration of the styles of governance that would produce the types of spatial policy and/or actor integration described above. As with the spatial policy and actor/organisation integration typologies, these styles can be ranked in the sense of intensity of mutual involvement. This conceptualisation, drawing on *6 et al.* (2002, p.53), provides a useful classification of the types of governance relations that may be observed in a process of strategy making in spatial planning. From Figure 2.8 one can see that at a very basic and loose level, governance involves taking into account and dialogue, which may in certain cases extend to temporary exercises in joint planning. These governance approaches find expression in the informal manner in which actors and organisations coordinate their actions and the cross-referencing and coordinating mechanisms they use to join up policy.

Moving up the ladder, governance styles enter the realm of integration, as joint working, either directly or by proxy through a strategic alliance or satellite body, leads to integration in the delivery of policy, in particular the bringing together of resources to do this. These approaches tend to be longer term and involve major issues, and can be seen in the way spatial planners develop overarching regional strategies for sustainable development or funding, through formal joint working and partnership mechanisms. Finally at the top of the ladder, there are the union and merger governance approaches to spatial planning, ranging respectively from integrating administrative functions to full spatial policy, actor and organisation integration. Such approaches can be reflected in policy terms by integrated



**Figure 2.8: Style of Governance Relationship, Related to Spatial Policy and Actor/Organisation Integration**

STYLE OF INTEGRATION	GOVERNANCE RELATIONSHIP	ACTORS/ ORGS.	FRAMES OF REFERENCE	POLICY
Holistic Integration	Union/Merger	Organisation Integration	SEES	Integrated Region Strategy
Joined up Integration	Strategic Alliance	Formal Partnership		Over-Arching Regional Strateg
	Satellite			
	Joint Venture	- - - - - Formal Joint		
Holistic Coordination	Joint Planning	- - - - - Working Informal Joint Working		
	Dialogue			
Joined up Co-ordination	Taking into Account	Consultation in Policy Development		Cross-reference Regional Strategi

regional strategies, which draw together all regional public policy, including the spatial planning framework, into one strategy.

This contextualisation of governance in relation to spatial policy and actor integration brings greater clarity to the different ways that spatial planning governance may operate and assists in giving an indication of tendencies towards depth or closeness. 6 *et al.* (2002) suggest a number of additional dimensions that prove useful in this regard and allow for a more nuanced consideration of the depth of governance. These include:

- 1). Intensity, which considers the level of resources that have been integrated into the governance process;
- 2). Breadth, involving a consideration of the range of policies and activities that are brought together;
- 3). Scope, considering the range of actors and organisations involved;
- 4). Exposure, considering the extent to which the core business of each organisation adapts during the course of integration.

### ***B). Conceptualising Cultural Change***

The above discussion of governance and new institutionalism relates strongly to the idea of the culture of spatial planning. The very idea that rules, practices and norms (*i.e.* structure), constrain and enable the agency of spatial planners, is an implicit recognition that planners operate within a culture. Therefore, as governance and institutional structures open up and change in response to integrating spatial policy, so also should the culture of the spatial planning profession. As planners attempt to integrate spatial policy they come into contact with new networks of actors and their respective organisations, from previously separate institutional cultures, one would expect them to develop shared meanings and understandings, which will influence how they think and interact, changing the culture of planning through embedding these ideas institutionally and professionally into cultural capital (Tewdwr-Jones & McNeill, 2000; Vigar *et al.*, 2000; Healey, 1999). In order gain a deeper insight into these ideas, culture will be defined in terms of its role as a metaphorical concept. Within this context the meaning of cultural change will then be considered. This will be followed by a discussion of how change of culture and change within culture can

be assessed empirically, which will complete the conceptual framework of this research. Contemporary factors of cultural change in English spatial planning will be discussed towards the end of this chapter in sub-section 2.5.4.

### 1). *Culture as a Metaphor*

Cultural change is a very widely used phrase and can be seen across a range of academic disciplines such as sociology, politics, history, psychology, economics, management and planning. As a result, it covers a range of theoretical perspectives, from modern to post-modern and a range of alternative terms such as organisational change and institutional change. A consideration of such theoretical frameworks will assist in conceptualising how cultural change is understood within this research, particularly in light of the contemporary cultural change encountered by the planning profession with the integration of spatial policy.

Academic approaches to understanding cultural change can be loosely categorised as being synonymous with structuralism and post-structuralism (Bate, 1994).

Structuralism views the organisation as a whole, with its constituent and interrelated parts of employees, management, culture, *etc.* This approach can be very complex and tends to think that culture can be changed through particular interventions, without much consideration of the individual's view. On the other hand, post-structuralism emphasises the importance of the individual's view, as it is they who perceive, make sense of and recreate on a daily basis the culture of an organisation or institution. It is this latter approach that fits comfortably with the governance and new institutionalism perspectives discussed above.

Yanow & Adams (1998; in Lurie & Riccucci 2003) illustrate the difficulty in defining cultural change. They point out that anthropologists, sociologists and other scholars have struggled with the concept of cultural change without much agreement on how to define it. Bate (1994, p.3) concurs, saying that as hard as culture and change are as individual terms to define, when one puts them together "...the chance of anything coherent emerging becomes all the more unlikely." These reservations, however, have not limited other writers in their attempts to define this term.

Brennan & Shah (2000) for example, write,

“Culture encompasses how people feel about themselves, their work, their institutions. It embraces values, attitudes and behaviour. And above all it is shared”.

(Brennan & Shah, 2000, p.341)

Kilman *et al.* (1986) concur, defining professional culture as:

“...the shared philosophies, ideologies, values, assumptions, beliefs, expectations, attitudes and norms that knit a community together.”

(Kilman *et al.*, 1986, p.89)

A similar perspective is also provided by Barley (1983), defining culture as:

“...a set of assumptions or an interpretative framework that undergirds daily life in an organisation or occupation.”

(Barley, 1983, p.399)

These meanings, although generally relevant to a wide number of organisations and individual actors, are only partially relevant to spatial planning, as they do not refer to factors such as external influences that are involved in recreating spatial planning culture professionally and institutionally. In this respect Schein (1992) defines culture as a

“...pattern of shared basic assumptions that [a] group learned as it solved problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.”

(Schein, 1992, p.12)

In many ways this definition reflects the role of planning in dealing with the internal and external changes brought by an emerging spatial perspective. Further, it suggests the manner in which this spatial perspective will develop as a new practice that will become institutionalised in the workplace and in the profession in general through accredited courses and continuing professional development. This perspective also reflects a dynamic culture that is always changing, reflected in the public policy role of planning (Healey, 1999).

As discussed above, the approach taken here to understanding culture and its change, sits within governance and new institutionalism views of culture as something that is internalised by planning professionals, involving the rules, norms and practices that

influence how they act. This is important to reiterate, because according to Meyerson & Martin (1987)

“What we notice and experience as cultural change depends directly on how we conceptualise culture.”

(Meyerson & Martin, 1987, p.623)

Bate (1994) provides clarity here, stating that ‘culture’ is synonymous with ‘organisation’ and that ‘strategies’ are synonymous with ‘culture’. In this sense, strategy, organisation and culture are all ‘part of the same package’ (Dalmau & Dick, 1991; in Bate, 1994). This view is supported by anthropologists, who point out that societies are culture, implying that organisations and institutions are in themselves culture as well, *i.e.* culture as a metaphor and not a component (Bate, 1994), culture as the institution of spatial planning and not something that can be separated from the policies and professional relations involved in its practice. This implies that cultural change is the same as organisational or institutional change, defined by Meyerson & Martin, (1987) as

“Any change among and between individuals, among the pattern of connections and interpretations.”

(Meyerson & Martin, 1987, p.639)

Bate’s (1994) view that strategies are synonymous with culture is also a pertinent point for the analysis of cultural change in planning. Here strategies are taken to mean the plans and strategies that are produced within spatial planning, such as RSSs and LDFs. According to Weick (1985; in Bate, 1994) strategies and culture have almost identical definitions, including commonalities such as:

- 1). They guide both expression and interpretation;
- 2). They are prospective;
- 3). They are embodied in actions of judging, creating, justifying *etc.*;
- 4). They provide continuity, identity and a consistent way of ordering the world;
- 5). They are social, summarising what is necessary to mesh one’s own actions with those of others;
- 6). Their substance is seen most clearly when people confront unfamiliar situations where the routine application of existing understanding is not possible.

(Weick, 1985; in Bate, 1994, pp18-19)

These descriptions help to remove any psychological barriers the researcher may have in relation to studying organisational and professional culture and their respective strategies. This can be expressed functionally (*i.e.* cultural forms provide a strategic function) and structurally (*i.e.* strategies are cultural forms) (Bate, 1994), implying that:

1. Strategy formulation of any kind is a cultural activity and its development is cultural development;
2. Cultural change is a strategic change.

(Bate, 1994, pp.20-23)

This suggests that cultural change could be described as movement from one strategy to another, *i.e.* a change 'of' and/or 'in' strategy use (Bate, 1994), such as for example the movement from land use to spatial strategies.

This integration of strategies, organisations and professional cultures illustrates how they cannot be separated in research and offers interesting insights regarding cultural change in planning and the development of new RSSs. It suggests that planning culture, organisations, professionals and strategies, and planning in the institutional sense, are synonymous with one another and must be examined with this in mind. So even though this research initially examines some of these aspects separately for heuristic purposes, it is imperative that these considerations are brought together at a later stage to understand cultural change within the profession.

## 2). *Assessing Cultural Change*

So with this understanding of organisational culture, one can begin to understand what is meant by change, in the sense that when shared ideologies, assumptions and work practices begin to alter, cultural change is taking place. But how is this measured and how can we be sure of the types of change under discussion? Lovell (1994), writing in the context of new public management in Britain describes four types of change. These are:

- 1). Change by exception: Such change usually involves projects that are temporary in nature and tend to have little impact. Civil service relocation projects and changes resulting from the budget.

- 2). Incremental change: This is the most usual type, occurring in an evolutionary fashion; often without participants realising it has happened. The degree of stability is the key here.
- 3). Pendulum change: These involve mood changes, such as moves from centralisation to decentralisation and *vice versa*.
- 4). Paradigm shift: This is the most important type of shift in the present environment, involving a radical alteration in values that underpin work cultures.

(Lovell, 1994, pp.3-4)

In light of these typologies of change and the context of spatial planning discussed above, it is most likely that the English planning profession is undergoing a paradigm shift (Shaw, 2006), as underlying values are changing from a siloed land use approach to a broader consideration of the spatial aspects of all public policy and the manner in which such aspects come together to impact on 'place'. Although these typologies of change are useful in the sense of generally understanding cultural change in the planning profession, they provide us with little indication of what such changes actually involve in relation to culture. In this sense they can be regarded as a rudimentary categorisation that provides a view *of* cultural change in planning, but not a view *within* the professional and institutional culture that is changing.

In this respect Schein (1992) provides a useful perspective, acknowledging that some aspects of culture are more superficial than others. This view pulls apart culture into different levels, which he regards as the essence of institutional culture. Within the context of individual welfare agencies and the system as a whole, Lurie & Riccucci (2003) regarded this as ideal for dealing with 'slippery items'. This provides a useful perspective for planning, which operates in a similar structure to welfare agencies in western democracies. The three levels of culture, which are not mutually exclusive, are described as:

- 1). Artefacts: These are the visible organisational structures and processes, including the physical environment, language, technology and products, public values, style of clothing, observed rituals *etc.*
- 2). Espoused values: A sense of what ought to be and not necessarily what is, including strategies, goals and philosophies. Such values tend to be

aspirational in nature and so are better predictions of what people will say, rather than do.

- 3). Basic underlying assumptions: These are the unconscious, taken for granted beliefs, perceptions, thoughts and feelings. They are the ultimate source for values and action, telling group members how to think, perceive and feel. As these are unconscious, they are rarely debated and are difficult to change.

(Schein, 1992, pp.16-27)

These perspectives provide us with a view of the levels *within* planning culture that could be involved in change, while complementing Lovell's (1994) 'types' of cultural change. Schein's typology therefore provides some insight into what we mean by cultures professionally and institutionally and in turn, what we mean in relation to their change. He clarifies this point by saying that if espoused values are congruent with underlying assumptions, then there is a greater likelihood that the articulated goals of an organisation will be realised, *i.e.* desired cultural change (Lovell, 1992). This implies that if changes in an organisation's structures and processes are consistent with new values, then the direction of change will be reinforced (Laurie & Riccucci, 2003).

## **2.5 THE EXPERIENCE OF INTEGRATING REGIONAL SPATIAL POLICY IN ENGLAND**

Throughout the twentieth century in England, the addressing of regional problems, through regional economic and industrial policies, has fluctuated relative to economic performance, policy priorities and political support and ideology (Danson & Lloyd, 1997). In this way there has been an ebb and flow towards and away from regional planning, as this scale has been continuously reworked, across different institutional spaces (Brenner, 2004), in an endless search for the right combination of regional planning governance structures to pursue national aims (Haughton *et al.*, 2010). This indicates that the integration challenge at the regional level is nothing new and according to Nadin (2006):

“...has been visited many times and was part of the original elaboration of the modern planning system in 1947.”



(Nadin, 2006, para 4.3)

In relation to understanding these changes, it is important to note that:

“The English regions are extremely complex entities, and attempting to explain the significance of the changes through which they [have] progress[ed] is a complex process.”

(Hardill *et al.*, 2006, p.1)

With this in mind, it is the intention of this section to explore how the region has been utilised as a focus for strategic planning from the 1920s to the 1980s, in relation to attempts to link and ultimately integrate a range of strategic issues which it was felt could not be tackled as effectively at local or national levels. The purpose is to examine whether these past experiences operated with characteristics similar to spatial planning as opposed to land use planning and therefore see if moves towards spatial planning from the 1990s into the 2000s, which are subsequently discussed, are something different or new. Following from this, the contemporary organisation of spatial planning at the regional level will be considered, before providing an overview of some research published to date, assessing how ‘spatial’ the ‘new’ spatial planning is.

### **2.5.1 The 1920s to the 1980s: Experiments in Regional Spatial Planning**

It is important at the outset, when considering the evolution of regional planning in England, to distinguish between regional and strategic planning policy. Regional policy evolved out of central government concerns for inter-regional disparities since the 1930s and was in effect national planning for the regions, in other words, inter-regional planning (Hall, 2007). Since then it has been both popularised and sidelined through various cycles of government interest in this level of planning, (Dimitriou & Thompson, 2007; Hammond, 2003) as a tool to enhance the national condition. Strategic planning on the other hand, developed out of an alternative conception of planning problems, to allow central government to more specifically address planning concerns at sub-regional and local levels, ranging from the growth pressure issues associated with twentieth century conurbation development to more localised concerns of endemic unemployment (Hall, 2007). Such strategic policy approaches were in effect, intra-regional planning, which it is important to note was never

mutually exclusive from inter-regional planning (Glasson & Marshall, 2007), as their respective foci of concern often coincided. Therefore the inter- and intra- regional policy distinction is used here solely for heuristic purposes, in order to assess the 'spatiality' of these previous approaches.

The first major twentieth century concerns with regional policy were primarily economic and related to the issue of inter-regional equity. The issue of depressed regions versus thriving ones received increased prominence in national policy terms in the inter-war years. This occurred as traditionally prosperous northern industrial regions went into decline after World War I, creating a prosperous core in the SE and a depressed outer area, particularly in the north. These concerns were voiced at this time by town planners (Town Planning Institute), rural conservationists (such as the CPRE) and political representatives from depressed areas (Hall, 2007; Cherry, 1988). Although the government gradually began to take action in addressing these problems, the approaches taken to deal with the dual planning problems of urban growth and industrial decline were, at the outset, divorced from each other (Cullingworth & Nadin, 2006) in any national spatial sense. Despite this, the experiences of addressing the growth and decline challenges would provide a critical mass of knowledge and expertise for the evolution of a more spatial form of planning in the 1940s (Massey, 1989).

In 1934 the Special Areas (Development and Improvement) Act, designated Special (or depressed) Areas, namely the North East coast, West Cumberland, industrial south Wales and the Glasgow industrial hinterland. The Act integrated the problems of economic development and social improvement, and through the appointment of special commissioners with budgets, it facilitated spatially targeted actions, such as the building of trading estates, in order to attract industry to the depressed areas (McCallum, 1976).

This centrally controlled, rudimentary spatial approach to inter-regional equity, was subsequently reinforced in the Barlow Report (1940), which linked in a spatial sense the problems of depressed versus thriving regions, nudging central government towards a more coherent inter-regional spatial perspective (McCallum, 1976). This conclusion was no accident, in the sense that the original terms of reference asked the

investigating committee to examine the distribution of industrial population in Britain, consider the social, economic and strategic advantages and disadvantages of such concentrations and to see what remedial measures, if any, could be undertaken (Cherry, 1988; Roberts, 1976). To overcome this, a balanced distribution of industry and industrial population was suggested, along with the appropriate diversification of industry in these areas (McCallum, 1976). The report, however, has been criticised for its narrow views on solving regional economic problems, as the committee felt that existing policy measures would eventually suffice (McCallum, 1976). Existing approaches were therefore mostly reiterated in the 1945 Distribution of Industry Act, which in many respects was a rather blunt approach to dealing with the spatially nuanced reality of intra- and inter-regional planning problems. This is not surprising, as the report considered urban congestion as a major theme and regional economic development as a subordinate theme, discussing both separately and only joining them implicitly in the national sense. Additionally, courses of action such as satellite towns and industrial estates were considered firmly in the context of intra-regional congestion, rather than inter-regional economic development (McCallum, 1976).

Nevertheless, the report was supported by a general growing belief that a nationally and socially integrated approach to planning was possible (Roberts, 1976). This led to the establishment of the Ministry of Town and Country Planning in 1943, with responsibility for urban problems, and subsequently physical land use activities under the Town and Country Planning Act 1947 (TCPA).

These developments were brought about by a post-war Labour cabinet that supported government planning and intervention (McCallum, 1976), as part of the coordination required for a welfare-state (Rydin, 2003b). The reforms, however, were not sufficiently spatially nuanced and in many respects were an *ad hoc* stab at bringing any coherence to regional spatial planning, a factor which has been regarded as retarding the integration of spatial issues at this time (Roberts & Lloyd, 1999a & 1999b). Despite such drawbacks, the Ministry did initially operate administratively on the basis of a comprehensive structure of standard regions, with the job of coordinating the development plan work of both local planning authorities and regional committees, although few of the latter extended to the scale of the Ministry's new regions (Massey, 1989). In many respects it was the bottom-up work

by planners within some of the English regions that began to recognise and connect the spatiality of these problems in any meaningful way.

Over the same time from the 1920s to the 1940s, there were bottom-up developments in building strategic or regional perspectives, using building blocks based on existing town planning powers, to form advisory or executive Joint Town Planning Committees (JTPCs). This was reflected by the fact that the term 'regional planning' had come into extensive use after WWI, representing an extension to what had been, up to then, a more localised practice (Cherry, 1998). In the 1920s, only the JTPCs for Manchester and the Midlands were large enough to be considered 'regional' (Cherry, 1988). The experiences of these committees contributed to a more integrated consideration of planning problems (Massey, 1989). Instrumental in these developments were pioneering planners such as Geddes and Abercrombie, who saw the importance of a strategic and regional spatial perspective and helped to develop planning techniques to this end, such as regional and sub-regional surveys. An earlier planning pioneer was Howard, whose 'social city' was essentially regional in its territorial scope (Cherry, 1998), integrating in a regional spatial sense, economic, social and environmental considerations.

From the late 1920s Unwin began instrumental work for the greater London Regional Planning Committee, which laid the groundwork for Abercrombie's 1944 Greater London Plan. Unwin's regional planning work began to connect a broad range of planning concerns in a clear spatial sense, including new towns, green areas, coherent road transportation, population densities and potential development land, all based around polycentric concepts (Cherry, 1988). Despite such positive developments, it is important to remember at this outset, that such approaches to planning were limited by a lack of regional planning expertise and techniques, and a lack of intellectual rigour and consistency in work (Massey, 1989).

Similar criticisms were also levelled in a sub-regional sense at the new development plans that emerged from the TCPA and their failure to assist in coordinating strategic and regional spatial thinking and action (Roberts, 1976). Such plans were generally deemed to have failed in any meaningful way to connect physical, social and economic issues (Cherry, 1974). They were also criticised for a lack of cross-

boundary perspectives, limited public involvement and a general inability to implement (Roberts, 1967), due to limited resources that were mostly directed towards housing and public services (Hammond, 2003).

These regional and strategic approaches all reflect a gradually increasing effort to recognise, interpret and selectively use underlying forces for change in order to create better economic, social and physical environments in both prosperous and disadvantaged regions. This provided an opportunity for the development of planning techniques, policies and procedures that would not have been provided by statutory town planning (Massey, 1989), but which led to a better understanding of the integrated nature of the problem of regional inequity. In this way, one can see that from as early as the 1920s, English regional planning practice, particularly in an intra-regional sense, was developing a clear integrated spatial consciousness. Just as many of the early twentieth century planning problems are still being experienced today (Hammond, 2002), so many of the pioneering spatial approaches suggested then are still being proposed. In this way, one can see that contemporary spatial planning is not in any way something new, but rather a swing back to and a reawakening of a previously accumulated spatial planning knowledge.

In a conceptual sense, one can see that regional spatial planning policy from the 1920s to the 1940s was at times generally coordinated, but integration was generally loose at best, only finding stronger expression on occasion, as through for example Abercrombie's Greater London Plan in 1944. The JTFCs did, however, draw planners together, creating a genesis of integrated regional working that was not previously seen. In this way, such bottom-up work by local government, although only essentially advisory, did express clear joint planning work in a governance sense and assisted national government thinking in this respect. Overall though, the manner in which regional spatial planning was expressed at this time can only at best be described as joined up coordination.

By the early 1950s, there was a swing away from the very limited advances made in regional spatial planning with the election of a Conservative government, on the platform of 'freedom from planning' (McCallum, 1976). This resulted in the abolition of the Planning Ministry's regional offices and research efforts in 1954, the

easing of industrial location restrictions and the decision not to revise any regional plans (Cherry, 1988). This led to a compartmentalisation of inter-regional and national policy and a lack of any spatial element being built into central government forecasting (McCallum, 1976). Despite revisiting regional policy with the onset of recession at the end of the 1950s, the same limited inter-regional approaches of influencing the location of industry were again promoted, ensuring the very same criticisms of being poorly coordinated and integrated, and not consistently related to any coherent long term national policy programme or strategy (McCallum, 1967). Particularly vocal in this regard was the National Economic Development Forum, which was established in 1963 and explicitly examined regional problems. It criticised inter-regional policy for being nothing more than 'geographical welfare', stating that it needed to consider what the regions could do to assist in the national economic context, emphasising in a spatial sense the inter-dependence between both (McCallum, 1967). This influenced national government thinking and an awareness of this inter-relationship between economic and physical planning, laying the foundation for a whole new generation of regional studies over the subsequent ten years, which helped to challenge the conventional orthodoxy that had compartmentalised the two.

The coming to power of a Labour government in 1964, which was committed to change in national and regional economic policy, ushered in a new era of regional policy, in effect a swing back to regional spatial planning considerations. As a result the level of public spending on regional policy increased by a factor of thirty-seven over the course of the 1960s, elevating it to one of the most important and expensive aspects of national economic management (McCallum, 1967). Despite this, similar business location controls were again tried and tinkered with, receiving many of the same integration criticisms as before.

Notwithstanding this, progress was made in relation to the establishment of Regional Economic Planning Councils (REPCs) in 1965/6, under the Department of Economic Affairs (Benneworth *et al.*, 2006). The REPCs produced a plethora of studies and plans, ranging from the NW and WM in 1965, which were mostly stock-taking as opposed to policy proposals; to the SE in 1970 and NW in 1974 (Glasson & Marshall, 2007), which included budgets (Glasson, 1974) and involved central

government and Standing Conferences of local authorities (Glasson & Marshall, 2007). These latter studies were comprehensive, explicitly combining economic and land use planning (Baker *et al.*, 1999). They had a long-term view to 2001, were intended to be regularly updated, provided a corporate framework for decision making, had a strong emphasis on implementation and financing (Glasson & Marshall, 2007) and were based on rigorous research and analysis (Hammond, 2002). Some, such as the NW plan even emphasised 'growth points' (Glasson & Marshall, 2007). In this way, one can see the evolution of a stronger expression of regional spatial planning over the course of the 1960s and 1970s, again illustrating the point that today's spatial planning in England is not necessarily anything new, but rather a progression that has built on previous experience within the planning profession and the public policy sector more generally.

Despite the apparent success of such regional spatial expressions at this time, the REPCs were not necessarily successful at bringing together the regional economic and land use components (Wannop, 1995), despite the detailed and at times overly complex nature of the plans produced (Hammond, 2002). This was in part due to the fragmentation of relevant powers and responsibilities in central government between the Departments of Trade and Industry, and Environment (Roberts, 1999). In addition there was a lack of coordination between regional agencies, which competed for resources (Roberts & Lloyd, 1999a & 1999b) and a lack of implementation mechanisms, as the REPCs could not set or control their budgets (Roberts, 1999). The spatial integration of land use and economic planning was also often hampered by disagreements between the REPCs and their respective regional Standing Conferences regarding the scope and content of plans (Roberts, 1999), leading some to question the genuineness of participation at this time (Baker *et al.*, 1999), which resulted in a failure to meet the genuine needs of different regions (Roberts & Lloyd, 1999a & 1999b). Around the same time similar failings were also mirrored in the production of sub-regional structure plans, which had emerged from the Town and Country Planning Act 1968, in that they also struggled to integrate physical and economic issues (Roberts, 1976), making it difficult to produce more localised strategic spatial perspectives (Pearce & Ayres, 2006).

In a conceptual sense one can see that across regional spatial policy and actors in the 1960s and 1970s there was a range of coordination and integration elements expressed in practice. In policy terms, at least on paper, there was a reasonable degree of integration between land use and economic planning issues, but there was relatively few links to environmental and social issues that would be expected in a contemporary sense. That said, it would be fair to describe the later comprehensive planning work of the REPCs as a form of over-arching regional strategy, under the *proviso* that although implementation was considered, the actual ability to deliver was indeed very limited. In terms of relevant spatial actor integration, the REPCs and Standing Conferences certainly engaged in coordination of their working efforts, leading to some informal and formal joint working, although it would be difficult to describe this work as anything more than coordination. As a result and due to the strong top-down influence by central government and limited regional and sub-regional stakeholder involvement, the REPC work was in effect an elite planning exercise (Glasson & Marshall, 2007). Governance relationships at this time could not be described as anything stronger than joint planning exercises, at best, suggesting an overall style of regional spatial planning as being holistic coordination. The experience of these regional planning exercises did however strengthen the cultural resources of the profession, providing it with an extended range of regional planning methods and techniques. Such cultural resources built on those that had been previously developed during strategic and regional planning exercises from the 1920s to the 1940s and were to prove a useful store when regional spatial planning was again revisited in the 1990s.

The broad approach to regional spatial planning was to come to an end in the mid 1970s, ending what some have called the golden age of regional planning (Thomas & Kimberly, 1995). The failure to make any real impact on depressed regions can in many ways be attributed to the fragmentation of powers and responsibilities in central government. Even though they were predominantly in the driving seat in the sense of vertical, top-down policy dictates, they failed to coordinate the various strands of regional economic, physical and social planning policies and their respective agencies (Hammond, 2003; Allemdinger & Tewdwr-Jones, 2000). Despite these shortcomings, some advances were made in this period in regional planning methodologies and the integration of policies in this respect (Danson & Lloyd, 1997)



and according to Hammond (2003), there were some other good lessons learned, for example, from cross-departmental studies on social policy by the Department of Health, from Home Office community and development programmes and from the introduction of corporate local governance.

The mid-1970s saw the onset of a new host of related socio-economic challenges and national economic pressures, including the loss of competitiveness and jobs in all regions, not just those that were previously in decline and the emergence of the 'inner-city' problem in the south, which had previously only existed in the north (Cullingworth & Nadin, 2006). These issues shifted national attention to a perceived need to arrest national decline through modernising industry and promoting growth, irrespective of location. As a result, regional planning policy lost ground to an emerging industrial policy that was not embedded within any spatial context (Roberts, 1976). Such changes were fuelled by a new Conservative government's neo-liberal market policies (Danson & Lloyd, 1997), bringing about a barren period in regional planning policy (Baker, 1998), as regional policy structures were dismantled (Tewdwr-Jones, 2002). The REPCs and inter-regional industrial location regulations were abolished and the regional plans of previous decades were allowed to expire, with the result that there was ever diminishing guidance for public and private investment, leading to a lack of capacity to make and implement strategic decisions. Such matters were compounded by the further reduction of strategic spatial planning capacity with the abolition of the Greater London Council and the six metropolitan county councils in 1986 (Danson & Lloyd, 1997). At the sub-regional level, *ad hoc* spatially targeted approaches were promoted through Urban Development Corporations and Enterprise Zones, although the capacity for integrated actions among these has been described as weakly managed (Cherry, 1998), embedding a vertical and siloed approach to economic, social and planning policies.

### **2.5.2 The 1990s to 2004: A Re-emerging Regional Spatial Planning Framework**

By the end of the 1980s, there were calls from the private sector for direction and guidance in relation to investment and from the environment and community sectors for comprehensive and strategic evaluation of infrastructure and settlement, prompted in particular by development pressures in the SE (Tewdwr-Jones, 2002).

This growing demand was reinforced by changes to EU structural funding at the time, from a project to a programme basis (Roberts, 1999; Danson & Lloyd, 1997), requiring SPDs to be prepared by partners. Eventually the government's improvised solution was to invite metropolitan authorities to get together and draft Strategic Planning Guidance (SPG) jointly for their areas, which was to be approved and issued by the SoS and provide a framework for the preparation of their own development plans. The problem with SPG was that many of the issues facing areas were not confined to the boundaries of participating authorities, focusing attention on the need for a broader territorial perspective (Pearce & Ayres, 2006). Despite these initial criticisms, SPG was to represent a pendulum swing back to regional planning in England, in a manner that would become more integrated and spatial than previously.

The re-emergence of regional spatial planning was facilitated at this time by a number of projects at local level that encouraged planners to revisit cross sectoral and cross-boundary policy work. In the case of the former, this was driven by LA21, as understandings of sustainable development and its integrative requirements were gradually comprehended and assessed. In addition, local government work on Single Regeneration Budget bids encouraged them to develop other cross sectoral policy perspectives, for example connecting land use with employment. Cross boundary work on strategic planning perspectives had evolved from work on SPG. This was developed further after the 1991 Planning and Compensation Act (PCA), as local authorities were instructed to form regional standing conferences to act as regional planning bodies and advise the SoS on the production of Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) (Pearce and Ayres, 2006). Social and economic partners were also encouraged to participate in this process so it would not become dominated by local government (Mawson, 1998).

RPG was established under the PCA, and although not a statutory document, was intended as a framework for all structure and district plans. The finer details were set out in 1992 in PPG12 (DoE, 1992), stating that the RPG should cover issues of regional importance, be limited to matters relevant to development plans, be regionally specific in its policy coverage, provide a development framework for twenty years and cover priorities for environment, transport, economic development,

agriculture, minerals, waste and infrastructure. This broad remit pushed regional planning firmly back on the agenda and as it grew in status (Baker, 1998), it encouraged the development of a range of networks through which public and private actors operated in order to influence policy (Hammond, 2003). These were facilitated through the establishment of Government Office for the Regions (GOs), charged with better coordinating regional policy and its respective actors; as central government was now committed to an effective regional planning framework (Tewdwr-Jones, 2002). The requirement for strategic SPDs for European funding was also influential here (Roberts & Lloyd, 1999a & 1999b; Danson & Lloyd, 1997). By the mid 1990s, these integrative aspirations were again reinforced, as regional planning began to recognise the regional problem in terms of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, although such reconciliation was a struggle (Hammond, 2003; Danson & Lloyd, 1997). Despite this, these regional planning developments were encouraging and some such as Roberts (1996) saw it as a fresh commitment to regional planning and to a broader policy agenda.

According to Tewdwr-Jones (2002), GOs were intended as a rationalisation and simplification of complex central government administrative networks that had operated for some time as separate entities at the regional level. Initially GOs included the integration of four central government departments, covering the functions of planning, local government, environment, transport, employment, trade and industry (Baker *et al.*, 1999). In planning terms GOs were involved in SoS calls, planning appeals, general planning functions and development plan monitoring. In no time, however, a range of criticisms emerged in relation to their activities. This mostly pertained to the fact that in reality GOs were agents of central government, ensuring a top-down, vertical line of control, failing to fulfil expectations of regional autonomy in policy making and failing to influence centrally formed policies. In a regional context they were also criticised for failing to engage with local stakeholders in their establishment of regional priorities (Tewdwr-Jones, 2002). As a result GOs were therefore seen as a limited exercise in regional administrative devolution, and lacking any real ability to promote and coordinate regional policy (John & Whitehead, 1997). Much of this stemmed from the fact that only a handful of central government departments were involved in the GOs. This indicates that the

regional reforms were emphasising, as regional policy had so often previously done, a functional and not a territorial integration (Hammond, 2003). The regional agenda was therefore strengthening vertical integration without considering the broader need for horizontal integration of policy. Therefore the separation of key powers and functions that pertained to regional planning policy curtailed its ability to implement plans and to operationalise the breadth of spatial policy work with which the regional level was now faced (Danson & Lloyd, 1997). All of this encouraged debate regarding the need for single government bodies in each of the regions to overcome this fragmentation, which was accompanied by questions of democratic accountability (Hammond, 2003; Danson & Lloyd, 1997).

Conceptually, developments in regional spatial planning over the course of the 1990s increased, in a cultural sense, the skills and confidence of the profession, and gradually established for it a regional institutional capacity (Hammond, 2002). The bottom-up approaches, although still strongly influenced by vertical lines of control from central government and GOs, contributed to a new style of informal regional governance (Roberts & Lloyd, 1999a & 1999b; Roberts, 1997) that was pushing governance beyond the boundaries of solely coordination. As a result, for the first time, a wider range of spatial policy actors, from for example environment, economics and land use, were beginning to come together through informal networking processes. Despite high aspirations, however, the resulting RPG documents struggled to achieve their coherent spatial intentions, as social issues were mostly sidelined, environmental objectives were weak and regional distinctiveness was difficult to perceive (Baker, 1998; Roberts, 1997; CPRE, 1994). In addition they were described as taking a 'lowest common denominator' approach and being 'poor' in relation to monitoring, review and implementation (Hammond, 2002; Roberts, 1997; CPRE, 1994). In essence, they were weak on integrating spatial policy.

Despite these criticisms, the development of a regional planning competency over the course of the 1990s was not a lost exercise and it is fair to say that most of the technical and professional components needed for the revival of regional planning were now in place (Hammond, 2002). These components, however, were not sufficient in themselves to ensure completion of the project. Further elaboration in terms of the scope and competence of regional planning was required,

According to Nadin (2006), there was a consensus at the end of the 1990s that planning was falling short and to alleviate this, there was a need for radical change. Suggested, but by no means exhaustive nor mutually exclusive reforms included:

- A more dynamic and timely planning and decision-making process that would enable planning to selectively and strategically target, coordinate and positively shape outcomes, assisted by proper staff, resources and expertise.
- A capacity for more inclusive and effective participation and consultation that would lend confidence and transparency to plans and decisions.
- More effective collaboration with other policy makers and stakeholders to integrate objectives and join up policy in order to overcome entrenched organisational cultures, different timescales and procedures for different strategies and a lack of cross sectoral knowledge of policy processes in general.
- More positive evidence based reasoning in formulating strategies and policies, as most plans at this time were simply a collection of policy criteria and decision rules, which failed to 'localise' national policy and understand the spatial development characteristics, patterns and trends within and across boundaries.
- A focus on the delivery of wider priority outcomes at national, regional and local levels, concentrating on strategic goals and targets.

In summation, these calls were about planning becoming more integrated and spatial, through shaping wider public policy with spatial frameworks that encouraged integrated strategies and coordinated action across policy sectors (Nadin, 2006). Such reforms were considered after the election of the New Labour government in 1997.

The establishment of Regional Development Agencies (DAs) was one of the first signs of action by the new government that expressed an intended commitment to further developing a regional spatial planning competency. They were first proposed in the White Paper *Building Partnerships for Prosperity* (DETR, 1997) and established in 1999 under the 1998 Regional Development Agencies Act (RDAA) (Stationary Office, 1998), along existing GO boundaries. DAs were to be directly

accountable to both central government and the regional chamber and had five stated purposes:

- 1). To further the economic development and the regeneration of its area;
- 2). To promote business efficiency, investment and competitiveness in its area;
- 3). To promote employment in its area;
- 4). To enhance the development and application of skills relevant to employment in its area; and
- 5). To contribute to the achievement of sustainable development in the UK where it is relevant to its area to do so.

(Stationary Office, DAA, 1998, S.4)

The DAs were to be run by boards made up of eight to fifteen members appointed by the relevant SoS, drawing on representatives from within the DA's territory, covering local government, business, unions, rural affairs and other interests deemed appropriate (Stationary Office, DAA, 1998, S.2). The DA took over some of the functions of GOs and certain quangos, such as English Partnerships and the Rural Development Commission, along with the administering of European Structural Funds, the coordination of inward investment and a whole range of other functions related to physical and social regeneration (Tomaney, 2002b; Roberts & Benneworth, 2001). They did not however, gain control of land use planning, but had to take account in their own work and their RES of local and strategic planning policies and RPG (DETR, 2000a, 1999c, 1999d). From a central perspective, in relation to their overall remit, the DAs represented the integration of central government functions across at least five departments, which all co-funded the DAs through GOs, namely: the DTI, DETR, MAFF, Department of Education and Employment (DEE) and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). From this broad and diverse remit one can see that the DAs represented an attempt by central government, not only to integrate the development and delivery of regional economic policy, but to ensure that this occurred within a regional planning framework. This was greatly assisted in the period after their establishment, in that both the DAs and regional spatial planning policy were managed by the DETR. In addition, the government set up the RIU in the CO to assist in regional coordination (Cabinet Office, 2000a & 2000b), although some have questioned the motivation

here of central government and a possible desire to retain central control (Tewdwr-Jones, 2002).

The initial aspiration of integrating the DAs and regional spatial planning were soon ended with the separation of both functions as the DETR was disbanded in 2001, with the DAs passing to the DTI and all spatial planning functions passing to the DTLR. Although the DAs were still scrutinised by the regional chambers who were responsible for regional planning policy, this did not bridge the gap and if anything led to greater conflict, as both were answerable to different government departments, who operated under different remits. Further fragmentation between regional spatial planning and economic policy became apparent with RES production, which was much less regulated than that of RPG, being produced in just six months, with some stakeholder consultation (Counsell *et al.*, 2007). In addition, DAs were criticised by the end of the first term of the New Labour government for lacking resources and flexibility (Tomaney, 2002b). Such difficulties were compounded by output targets that were centrally set (HM Treasury, 2000a), which had been set out in the pre budget report of 2000, allowing just some regionally specific targets (HM Treasury, 2000b). This led to further reforms in 2002, with the DA taking responsibility for Regional Selective Assistance from the GOs, as well as taking on the role to produce a Framework for Employment and Skills (CO, 2002), which along with an increase in overall funding and flexibility helped in some respects to better integrate DA functions (Hammond, 2003). Despite these advances in integration, the performance ability of DAs since then has come to be recognised as ultimately limited, due to the fact that in the reality of a globalised world, they have little control or influence over the economic space they manage (Roberts & Baker, 2006). In effect, they are dependent on the actions of private sector actors (Glasson & Marshall, 2007).

The 2002 reforms to the DAs coincided with the strengthening of the GOs, which had been proposed in the 2000 CO/PIU report *Reaching Out* (2000a). This had suggested a broader and stronger remit for GOs, representing a broader range of central government departments. Since then the GOs have expanded to include ten government departments, taking on a range of functions such as agriculture, education, health, crime and culture. Included among these has been the sponsoring and mentoring of the DAs and a general responsibility to coordinate the activities of

public bodies in the regions (CO, 2002). This provided the GOs with an expanded ability to coordinate a broader range of national policy at the regional and local level (Pearce & Ayres, 2006).

The RDAA also established regional chambers as having a statutory scrutinising function of the DAs' RESs, which had been proposed in the 1997 regional White Paper *Building Partnerships for Prosperity* (DETR, 1997). The chambers were regional groupings consisting of local government, business and other vested interests and up to this point did not exist in all regions. This soon changed, however, and they became more established over time in all English regions, excluding London. Their remits gradually broadened and budgets increased (Hammond, 2003), to include a range of functions, including review and scrutiny, environment, planning, transport, housing, Europe, economic development, education and sustainable development. These duties required the chambers to work closely with their respective GOs and DAs to cultivate cross-regional networks to develop and deliver policy. The experiences of this cooperation between these regional agencies are considered below.

Regional chambers became commonly known as Regional Assemblies (RAs) after the 2002 Regional White Paper *Your Region, Your Choice* (DTLR, 2002). This was part of central government proposals to introduce an elected tier of regional government in England, to complement its devolution plans for Northern Ireland, Wales, Scotland and London. These plans were abandoned in 2004, however, when the first referendum for an elected regional assembly in the NE rejected the proposal (Counsell, *et al.*, 2007). Despite this the RAs had built up a broad policy remit in preparation for devolution, which included regional planning and the coordination of regional strategies, partnership working and improved delivery in relation to this. Although in some regions the Regional Planning Body (RPB) had been separate from the RAs, this consolidation was ensured after it was first mooted in PPG11 in 2000, so they could provide the necessary leadership to produce and implement integrated spatial strategies for their region (DETR, 2000a). Therefore RAs became responsible for producing RPG, in addition to RSDFs.



RSDFs are non-statutory documents, which as described above were produced to provide a high level vision in order to assist regional bodies in moving towards sustainable development, through integrating horizontal and vertical strands of policy (Counsell *et al.*, 2007), with a set of common objectives and a series of indicators and targets to monitor progress (DETR, 2000b). They were intended to inform regional strategies such as the RES, RPG and local plans and policies through sustainability appraisal (SA) and therefore have relied on regional actors and organisations to utilise them in solving tensions between strategies (DETR, 2000b; Tewdwr-Jones and Mc Neill, 2000). This key role RSDFs in integrating regional policy was later reiterated in PPS11 (ODPM, 2004a). The initial development of RSDFs, however, encountered many siloed barriers (Cooper Simms, 2002), which were representative of the teething problems that New Labour's public sector integration reforms were experiencing in the early 2000s and were mirrored in a further round of reforms to RPG at this time.

The re-issuing of PPG11 in 2000 (DETR, 2000a), broadened the remit to RPG to include the Regional Transport Strategy (RTS). It stated that RPG should provide a framework for other regional strategies, covering a fifteen to twenty year period and should identify the scale and distribution of a broader remit of policy, including new housing and regional priorities for environment, transport, infrastructure, agriculture, economic development and minerals and waste, all within the context of working towards sustainable development (Pearce & Ayres, 2006). To enable this, stronger relationships with other regional strategies, such as the RES were required, in addition to the integration of a broader range of stakeholders (DETR, 2000a). In order to make stakeholder involvement and the resulting RPG more transparent, EIPs were to be introduced (DETR, 1998). These changes to RPG were acknowledged as being influenced by the ESDP and the RSDF (DETR, 2000a). These reforms were subsequently implemented in the next round of RPG production up until 2004, but the problems of achieving integration persisted and new ones arose. The government, however, was already considering an alternative to RPG, namely RSSs, since the publication of the planning Green Paper, *Planning: Delivering a Fundamental Change* in 2001 (DTLR, 2001).

The problems encountered with the last round of RPG production, echoed those experienced by the RSDFs. Although the government had intended a planning document that could better facilitate regional policy integration, this failed to be realised. Vigar *et al.*, (2000), Tewdwr-Jones (2002), Haughton & Counsell (2004) and Pearce & Ayres (2006) have suggested a number of reasons for this, including:

- 1). RPGs lacked regional distinctiveness, reproducing too much existing national policy and were mostly aspatial;
- 2). Their land use orientation ensured a narrow and limited remit that lacked a strategic perspective;
- 3). RPGs were weak on environmental objectives and appraisal;
- 4). They failed to properly take account of other regional strategies in relation to the goal of sustainable development;
- 5). RPG lacked targets that could be monitored;
- 6). Their production process was too long and insufficiently transparent;
- 7). As a result they did not command commitment from regional stakeholders.

It would be fair to say, however, that the experiences of the RAs in producing RPG were nevertheless to prove useful in producing RSSs and that by 2004 the machinery of English regional governance was significantly strengthened to assist in achieving this. A key effect in this respect had been the preparation of a proliferation of regional strategies that related to land use planning (Pearce & Ayres, 2006). Additional relevant strategies here include the Regional Waste Strategy (RWS), the Regional Housing Strategy (RHS) and the Regional Cultural Strategy (RCS) (Counsell *et al.*, 2007), although this is by no means an exhaustive list.

### **2.5.3 The Introduction of Regional Spatial Strategies**

In order to cement the reforms of RPG and strengthen the role of strategic and integrated land use planning and governance at the regional level, while also addressing some of the criticisms discussed, the government introduced the PCPA. This replaced the non-statutory RPG with a statutory RSS, which also replaced statutory strategic local government plans. As discussed earlier, these changes included a fundamental reform introduced by the Act, which recast land use planning

as spatial planning, broadening its remit to integrate the spatial aspects of public policy and contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

The role of the RSS was set out in PPS11 (ODPM, 2004a) in the same year. This stated that the RSS should:

- Provide a broad development strategy for the region for a fifteen to twenty year period;
- Identify the scale and provision of new housing;
- Set out priorities for the environment, such as countryside and biodiversity protection;
- Address spatial issues relating to transport, infrastructure, economic development, agriculture, minerals extraction, and waste treatment and disposal.

(ODPM, 2004a)

The RSS also had to articulate a spatial vision for the region, along with aims and objectives to achieve this and explain how these would contribute to the establishment of sustainable development and add value to the overall planning process. To ensure progress in delivery of the RSS it had to provide clear links from policy objectives and priorities to targets and indicators, clarifying who would do what and when. In a territorial sense the document was required to be specific to the region, addressing regional and sub-regional issues that often cross boundaries. It was to remain strategic in the sense of being locationally as opposed to site-specific below the regional level, leaving local issues to be addressed by Local Development Documents (LDDs) (ODPM, 2004a).

In the context of policy integration, the RSS was also required to be consistent with and supportive of other relevant regional, national and EU policies and strategies. In particular the RSDF was to be used as a starting point to aid integration and ensure that sustainable development was at the heart of the strategy. PPS11 also stated that the RSS was to shape and be shaped by other regional strategies, making sure to align visions and key objectives, while providing a spatial framework for other strategies, ranging from biodiversity, culture and health to housing, skills and air quality. The critical strategies for integration, however, were the RES, the RHS, the

RTS, which had already been integrated into RPG and the RWS. On top of this broad horizontal integration within the region, Appendix A of PPS11 listed seventeen national policy sectors to take into account. To assist in some respects here, PPS11 advised on the merging of the RPB and Regional Housing Board (RHB), the development of joint economic evidence bases for future RSS and RES revision and, where possible, the consolidation of consultation exercises for different regional strategies (ODPM, 2004a). From this, one can see that the overall approach to regional strategy integration was effectively a rolling forward agenda, where each strategy when updated, would take account of all other strategies in the region.

In order to ensure integrated policy development and delivery, a very wide range of stakeholders from national and regional policy areas were to be involved in RSS preparation and delivery, in addition to consultation with a broad range of other interested regional parties. Stakeholder involvement was to be ensured through a statement of public participation, organising partnership work, along with relevant steering and focus groups. Close attention to advice from local government was also suggested. The process of bringing together all stakeholders in RSS development was very similar to the previous RPG approach. After the identification of issues and options and the drafting of a project plan, options were to be then assessed and developed into a draft version. This version was then to be consulted upon and a further draft developed before the EIP. Unlike the previous RPG process, however, the EIP was to be streamlined and no longer operate as a debating forum for all policy in the RSS. In essence it was to be a test of 'soundness' of the plan, only selectively picking aspects of the draft considered relevant to such an assessment. After the EIP Panel issued their report, there would be a final consultation on the proposed changes, before issuing the final RSS. This entire process was to be shadowed by an SA process, to aid policy integration, from baseline and scoping at the issues and options stage to assessing potential impacts, leading up to consultation on the first draft and the publication of an SA report. The overall approach to SA was set out in *Sustainability Assessment of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents* (ODPM, 2005b).

Under the new legislation RAs are also permitted to produce sub-regional strategies within their boundaries and across their boundaries with local government and other

RAs, to deal with specific strategic issues. This is because at this scale one can have different yet intersecting processes which converge to produce unique sub-regional issues, for example within certain defined functional areas like city-regions. *The Northern Way* (ODPM, 2004b), published the same year as the PCPA was passed and discussed below, encourages such an approach and assists in operationalising it.

Around the time of the PCPA, a number of other developments took place in relation to the remits of RAs, which were intended to assist in their duty to draw together and deliver public policy. In 2003 the ODPM published *Sustainable Communities: Building for the future* (ODPM, 2003c) which set out how to deliver sustainable development in urban and rural areas. But as this had a strong emphasis on the SE, the ODPM launched *The Northern Way* in 2004. This set out a broad strategy taking in the three northern regions and advocated the DAs to work together to get all policies and plans to support the ideas of inter-regional collaboration, investment prioritisation and the development of city region plans. The two midlands regions also developed a similar approach know as *Smart Growth: The Midlands Way* (AWM & EMDA, 2004). In a sense, these inter-regional plans provided almost national coverage of the English regions and assisted them in focusing attention on broader sub-national/inter-regional spatial contexts, in both RSS and RES preparation.

The integration of policy in relation to prioritisation, financing and delivery was also focused on by central government through the Treasury, which issued a consultation on devolved decision making for Regional Funding Allocations (RFAs) in 2004 (HM Treasury, 2004a). In its spending review the same year, it expressed a desire to improve regional decision-making through publishing frameworks of indicative regional funding, covering transport, housing and economic development, based on prioritisation advice from regional stakeholders through Regional Emphasis Documents (REDs) (HM Treasury, 2004b). Guidance on preparing this advice was subsequently published (HM Treasury *et al.*, 2005).

#### **2.5.4. Integrating Regional Spatial Planning: A Critical Discussion**

Developments since 1997, although incremental (Tewdwr-Jones, 2002), have transformed the landscape of regional planning, due to explicit efforts by central

government to integrate spatial planning policy in both a horizontal and vertical sense within the English regions. In some respects, these developments have revealed the complementary strengths of the regions (Benneworth *et al.*, 2006). One of the fundamental problems encountered during regional planning evolution, however, was that, no matter what attempts the government made to explicitly address integration concerns, fragmentation problems continued. According to Tewdwr-Jones (2002), this was due to the lack of an overall policy approach, with policies thought through in an unfocused way, resulting in potential incompatibility between policy areas and the new regional agencies. Such fragmentation was compounded by relationships between agencies that were ambiguous (Roberts & Baker, 2006), due to complex and sometimes overlapping working structures, involving multiple actors and their respective policies (RCEP, 2002) and funding streams, creating an enormous challenge for joining up (Pearce & Ayres, 2006). In the past this has led academics to suggest that fragmentation was due to a lack of mechanisms to overcome it (Stephenson & Poxon, 2001) and indeed, in the absence of elected RAs, there appears to have been an unwillingness by the centre to offer an alternative that may weaken vertical integration through strengthening the horizontal. It will therefore be interesting in the context of this study to see how the new RSSs, which have the opportunity to build on an existing capital in this regard, are capable of bringing about the integration of spatial policy. With this in mind it will be useful to consider an overview of the main positive and negative developments that have occurred in integrating spatial policy at the regional level, since the early 2000s. These will be considered in relation to critical and normative writings in the lead up to the 2004 reforms and some subsequent findings.

Drawing on the conceptualisations of integration in spatial planning discussed earlier, it is possible to break down this critical overview into a consideration of issues in relation to policy/plans and actors/organisations, in addition to some initial thoughts on governance and cultural change. Within each of these, horizontal inter- and intra-regional relationships can be considered, along with vertical relationships to central and local government.

### ***A). Plans and Policies***

One of the main areas of concern in regional spatial policy integration is the extent to which plans and their policies mutually support each other. The different preparation process, content and review requirements of the main regional strategies, such as the RES, RSDF, RSS and RHS, is often cited as a contributory factor in this regard, creating a divergence of content, which is compounded by a general lack of flexibility in changing strategies (Pearce & Ayres, 2006; Baker Assocs. *et al.*, 2006). In addition, each of the strategies have different time scales, ranging from the RSS at twenty years to the RES at ten, the RHS as current and the RSDF with none, while strategies such as the RSSs have taken much longer than anticipated in their preparation. As pointed out by Counsell *et al.* (2007), a further complication is encountered in a vertical sense, in that some of the strategies such as the RHS and RSDF are bottom-up, while the RES and RSS are top-down. Connected to this are 'parity of esteem' issues between the latter two strategies, as there is evidence that this is not always the case (Baker Assocs. *et al.*, 2006). This can be seen for example in conflicts around the weight given to the environment, sustainability and competitiveness agendas (Pearce & Ayres, 2006). Other areas of conflict have been observed around planning and housing; economic development, education and housing; planning and health; and environment and transport. Much of this is explained by the relative newness of efforts to integrate these policy areas (Baker Assocs. *et al.*, 2006) and a resulting lack of understanding and awareness amongst the relevant policy actors of any cross-referential relationships between their strategies (Counsell *et al.*, 2007; Baker Assocs. *et al.*, 2006). Professional policy cultures and general resources appear crucial in this regard.

A lack of clearer policy direction from the centre is often cited as a main contributory factor to regional policy conflict. For example, PPS11 (ODPM, 2004a) has broadened considerably the areas of policy coverage for the new RSS, but it is not always clear how far the document should go in extending its coverage beyond core spatial planning functions to include all issues related to land use or the depth to which any of these possibly relevant issues need to be addressed (Pearce & Ayres, 2006).

Such confusion has been compounded by the perennial problem of a lack of mechanisms to resolve conflicts between the main strategies, leading some to suggest in the past (Baker, *et al.*, 1999) that this possibly resulted in a lowest common denominator approach to policy making in the regions; a factor which still may hold true today. This lack of regional coherence is compounded by strong vertical policy sector links that are maintained from the centre down to the region, resulting in weaker horizontal regional cross sector links (Stephenson & Poxon, 2001). For example, responsibility for the RESs and RSSs rests with two different SoSs.

One of the government's main approaches to dealing with policy incompatibility has been to place sustainable development at the heart of spatial planning frameworks (see for example, ODPM, 2005a), as a powerful integral coordinating mechanism to aid the integration of spatial policy and the removal of incompatibility. But as pointed out by Tewdwr-Jones (2002), this could be interpreted as a way of saying that it is up to the regions to resolve such conflicts. In this context, it may therefore be possible that the government is passing down to regions the task of joining up, rather than being more proactive in this regard at the centre. As was illustrated in Chapter One, a crucial problem with joining up at the centre, however, has been the manner in which government departments relevant to the regional spatial planning project have chopped and changed over the course of the past twelve years.

There is little research to date on the vertical relationships between the emerging LDDs and RSSs, as the former are still in production, and it will take time to see how these policy scales fit together and address (or not) previous barriers encountered in this regard. At a more strategic sub-regional level, a similar conclusion can be reached in relation to sub-regional spatial strategies. Recently, however, increasing attention to functional sub-regions such as city regions and polycentric development has been noted (Docherty *et al.*, 2004) as emerging useful integral coordinating mechanisms. This was originally influenced by the ESDP (CEC, 1999) and was subsequently suggested as a model for development of cities in the north of England's *The Northern Way* (ODPM, 2004b). It is probable that the failure of the model of devolved and directly elected RAs in England and the success of the London city-region model, with a directly elected mayor, has helped to bring this approach to the fore. Indeed, since the DCLG was formed in 2006, it has emphasised



city regions, as opposed to just GO regions. It will therefore be interesting to see how this policy is taken on board, if at all, in RSSs and whether this will be centrally driven or a response from within the regions (Counsell *et al.*, 2007; Docherty *et al.*, 2004).

RSDFs have provided some assistance in integrating regional spatial policy and in this way have acted as a type of overarching regional strategy. To assist in their application, some regions have produced Integrated Appraisal Toolkits to support sustainability appraisal of policy at key stages in strategy preparation processes. In addition to this, three regions, namely the EM, the SE and Yorkshire and Humber (Y&H) have produced guidance on using RSDFs in formal SA (Counsell *et al.*, 2007). The EM was the first to do so, producing *A Step by Step Guide to SA* (EMRA, 2000), in addition to being the first to produce a higher level RSDF, which it called an Integrated Regional Strategy (IRS). Although this was promoted by central government as good practice to effectively integrate regional policy, it did not manage to reduce tensions, as was witnessed at the EIP for the last RPG in the EM (Counsell *et al.*, 2007). Such problems give an indication of the barriers faced by RSDFs in effecting the sustainable integration of regional policy and the problems encountered with integrating spatial policy more generally. A report to the SW RA in 2002 listed a number of obstacles in this regard, including siloed thinking, short termism and insufficiently developed partnerships (Cooper Simms, 2002).

More recently the production of REDs in order to avail of RFAs could also be described as providing a type of overarching regional framework or strategy. The manner in which they require regional spatial policy to be prioritised for funding has assisted in ensuring a more coherent approach to the implementation and therefore integration of regional spatial policy.

### **B). Actors and Organisations**

The RA, as the RPB, faces a fragmented regional actor/organisation network in attempting to draw together spatial policy in the RSS. The range of policies and actors involved creates potential for conflicts (Tewdwr-Jones, 2002). This is made more difficult due to the ambiguous relationships between regional organisations (Roberts & Baker, 2006). For example the DA needs RA approval for the RES, but

both organisations are mutually dependent on each other to achieve the region's collective goals, leading to accountability problems (Pearce & Ayres, 2006). This has led some academics to revisit the connected issue of the need for a directly elected body, without which the new regional planning arrangements may prove temporary (Roberts & Baker, 2006). Either way, however, each RPB still has to face the difficulty of developing consultation, dialogue and relevant joint working relationships, which are part of the cultural change that is involved in integrating regional spatial planning (Pearce & Ayres, 2006). In its essence, the joining up of the work of spatial planning organisations and the intentions of their plans, involves building dialogue between individual actors, who represent different professional institutional cultures. In this sense the cultural change involved here does not just mean dialogue, but also dealing with different data bases, different methodologies and different assumptions and associated prioritisation of policy detail (Counsell *et al.*, 2007). Taking account of these perspectives, it is possible to discern, that despite what may be very critical and high expectations at too early a stage in the reform process (Tewdwr-Jones, 2002), some progress has been made in the capacity for integrating spatial actors and organisations.

Along with the RAs and DAs, the GOs also have a responsibility to facilitate regional policy integration. In general they have working arrangements with both the RAs and DAs, which in recent years have moved beyond policy development to implementation, through for example the joint production of REDs and associated prioritisation of regional transport needs through regional transport boards. Such work, along with RSS development, has led in some cases to planning staff being seconded from GOs to RA planning teams (Pearce & Ayres, 2006), facilitating joint working arrangements. Despite these positive signs, there are also some visible problems. Due to the GOs' quasi-judicial role in relation to RSS, tensions can be apparent between them and the RA. This has led RAs, among others, to criticise the internal working of GOs, such as for example the extent to which their planning teams consult with other government policy professionals to achieve the joined up approach prescribed and the extent to which these other actors have an understanding of spatial planning (Pearce and Ayres, 2006). Much of this is not surprising when one considers that the GOs alone have come to constitute eleven government departments, the policy areas of which have been chopped and changed at national

level over the past twelve years as new departments have been formed. This has left little room for developing a strong spatial planning joined up focus at the national level, leaving much of the responsibility of this to the GOs, which have only a fraction of the resources available nationally. This creates integration challenges when one considers that while RAs have vertical links with the DoT and the DCLG, they have virtually none with other government departments (Pearce & Ayres, 2006) and are therefore dependent on GOs to fill this gap, which can prove difficult due to the GOs' fragmented internal workings.

One of the main barriers to integration appears to lie in the apparent overall lack of clarity regarding regional roles, functions and priorities. As a result, since engagement takes time and resources, if the benefits of doing so are unclear, it is much less likely that policy and related professional differences will be overcome and suitable working arrangements established (Baker Assocs. *et al.*, 2006). This assertion is supported by Short *et al.* (2006), who argued that sectoral interests would only engage with regional institutions if they were aiming towards clear regional ends. They point for example to business interests who have been slow to develop a meaningful regional capacity and have tended to interact with the regional agenda at the national level instead.

Related to this point of confusion surrounding inclusion, is the sheer range and number of stakeholders in general that can potentially be involved in consultation for RSS development and the management of expectations that these stakeholders may have, so as to avoid potential conflict. The point made at the beginning of the planning reforms by Tewdwr-Jones (2002) still seems to hold true today, that a greater number of stakeholders involved in a broad range of policy coverage in RSS development would inevitably result in policy and actor tension, as the RSS is not the panacea for policy integration that stakeholders may expect. All of this, along with the EIP, slows the process down, making it difficult to reconcile a complex web of interrelated problems and creating unwieldy strategic perspectives. It is this complicated policy landscape that makes it difficult for actors to find their way in joining up, leading to a reluctance to engage and an incomplete knowledge of policy and actor interrelationships. Counsell *et al.* (2007) for example, found that in the

Y&H region, such confusion confounded silo mentalities, resulting in a very low level of awareness of that region's RSDF.

Despite these barriers, Pearce & Ayres (2006) show a commitment among all RAs to consult with a range of stakeholders and that stakeholders in turn express a general level of support for engaging with the RAs. Despite the fact that some stakeholders chose to remain single issue participants and/or defend very localised interests, their involvement in general was shown to be positive, participating in RA partnership and advisory groupings, which RA staff viewed as an important opportunity for closer dialogue and service delivery. Very few stakeholders were individual members of the public making representation in their own right, leading to suggestions that the idea of 'citizen consultation' was inherently tokenistic. An explanation, however, may be that the general level of involvement of this large cohort in region planning tends to be very low anyway (Tewdwr-Jones, 2002).

Stakeholder involvement, however, was not consistent across all regions and in addition to the business community engagement barriers discussed, there was limited input by social partners. The experience of those involved was not necessarily always positive either, as being listened to does not necessarily mean being taken into account and often there was a feeling of a lack of joint ownership in relation to strategies, leading to acrimony at EIPs (Pearce & Ayres, 2006).

Inherent in the development of integrated spatial policy is the necessity to implement and deliver. In this respect, the broad remit of the RSS contrasts with the very limited capacity of RAs to directly control the resources required to achieve RSS goals (Haughton *et al.*, 2010). As a result RAs must rely on other national, regional and local bodies, which in itself involves many of the actor/organisation conflicts discussed. As there is little RAs can do in relation to their power remit, attention in this area has primarily focused on the issue of staffing and resources.

One of the big issues RAs face in this regard is the need for specialist staff, who within RAs tend to be small in number and under greater pressure to perform. Other RA staff can only provide limited assistance of other RA staff due to their lack of spatial planning training or being under constant pressure to perform extra tasks for

central government (Pearce & Ayres, 2006). In some respects this mirrors the internal situation of GOs and relates to the wider problem of planners not only taking account of other policy perspectives, but other policy actors developing an understanding of what spatial planning means to their areas of expertise. This is compounded by time constraints upon planners, a shortage of regional planners in general and the fact that central government micro-manages the limited resources RAs possess (in comparison to DAs and GOs), limiting their diversion into spatial planning if an RA so desired (Pearce & Ayres, 2006). This confounds the work of regional planners, as the real burden of their work is involved in coordination and establishing mechanisms for delivery (Pearce & Ayres, 2006). Positive developments that could assist in this regard include the simplification of cross sector partnerships, the use of common data bases and methodologies for all policy development (Counsell *et al.*, 2006) and more funding for staff. It has also been suggested that there is a need to develop analytical methods and skills to assess the combined territorial impact of sectoral policies that support integration (Nadin, 2006).

### **C). Governance**

As one can see from the discussion of integrating regional spatial policy and actors/organisations, there has been a gradual development since the 1990s of regional governance structures in this regard. Hammond (2003) found that although the drive for joining up was officially from the centre, there was also a strong desire from within the regions to integrate policy and actions. In this sense the regions in themselves could be described as sites of innovation in developing governance mechanisms for coordinating and integrating regional policy, even though tensions do inevitably arise. Supporting this, Haughton & Counsell (2004) found evidence of a less hierarchical and more interactive set of relationships through networking between actors and their respective organisations; building coalitions around shared agendas.

In the conceptual hierarchical sense of governance relationships described above, these evolving approaches to regional spatial planning have developed beyond the 'taking into account' and 'dialogue' approaches of previous RPG arrangements, to the establishment of 'joint planning' and 'joint venture' approaches in contemporary RSS arrangements. This development of closer governance arrangements has been

assisted through RSDFs, REDs and the use of integral spatial concepts and discourses such as city regions, which have more easily conveyed in simple terms the intentions of spatial plans (Nadin, 2006; Baker Assocs. *et al.*, 2006).

The manner in which governance relationships have deepened can also be seen in the increased *scope* of actors and *breadth* of policies that have been brought together, although weaknesses still exist in relation to business and social sector stakeholders. This suggests that while the quality of relations has improved in some respects, for example between land use and transport, housing, economic and environmental sectors, they are more or less non-existent with other sectors. As a result, the institutional capacity for integrated regional spatial planning, even at a basic level, is incomplete. Additionally, although the *intensity* of resources being brought together in relation to RSS implementation has increased, such as for example through the REDs, it is not clear that the *exposure* of the core business or culture of the main constituent organisations, namely the RAs, DAs and GOs has changed in any meaningful way, as exemplified through the fragmented internal workings of the GOs or ongoing conflicts between the RAs and DAs. As a result, although governance relations in the integration of regional spatial planning have moved beyond coordination to integration, in terms of style, they appear to lie at the lower end of joined up integration.

#### **D). *Cultural Change***

The move from land use to spatial planning has challenged the professional culture of planners to open up and adapt to new ways of working and thinking and to mobilise new networks, challenging the profession to put into practice its long held wider ambitions for the discipline (Glasson & Marshall, 2007). In the regional context this has involved a range of planners, including those previously involved in regional planning in the 1970s, those who were previously involved in structure planning and a range of other planners working in housing, transport, environment, the GOs and DAs, private consultancies, NGOs and national government (Glasson & Marshall, 2007). Together these planners, along with other professionals and stakeholders involved in 'learning by doing', have had to come together at the regional level in a complex process of research and strategy creation, under severe time constraints. This is a tall order for any professional culture expected to change

and adapt, and those involved have had to hit the ground running. The need for rapid up-skilling in this respect was underlined by the Egan review (ODPM, 2004c) and by Barker (2006). Such rapid change inevitably implies tensions and conflicts as regional spatial planners break new policy ground and attempt to meet the large degree of expectation that the new system places on them.

Shaw (2006) recognises the role of leadership and its associated skills as being crucial in a period of cultural change within any organisation or profession. Leadership is particularly important as there are likely to be unintended consequences of cultural change without strong leadership embedded. The abandoning of elected RAs in England has implications in this respect, in particular, the strength of leadership within RAs and the ability of this to guide planners through this period of change. As a result the calibre and capacity of planners is very important in this context along with a willingness to learn by doing (Shaw, 2006).

One of the key points of tension regarding cultural change within the new system of planning is the plethora of ever-expanding government initiatives, requirements, targets, *etc.* which planners have to address. This severely curtails an already limited resource base and places great pressure on the skills of planners not only to perform these tasks, but also to internalise the new planning practices expected of them. Following from this Shaw (2006) recognises the skills and capacities of planners as crucial in adapting to cultural change within the new system and that resource inputs are vital in this respect. He also acknowledges, however, that this is a gradual process and that expectations need to be managed. Connected to the need for resources, as pointed out by Barker (2006), is an acute shortages of planners within the public sector due to a drop in the numbers being qualified and competition with the private sector for recruitment. The government, however, has made strides in dealing with this shortage through working with professional bodies such as the RTPI, who have been similarly promoting the agenda of cultural change. This has involved the streamlining of professional planning courses so as to fast track planners into the job market and has been supported by a number of DCLG bursaries from the Planning Delivery Grant, as was proposed by Barker (2006). In addition, the government set up the Academy for Sustainable Communities in Huddersfield, (now incorporated into the Homes and Communities Agency,) to address the range of skill gaps within

spatial planning and sustainable communities more generally. It is hoped that all of these approaches will help to build capacity within the profession and assist planners in doing things differently. In order to change, spatial planners will have to address a number of barriers, which Shaw (2006) describes in relation to cultural change in spatial planning at local government level, which are also echoed in the difficulties faced by regional spatial planners. These include information and task overload; procedural uncertainty with the new system; a lack of tested models and precedent; poor sequencing of government advice; uncertainty regarding the scope and purpose of spatial planning at a national, local, and regional level; and tensions between the differing rigour and degree of public scrutiny for the RSS as opposed to other regional strategies, such as the RES. It will be interesting to see the degree to which these hold true in the cases studied.

## **2.6 CONCLUSIONS**

The purpose of this chapter was to address the study's first objective of exploring the emerging concepts and contexts of spatial planning and public policy integration within the English regions in the context of spatial planning policy and actors/organisations. This began with an exploration how land use planning has been recast as spatial planning, requiring it to bring together a broad range of the spatial aspects of public policy and tie these together in the development and delivery of territorial strategies. Two main drivers in the emergence of spatial planning were considered, namely influences from Europe and the influence of sustainable development.

The regional level was then explored as a specific scale at which spatial planning policy is being integrated. The manner in which regions have come to be defined in England, as a problem and as a solution was considered briefly in a historical and contemporary context, in addition to an overview of the many drivers in this regard. Although no single regional problem was identified, the 'regional imperative' (Wannop, 1995) was recognised, justifying why central government has consistently returned to it as a means of addressing economic and social inequalities.



Following this a comprehensive framework to conceptualise integrated spatial planning in the context of this study was set out. This began by noting that integrated spatial planning is planning that is becoming spatial, an ongoing and never ending process in the development of spatial planning. In this way, it suggests a new paradigm for planners in England, who must work on an ongoing basis with the spatial aspects of other public policies and their respective professionals. In order to bring greater conceptual and linguistic clarity to the discussion, a number of useful general lenses, typologies and theoretical perspectives were brought together to develop an appropriate conceptual framework for the study of integrated regional spatial planning. General lenses considered were territory, in a physical and 'field of action' sense, and frames of reference in the sense of the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development. Following from this the integration of spatial planning was typologised in terms of styles of integration, along with the integration of spatial policy and spatial actors/organisations. Styles of integration considered basic coordination approaches to much more involved integration techniques which encompass actual delivery. Against these styles hierarchies of policy and actor/organisation integration were developed, illustrating the varying degrees of closeness that may occur in spatial policy development. In order to allow for more in-depth understanding, the conceptual framework was then completed using theoretical perspectives drawn from governance, complemented by new institutionalism and a post-structural conceptualisation of cultural change.

The final section of this chapter provided a historical and contemporary overview of developments in regional spatial planning over the course of the 1900s and into the 2000s. In a historical context this illustrated that regional spatial planning is nothing new. Since its genesis in the late 1920s regional planning has waxed and waned, but the necessity of regional planning has always ensured that it came back to prominence and each time it did so with a much stronger expression of intent and coherence. From the bottom-up JTPCs of the 1920s and 30s to the top-down REPCs in the 1960s and 70s, planning as a profession has gradually built up a regional and sub-regional institutional competency, providing a more solid cultural and experiential basis to build upon with each subsequent resurgence of regional spatial planning. Although these earlier experiments in regional planning were predominantly nothing more than advisory and essentially just coordination, the

contemporary evolution of regional spatial planning has pushed the practice into the realm of integration. This has been accompanied by the evolution of more complex governance arrangements, which in itself has proved more problematic for the profession, requiring new working arrangements, skills and practices which have entailed a cultural change professionally.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Methodologies, along with conceptual frameworks are in the broadest sense concerned with the establishment of knowledge and how this can be validated in the eyes of others. This involves the development of a research strategy, which sets out how the study will be designed and conducted, what assumptions, if any, are inherent in this and what combination of research techniques will be utilised (Miles & Huberman, 1984; Bulmer, 1977). It is important to note at this point that theory and general methodology intertwine at all stages in the research process, so that the conceptual framework discussed in the previous chapter has influenced the method and techniques employed; an implicit point in much sociological inquiry (Bulmer, 1977).

The methodology set out here has also been chosen in order to meet each objective and fit comfortably, in an ontological and epistemological sense, with the conceptual framework. In this sense, the research aim and objectives have dictated the methodology of investigation and the manner in which it was deployed (Bulmer, 1977). This involved such issues as keeping an open mind about the steps to be taken, while articulating the grounds on which they were taken in relation to representativeness, reliability and validity; and justifying the combination of techniques involved (Bulmer, 1977).

This chapter therefore sets out to fulfil the second part of Objective Two, namely to develop a methodology appropriate to examining the integration of regional spatial policy and actors in RSS development. In doing so this chapter begins by discussing the role of an interpretative approach, which is crucial in this study as it provides a bridge between the conceptual framework discussed in Chapter Two and the methodological approach laid out here. The main method of comparative case studies is then discussed, followed by an examination and description of the methodological tools used to gather evidence. These data collection techniques consist of

institutional mapping, documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews. Ethical considerations in undertaking the methodology are considered throughout the chapter.

### **3.2 THE INTERPRETATIVE APPROACH**

A crucial aspect of the conceptual framework of this thesis is that meanings, understandings and beliefs have a relationship to actions (Bevir & Rhodes, 2003). In order to understand the developments of the RSS in substantive and procedural terms, it is necessary to capture the beliefs of the individuals involved. Individuals' beliefs exist in the context which forms them; in this case an episode of regional spatial planning. The interpretative approach offers the opportunity to explore participating actors' understandings of the context within which they shape policy, as well as their understandings of the spatial policies they are attempting to integrate (Galsson & Marshall, 2007). This research therefore uses the interpretative approach to explore how actors self-describe the contexts and structures within which they operate and goes some way to illustrating how these self-descriptions may influence policy. This process by which policy then develops gives rise to further self-descriptions by other actors (see discussion by Denzin, 2002). The interpretative approach therefore deems it been necessary to compare, contrast and conjoin descriptions of individual's beliefs with those of other actors. In this way one gains a more valid understanding of the way narratives of policy formulation and adoption are produced.

In this context, however, it is important to consider Bevir & Rhodes' (2003) statement that:

“...individuals may not be fully aware of why they act the way they do, and even if they were, it is unlikely they would be willing to own up to all the beliefs that inform their actions.”

(Bevir & Rhodes, 2003, p.193; see also Huberman & Miles, 2002).

One way of dealing with this, which complements the institutional and agency discussion in the previous chapter, has been to employ the interpretative approach specifically developed by Bevir & Rhodes in their work on governance (2003),

which in turn complements the core theoretical governance lens of the conceptual framework. Bevir & Rhodes (2003) have used this interpretative method to understand how elite civil service actors conceived of the governance processes in which they operated and how these perceptions shaped their reactions to and therefore the reality of civil service reform in England in the 1980s. In public policy, sustainable development provides a good example of how a policy can be conceived and interpreted in vastly different ways, across different policy sectors and levels of government, leading to differential emphasis in responses that range from deep green to ecological modernism (Naess, 1998).

Applying a governance model of the interpretive approach to an investigation of the RSS allows for the discovery of discourses, ideologies and traditions that underpin (Bevir & Rhodes, 2003) the development and subsequent implementation of the strategy (Healey 2006). This understanding is needed, according to Healey (2006) because of the ways in which it has been difficult to conceptualise contemporary planning practices. Therefore Healey (2006, p.6) has suggested that in order to achieve this understanding there is a greater need to “have a detailed appreciation of the nature of individual action and agency in the context of the broader forces which drive the flow of action” not only within the planning field, but also within the context in which spatial planning is intended to work. The interpretive approach therefore allows for the development of a better understanding of these practices from the interpretations of the actors involved and can provide a basis from which old policies may be improved and new policies may be better integrated into planning practice as a whole.

It is important, however, to consider that interpretative approaches may go too far in rejecting the idea that institutions influence behaviour and that ideas can have motivating power, as suggested by Bevir & Rhodes (2003). Hay (2004) tempers this approach, suggesting that perceptions of the world, which may be inaccurate from the point of view of others, can structure behaviour. In order to keep a critical possibility that behaviours can be accounted for by ways other than descriptions of actors, one should not go too far in asserting the supremacy of an individual’s story. Important here is the guiding framework of institutionalism, that institutions can have effects on constraining behaviours.

From this approach to interpretivism one can see that narratives alone cannot necessarily account for understanding a policy process, regarding either development or implementation (Finlayson, 2004). So in order to develop accounts of how policy emerges from a given context, one must synthesise interpretivism with the insights of governance as an organising framework and as discussed, institutionalism, in addition to the spatial policy and actor/organisation typologies discussed. Only looking at one element of the policy map, such as actors' self-descriptions, may result in only a partial understanding of policy, both in terms of the structures from which policy emerges, the form policy takes and the content of that form.

Therefore the theoretical grounding for this research is institutionalism supplemented by the concept that policy often involves a variety of actors, who exist within structures which may vary across geographic and policy areas (governance). This study has therefore employed a comparative case study method, which utilises the following data collection and analysis techniques:

- Institutional mapping
- Documentary analysis
- Semi-structured interviews

These will now be explored, before progressing to consider the findings of the research.

### **3.3 COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.3.1 Understanding Case Studies**

Case Studies are used to understand complex social phenomena (Yin, 2003). They prove useful in understanding how and why particular phenomena have occurred, where the researcher has no control over the actual behavioural events. They tend to focus on contemporary, real life contexts, such as episodes in spatial planning, allowing for direct observations and interviews that illuminate contextual conditions (Yin, 2003). In the context of this research the cases studied examined are explanatory, exploratory and descriptive (Yin, 2003), and are influenced by their episodic regional spatial planning nature and the typological, governance, new

institutionalism and cultural change conceptual framework adopted. It is important to note that case studies tend to be generalisable to theoretical propositions and not to a general population or universe, as cases are not sampling units in the quantitative sense (Yin, 2003).

The comparative case study approach adopted here is both procedural and substantive, which provides greater validity to findings as opposed to the use of a single case study. This is reinforced through the use of multiple qualitative techniques, allowing data to converge in a triangulated fashion (discussed below) (Yin, 2003). The units of analysis are episodes in regional strategy preparations, including consideration of both the policies produced through RSSs and the spatial planning actors and their respective organisations involved (Yin, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1984). Both the research aim and objectives, and resulting literature review and conceptual framework have influenced the choice of units and all of these together in turn have influenced the research design and data collection strategy (Yin, 2003). As a result there is a correlation between the defined units of analysis and the defined phenomena being studied (Yin, 2003), which in the context of this research is the RSS preparation process.

### **3.3.2 Case Study Design and Selection**

Drawing on Bulmer (1977) it has been possible to conceptualise the case study approach used in this thesis. The case study has used a sociological, non-experimental design, to assist in understanding the meanings and interpretations that regional spatial planners and stakeholders attach to the RSS as a document and a process, in the context of integrating regional spatial policy. The episodic nature of the cases studied provide a 'snap-shot' at one particular point in time, after publication of two draft RSSs for their respective EIPs. This has enabled a static case comparison, where the data is collected from two groups of regional planners and their respective RSSs, across two English regions, which differ in their exposure to a particular variable, *i.e.* their respective RSS preparation processes. As a result casual inferences can be made by comparing various characteristics across the cases studied. In essence, this research has used a holistic, comparative, multiple-case design (Yin, 2003).

The execution of this case study design and the choice of units of analysis were time and resource dependent. The NW and EM RSS processes were chosen as the units of analysis. The former region was selected for two reasons. Firstly it was the GONW, which had obtained the ODPM/DCLG CASE award for this study, required that this region be included in the analysis. Secondly, prior to the introduction of RSSs, the NW was also one of the few regions in England that did not further develop its RSDF beyond basic central government requirements, towards anything approaching an overarching regional framework in either policy or actor/organisation contexts. As a result, the NW region provided a useful base line of integrative working experiences, or lack thereof, to understand the opportunities and barriers of spatial policy integration in RSS development. In contrast the EM was chosen as a comparator case, as it was the first region in England to explicitly engage in spatial policy integration exercises, originally developing its RSDF in a far more integrated manner than was officially required. The East Midlands therefore provided an opportunity to compare and contrast the cultural resource base they had developed in this respect, with the baseline experience of the NW.

Both cases studied began from the inception of RSS preparation, which had a gradual initialising process from 2003/4, culminating in a 'cut-off-point' in late 2006, when both regions had published their draft RSSs for their EIP tests of soundness and when all semi-structured interviews were complete.

### **3.3.3 Case Studies and Validity**

When constructing and executing the cases studied, issues of validity were considered in relation to their construction (Yin, 2003). This involved consideration of a number of types of validity. Those relevant to this study include:

- 1). **Construct validity:** This was ensured through the use of multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2003), in this case institutional mapping, documentary analysis, semi-structured interviews and relevant academic literature;
- 2). **External Validity:** The use of a conceptual framework and of multiple-cases to assist in generalisability beyond the immediate cases studied (Yin, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1984);
- 3). **Reliability:** Setting out the research strategy to minimise bias and errors, and to allow others to replicate it (Yin, 2003).



Consistency in approaches to the cases studied has also assisted external validity, namely the use of the same data collection and analysis techniques in both cases (Huberman & Miles, 2002). It is important to note here in the context of this qualitative research that the goal was not to produce a standardised set of results that another researcher undertaking the same study would replicate. Instead, the intention was to ensure that if this happened, both sets of findings would not be inconsistent. This is best thought of as a matter of 'fit' (Huberman & Miles, 2002).

Overall validity of the research strategy and findings is ensured through triangulation. This implies choosing several as opposed to just one research technique, which are combined in different ways, to study the same phenomena (Denzin, 1970; in Bulmer, 1977), therefore bringing stronger validity to the research findings (Bulmer, 1977). In other words, such a multi-technique approach produces a higher degree of confirmation, as it assists in overcoming the different biases that can be inherent in any individual method. Such biases are discussed, where appropriate, below, in relation to the various data collection and analysis tools use in this comparative case study methodology and it is to these tools that this discussion now turns.

### **3.3.4 Data Collection and Analysis Techniques**

#### ***A). Institutional Mapping***

Little has been written on the practice of institutional mapping in the social sciences in general, although it is implicit in planning theories dealing with governance and institutions (see for example Vigar *et al.*, 2000). As discussed in the previous chapter, however, the need to identify institutional actors and their policy networks, along with any conflicts and existing and potential links between them, is essential to studies utilising the theoretical concept of governance by networks.

In using institutional maps it is useful to consider Aligica's (2006) suggestion that institutional maps should work within a theoretical paradigm that supports their use. Such a paradigm emphasises social actors; gives special attention to interpersonal relations, roles and processes; focuses more on the analysis and interpretation of institutions, situations and events and less on general laws, regularities and variables;

and takes seriously into account social change, capturing the dynamics of change in real historical time (Aligica, 2006). Many of these aspects share strong commonalities with this study's conceptual framework. Therefore the use of institutional mapping as a methodological technique and the features which will be included, stem from the conceptual framework; its concern with the relations between spatial planning policies and practitioners, their understandings of the policy process and their relations with other actors.

Following from this, any attempt to construct an institutional map therefore depends on the needs of the mapmaker, which in turn will influence the selection of the units of analysis and the tools used to illustrate this (Aligica, 2006). Therefore in the context of this study the institutional maps focus on:

- 1). The national spatial planning context of the region, which sets out the cascade of spatial planning policy from national and sub-national levels, through to regional, sub-regional and local levels;
- 2). The regional spatial planning and organisation context of each region, describing the main regional strategies and their respective lead organisations that relate to regional spatial policy and practice;
- 3). The regional stakeholder context of the RSS, providing an overview of the main stakeholder networks that the RA is required and encouraged to consult with in RSS development;
- 4). The RA's internal structures, setting out the functional policy and actor divisions and how these relate to spatial policy.

Each of these four elements comes together to provide broad brush strokes for the two institutional maps, sketching out the contexts in which each of the draft RSSs were prepared. It should be noted that the maps initially provided at the beginning of the research findings in Chapter Four are not complete in the institutional sense. A comprehensive institutional picture can only be fully developed through consideration of all of the research's findings, including detailed consideration of the integration of spatial policy and actors in the RSS processes, in addition to examining the governance relations and professional cultural concerns that pertain to these episodes in planning.

The basic institutional maps that are initially sketched were drawn up through a number of iterative steps, which involved triangulating a number of data sources. These included:

- The spatial policies and stakeholders that the RA is required and encouraged to include in RSS preparation, as set out in PPS11 (ODPM, 2004a);
- The overview of contemporary English spatial planning examined in Chapter Two;
- The RSS preparation project plans and other process background documentation issued by the RAs;
- The draft RSSs;
- Self-descriptions of the role of each actor from semi-structured interviews.

The institutional mapping exercise is therefore dependent upon two other methodological techniques, namely documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews.

## **B). *Documentary Analysis***

### *1). Understanding Documents*

To understand what one means by documentary research, it is first necessary to define what documents are. May (1997) provides a very useful definition that sits comfortably within the context of spatial plans.

“Documents, as sediments of social practices, have the potential to inform and structure the decisions which people make on a daily and longer term basis; they also constitute particular readings of social events. They tell us about the aspirations and intentions for the period to which they refer and describe places and social relationships.”

From this, one can see that the RSS as a document fulfils this definition. The RSS is intended to inform and structure planning decisions at a regional and sub-regional level in the short and long term and gives one an indication of the types of planning practice involved in its delivery. It is also a ‘snap-shot’ in time of a particular amalgamated perception of social, economic and environmental relations within a particular region and elaborates on this with aspirations and intentions for the period of the strategy. Similar analogies can be drawn with other regional documents that contain spatial planning policies, such as the RES, the RTS and the RHS.

The analysis of documents has received limited treatment in methodological literature, as it has been dismissed, particularly within positivistic contexts as:

“...not a clear cut and well-recognised category, like survey research or participant observation....It can hardly be regarded as constituting a method since to say one will use documents is to say nothing about *how* one will use them.”

(Platt, 1981, p.31 – *original emphasis*).

Plummer (1990) subsequently added to this view by stating that documentary research was crude and impressionistic. But as May (1997) points out, positivism has been criticised for its limited concept of science, unable to live up to its own canons of scientific inquiry, its methods often reproducing and reflecting biases already existing in society. As a result, he progresses to suggest how one needs to examine documents in a different way, to see them not as self-evident, in a positivist sense, but as part of the ways in which truth is produced (May, 1997). As a result documents can be said to not just reflect reality, but they also produce it. In the context of the conceptual framework they could be said to structure reality. They are therefore not neutral artefacts and need to be approached in the social and cultural context in which they were written (May, 1997; Mason, 1996; Forester, 1994; see also Giddens, 1984). This perspective relates to the conceptual framework discussion of documents or spatial plans as being culture; as expressions of the culture of spatial planners. Therefore the more spatial that RSSs are as policy documents, it follows that the profession itself has become more spatial in its thinking and practice.

As documents stand for an underlying social pattern or use value, it is important that we use our own cultural understandings to engage with ‘meaning’ embedded in documents. As a result one cannot read documents in a detached manner, so in the hermeneutic sense the researcher needs to engage (May, 1997). To truly understand a document, however, one must also engage with researching the procedure that came to formulate it and the location of this within a wider social and political context (May, 1997; Mason, 1996). This broader context of RSS preparation is explored through Objectives Four and Five, in Chapters Five and Six respectively.

## 2). *Methodological Approaches to Studying Documents*

As illustrated by Mason (1996) documents can be read in a literal, interpretative or reflexive sense, although the boundaries between such readings are often blurred. Within this a variety of quantitative and qualitative approaches can be undertaken when analysing the content of documents. According to Ericson *et al.* (1991), quantitative content analysis

“seeks to show patterns of regularities in content through repetition and qualitative content analysis.....emphasises the fluidity of the text and content in the interpretative understanding of culture”

(Erickson *et al.*, 1991, p.50)

The quantitative approach is not undertaken here due to its limiting emphasis on product, failing to critically consider the context of production, while negating the idea of a number of possible readings by an audience (May, 1997). Therefore a qualitative approach will be better able to grasp the significance, even of isolated references (Scott, 1990). In this

“.....process the analyst picks out what is relevant for analysis and pieces it together to create tendencies, sequences, patterns and orders. The process of deconstruction [therefore] breaks down many of the assumptions dear to quantitative analysis.”

(Ericson *et al.*, 1991, p.55)

In a qualitative sense semiotics is a popular methodological approach to textual analysis. However, in the context of this study, as content analysis is very focused on the spatial expression and intention of RSSs and is just one part of a wider range of triangulated data, including interviews, the intensive approach of semiotics is not undertaken. The documentary analysis technique used here is therefore ‘illustrative’ where data is selected in relation to its ability to demonstrate general spatial themes which emerge and which can be supported by the use of specific examples (May, 1997; Mason 1996). The manner in which this particular qualitative methodological technique is adapted for this research is described after discussing issues of bias.

## 3). *Bias in Documentary Research*

In the context of documentary research May (1997) suggests that bias may stem from how documents are used and selectivity in their analysis, as opposed to their use in

the first place. This selectivity applies to what is recorded as much as what is left out. In the context of this study, bias in selecting regional spatial planning documents has been limited, as a wide range of the main regional spatial planning documents have been taken into account. Any bias in relation to content analysis has also been limited as such documents have been exclusively used to consider how they integrate spatial policies. Also documentary research is just one part of a multiple technique approach to studying spatial policy integration and the RSS, which further helps to reduce bias.

#### *4). Researching the RSS as a Document*

Taking the former discussion into account, this section lays out the approach to documentary analysis in this research. It is important to first note that to ensure consistency, the analysis of documents was subject to exactly the same degree of critical scrutiny in both cases (Mason, 1996).

The approach used here is influenced by Harris & Hooper (2004) who examined the spatial content of public planning documents in Wales in the early 2000s and in this sense can be described as ‘validated instrumentation’ (Miles & Huberman, 1984). The analysis therefore considered the coordination and integration of spatial policy within the RSS and between it and the RES, RHS and RSDF, as together all four documents comprise the main spatial intentions of regional spatial planning in an English region. The documentary analysis involved four main steps:

- 1). Examining the internal spatial content of the RSS as an indication of how space and place are treated and therefore how coordinated and integrated they are. This involved a consideration of:
  - i). The overall layout of the document and how policies cascade throughout the RSS, from the initial vision and objectives, through to the regional and sub-regional policy frameworks;
  - ii). The overall regional framework, including the key diagram, regional development principles and the regional spatial framework such as the use of settlement hierarchies;
  - iii). The sub-regional framework, including strategic spatial functional area concepts such as city regions that are intend to provide sub-regional spatial coherence;

- iv). References to spatial data such as tables, maps, and other thematic and spatial criteria;
  - v). References to intra- and inter-regional planning strategies and their respective organisations, including cross-boundary considerations;
  - vi). Other general implicit and explicit geographical references.
- 2). Assessing the SA reports, which were published along with the draft RSSs and in accordance with central government advice (ODMP, 2004a) were drawn up concurrently to the RSS preparation processes. These documents assist in considering an additional dimension of integration within the RSSs, indicating how RSS objectives and policies may impact in a positive and negative way on the sustainable development of their respective regions. In the context of the conceptual framework, this approach helps in understanding the ability of the RSSs to coordinate and integrate policy across the frames of reference, *i.e.* economic, social and environmental dimensions.
  - 3). Considering the draft RSS's Implementation Plans (IPs), monitoring and review procedures and associated targets and indicators (ODPM, 2005c & 2005d), which were expected to feed into central government requirements for annual monitoring reports (ODPM, 2004a). These RSS requirements, together with the respective RFAs (HM Treasury *et al.*, 2005) help to illustrate how the coordination of regional spatial policy was moving beyond intentions in the RSSs and other regional plans to integration in terms of delivery through partnership and joint funding streams.
  - 4). The manner in which the RSS was coordinated and integrated with the RES, RHS and RSDF, gives an indication of how the draft RSS was satisfying central government requirements for integration with the spatial aspects of these other key regional strategies. This was assessed through the spatial policy integration typology that was developed as part of the conceptual framework through examining cross-referencing between strategies, the use of integral coordination mechanisms and the role of overarching and integrated regional strategies.

## **C). Semi-Structured Interviews**

### *1). Understanding Interviews*

The interview is a type of qualitative method, in that its starting point is words, as opposed to numbers (David & Sutton, 2004). This emphasis on words reflects the manner in which this research is concerned with the way people understand the social structures surrounding them and create meaning within those structures (Denscombe, 2003), or in terms of the aim and objectives; how planning practitioners in the English regions self-describe their views on the RSS as a document and as a process.

Unlike statistical, quantitative approaches, qualitative interviews produce data on a particular topic, which is rich in in-depth narrative detail. Within this approach, multiple, and often ambiguous and potentially contradictory accounts of the world may emerge. These potentially competing accounts are then subject to analysis by the researcher; in the case of this analysis using the approach detailed below. This view of semi-structured interviews therefore links to the conceptual foundations of the research laid out previously, in particular the interpretative approach.

One of the main problems with qualitative research is its specificity. There is always a danger that findings from this approach will not be applicable to other instances of similar phenomena (Denscombe, 2003). This is why this research makes use of comparative case studies and triangulated data, to enhance the potential transferability of conclusions.

### *2). Executing Interviews*

There can be a range of potential problems in the use of interviews. At the outset, there is the issue of access to spatial planners in both regions and the ability to conduct interviews at appropriate times and places. There are also issues surrounding how comfortable an interviewee feels participating in this research process.

Obtaining informed consent helps in this respect, as it requires full disclosure of the nature of the research project, as well as the intended uses of the interview material (David & Sutton, 2004; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Informed consent also requires permission to be granted for the use of any quotations and allowing the interviewee to withdraw from the research at any time. This use of quotations was not a problem



in the context of this research, as where used, they are not attributable to a specific named individual, but rather to a relevant organisation (where more than one spatial actor was interviewed) or policy sector, within a specific region.

The interview approach used here may produce unwanted data due to its semi-structured format. As a result it proved useful to supplement interviews with other techniques, such as documentary analysis, in order to allow the interviewer to concentrate on detailed and specific questions in the time available, avoiding the collection of data that was potentially available from other sources. This approach was supported through making sure the researcher had existing background knowledge of the topics in question. Preparation was of particular importance in this research as many interviewees, being 'elites' (discussed below), were busy professionals, with limited time to offer for interviews (Young, 2004).

It was also necessary to consider the manner in which interviews could produce inappropriate or distorted information (Briggs, 1994). Issues surrounding this included the familiarity of the interviewee with the interview process, the physical context in which the interview took place, the use of familiar language and concepts and the use of loaded or leading questions to illicit responses deemed most appropriate to the research (Briggs, 1994). In the context of this research, it was found that all interviewees had previous experience of the interview process, having been previously interviewed for a range of different academic, government and/or consultancy research projects.

In order to interview a range of spatial policy practitioners in both cases, issues surrounding 'elite' interviewing were considered. An important problem that commonly arises in respect of such interview subjects is the difficulty of understanding or the gulf that can arise in a technical sense between the experience of the researcher and that of the subject (Briggs, 1994). This, however, was minimised in this research, due to the professional spatial planning background of the researcher, enabling a more informed understanding of the issues covered in the semi-structured interview schedule.

Drawing on Young (2004) it was possible to anticipate potential barriers and opportunities in this respect, so as to ensure a more considered approach to interviewees. This awareness was exceptionally important to the research, as those representatives of regional policy sectors and/or organisations, who had participated in the RSS process, were the only spatial policy practitioners who could illuminate on this episode of spatial planning; all interviewees having been involved throughout their entire respective RSS processes. As a result there were no substitutes, so their cooperation was essential. In essence, they were 'elites' from the perspective of this research (Young, 2004).

Interviewees were chosen on the basis of being RA planning staff and RSS consultees (as defined in the institutional mapping) who had participated directly in the RSS process. All interviewees' policy sector and/or RA spatial roles corresponded in both cases studied to ensure consistency in data collection. This resulted in just over forty interviews. The range of policy perspectives of interviewees and their respective organisations are listed in Table 3.1. In the case of the CsA and EN, which were subsequently combined to form Natural England, interviews with representatives from both organisations in both regions were undertaken prior to the merger.

All interviewees were initially contacted by e-mail, which entailed a detailed description of the study and a request for their participation in an interview. Where replies were not directly received, e-mails were followed up by phone calls in order to establish contact with the subject. Through both means of communication, additional questions that perspective interviewees may have had were answered, including discussing the usual interview caveats such as confidentiality. Times for interviews were arranged and the semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix One), which had been piloted and subsequently refined, was forwarded in advance. All those contacted agreed to be interviewed and interviews ranged in time from forty minutes to two and a half hours. Interviews were mostly face-to-face at the subject's place of work, although several in the EM case were conducted by phone and additional considerations of this approach are discussed below. All interview participants were e-mailed after the fact to thank them for their cooperation, obtain

permission to contact them again if necessary, and to promise them a summarised copy of the research's findings after it has been approved by the study's sponsor.

**Table 3.1: Organisation and Corresponding Policy Perspectives of Interviewees**

Organisation	Policy Perspective
Regional Assembly	Head Spatial Planner
	RSDF
	SA/SEA
Development Agency	Head Spatial Planner
Government Office	Head Spatial Planner
	Housing
	Environment
	Transport
	Economy and regeneration
	Rural Affairs
	Health
Countryside Agency*	Rural Affairs
English Nature*	Environment
Environment Agency	Environment
English Heritage	Heritage
Campaign to Protect Rural England	Sustainable Development, Environment, Transport, Rural Affairs <i>etc.</i>
City-Region Organisations/ County Councils	Sub-Regional Spatial Planning Perspectives

(\* now combined to form Natural England)

All interviews were recorded, so as to provide a 'back-up' for clarification of written notes taken in interviews. In most cases though, the written notes proved sufficient in detail for analysis, which considered the 'spirit' of substantive meanings, as opposed to verbatim data. There was nothing to indicate that the recording of interviews discouraged honest and open detailed opinions, as these were always forthcoming

and all interviewees were comfortable with this approach from the outset of the interview. In addition, it has been reported previously, that recording interviews also tends to make the respondent "...more serious about his/her replies..." (Belson, 1963; in Young, 2004) and indeed there is little evidence that recording interviews in some way diminishes them (Young, 2004). It has been shown that any minor impediments in this regard can be overcome through an in-built microphone (Young, 2004), which was followed during this study, using a lighter sized MP3 recorder.

Time and resources necessitated the use of telephone, as opposed to face-to-face interviews, with some participants. This approach was only used in the EM case due to its distance from the researcher's base. It entailed a number of additional considerations relating to ethics and validity, in addition to those for face-to-face interviews previously discussed. Pertinent issues included the quality and reliability of data obtained, the level of success in eliciting information, the manner in which questions are answered and confidentiality concerns (Thomas & Purdon, 1994).

According to Thomas & Purdon (1994), telephone interviews are at least as successful as face-to-face interviews in eliciting information, although it is fair to say that questions may be answered slightly differently over the phone in that they tend to be shorter, with the interview tending to proceed more briskly (Thomas & Purdon, 1994). Although this was experienced to a marginal degree in the EM interviews, such potential briskness was mostly overcome through taking notes during the interview, which the interviewee was aware of. This provided silent gaps, which the interviewee often took as a cue to provide additional information that was either directly relevant or related. In relation to responses that may have been perceived as sensitive in nature, this was addressed through expressing anonymity caveats at the beginning of the interview. The reliability of this approach was also confirmed through comparison of telephone responses with those of face-to-face interviews that were carried out with the most senior spatial planners in the EM. This provided a control, and indeed a consistency of responses was confirmed across both approaches. This finding is supported by Thomas & Purdon's (1994) assertion that doubts over the reliability of factual information obtained over the phone and its comparability with information obtained in face-to-face interviews have largely been discounted.

### 3). *Approach to Analysing Interviews*

Most accounts of qualitative research tend to explain the management of data, but stop short of explaining how classification and explanation is achieved, *i.e.* how findings are generated (Spencer *et al.*, 2003). This is because, unlike quantitative analysis, there are no clearly agreed rules and procedures for analysing qualitative data. Approaches differ in terms of the basic epistemological assumptions about the nature of the research and the status of the researcher's accounts (Spencer *et al.*, 2003).

Direction here is made explicit through considering the conceptual framework, as there is no such thing as purely descriptive, a-theoretical analysis, as all description involves selection and interpretation of meaning according to implicit and informal theories in use (Mason, 2002). It is also important to consider approaches that remain grounded in the data; permit captured synthesis; facilitate and display ordering; permit within and between case searches; allow systematic and comprehensive coverage of the data set; permit flexibility and; allow transparency to others (Spencer *et al.*, 2003).

The approach to analysing the interview data was adapted from work in this area by Spenser *et al.* (2003) who offer direction on contextualising and drawing out interview data in qualitative analysis. As stated above, the written notes obtained from the interviews proved sufficient in detail for analysis. Examination of the interview notes therefore concentrated on capturing and interpreting common sense, substantive meaning, as opposed to verbatim interview data (Spencer *et al.*, 2003).

The data was reduced into a number of themes or categories that assisted in more easy management for analysis. These categories were dictated by the literature review, conceptual framework and structure of the semi-structured interview schedule and resulting interview notes. Although the categories appear distinctive, they are not necessarily mutually exclusive. The categories included:

- 1). Substantive spatial policy perspectives:
  - a). Views on integration of the draft RSS and comparison to previous RPG;
  - b). Satisfaction with SA/SEA process in preparing the RSS;

- c). Expectations for implementation of the RSS;
  - d). Perceived integration of the draft RSS with the RES, RHS and RSDF;
  - e). Perspectives on how the RSS could better integrate spatial policy.
- 2). Procedural spatial actor/organisation perspectives:
- a). A narrative description of the RSS process, from issues and options to publication of the draft RSS for the EIP;
  - b). Views of the RSS preparation process, including influential factors that drove integration;
  - c). Perception of the horizontal integration between principle regional RSS stakeholders and of the vertical integration of local and central government in the process;
  - d). How a future RSS consultation process could be improved, if at all.
- 3). Professional spatial planning perspectives:
- a). Background of respondent and level of experience in regional spatial planning;
  - b). Understanding of spatial planning and its integration in a regional context;
  - c). Views on the skills required for engaging in regional spatial planning and strengths, weaknesses and opportunities in this respect;
  - d). Perception of cultural change in the planning profession.

The interview data in each category, was where necessary, triangulated with the institutional mapping and documentary analysis. Where this was not possible and competing claims emerged, primacy was given to interviewee statements based firstly on the frequency of a claim, secondly on the centrality of an interviewee's role in the RSS process and thirdly on the level of experience that an interviewee had as a regional spatial policy actor. To ensure accuracy in such decisions, data in each category was retained in context in relation to who made the statement and their role in the RSS process, which was then used as necessary to write up in the discursive style utilised in the findings chapters. In addition to the general discussion of semi-structured interviews, throughout the results chapters, under the various categories set out above, such data was also related to the typological and theoretical aspects of the conceptual framework as necessary. It was therefore through these combined

approaches that a more accurate understanding of the two episodes of regional spatial plan-making became apparent.

This approach to qualitative data analysis was iterative rather than linear. In this analysis there was therefore a constant need to revisit the original data to look for new clues, check assumptions and identify underlying factors, helping to refine the analysis produced (Spencer *et al.*, 2003). As part of this the themes/categories developed have helped illustrate patterns of association and in cases why these occur. Such links were explicit associations, links between sets of phenomena or associations between experiences, behaviours and perspectives (Spencer *et al.*, 2003). This research therefore offers explanations at the level of meaning as opposed to explanations at the level of cause, in the narrow deterministic sense (Hughes & Sharrock, 1997). Here it proved useful to consider Giddens' assertion that in social research, causal and deterministic statements of relations are inherently unstable, as people differ in their ability to make things happen, and that actions often have unpredictable and unintended consequences (Giddens, 1984). As a result this research speaks of different contributory factors or influences, such as situational influences or patterns of understanding, which are offered with varying degrees of certainty depending on the strength of the evidence obtained.

### **3.4 Conclusions**

This chapter has set out the methodological approach utilised in this study of the integration of regional spatial policy and actors/organisations in RSS development. The importance of the interpretative approach as a bridge between the conceptual framework and methodology was discussed, before setting out and justifying the use of a comparative case study methodology and the choice of the NW's and EM's experiences of RSS preparation, as cases for study. The use of a number of techniques crucial to the cases studied were then described. These include institutional mapping, documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews. Each of these methodological tools have come together in an iterative manner to triangulate data collection and analysis, enhancing the validity of the findings that follow.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **INTEGRATING SPATIAL POLICY IN THE RSS: MEANING AND UNDERSTANDING**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter, the first of four to consider the findings from this research, sets out to meet Objective Three, which examines the manner in which regional spatial policy has been integrated in RSSs. The chapter begins with the description of a basic institutional map, which will be built upon subsequently over the course of Chapters Four through Seven. Within this chapter, the institutional map presented at the outset, provides a context for examining the manner in which regional spatial policy had been integrated by early 2007 in the cases studied. Following the institutional map, the coordination and integration of spatial policy will be considered in four contexts:

- 1). An examination of the internal spatial content of the draft RSSs as an indication of how space and place are treated and therefore how coordinated they are in policy terms;
- 2). An assessment of the SA of each draft RSS to consider the coordination of spatial policy in terms of sustainable development and frames of reference;
- 3). A consideration of the extent to which each RSS has provided for delivery through its IP and related RFA, in addition to associated monitoring and review procedures; indicating how RSS policy will move beyond coordination on paper to actual integrated delivery;
- 4). A conceptualisation of the coordination and integration of the RSS as a document with the RES, RHS and RSDF, through the spatial policy typology developed in the conceptual framework in Chapter Two.

In exploring the draft RSSs through each of these four lenses, the views of RSS stakeholders are used where necessary as supporting evidence. It is important to note that although both RSSs reviewed here are draft RSSs, the 'draft' adjective is not used on every occasion.



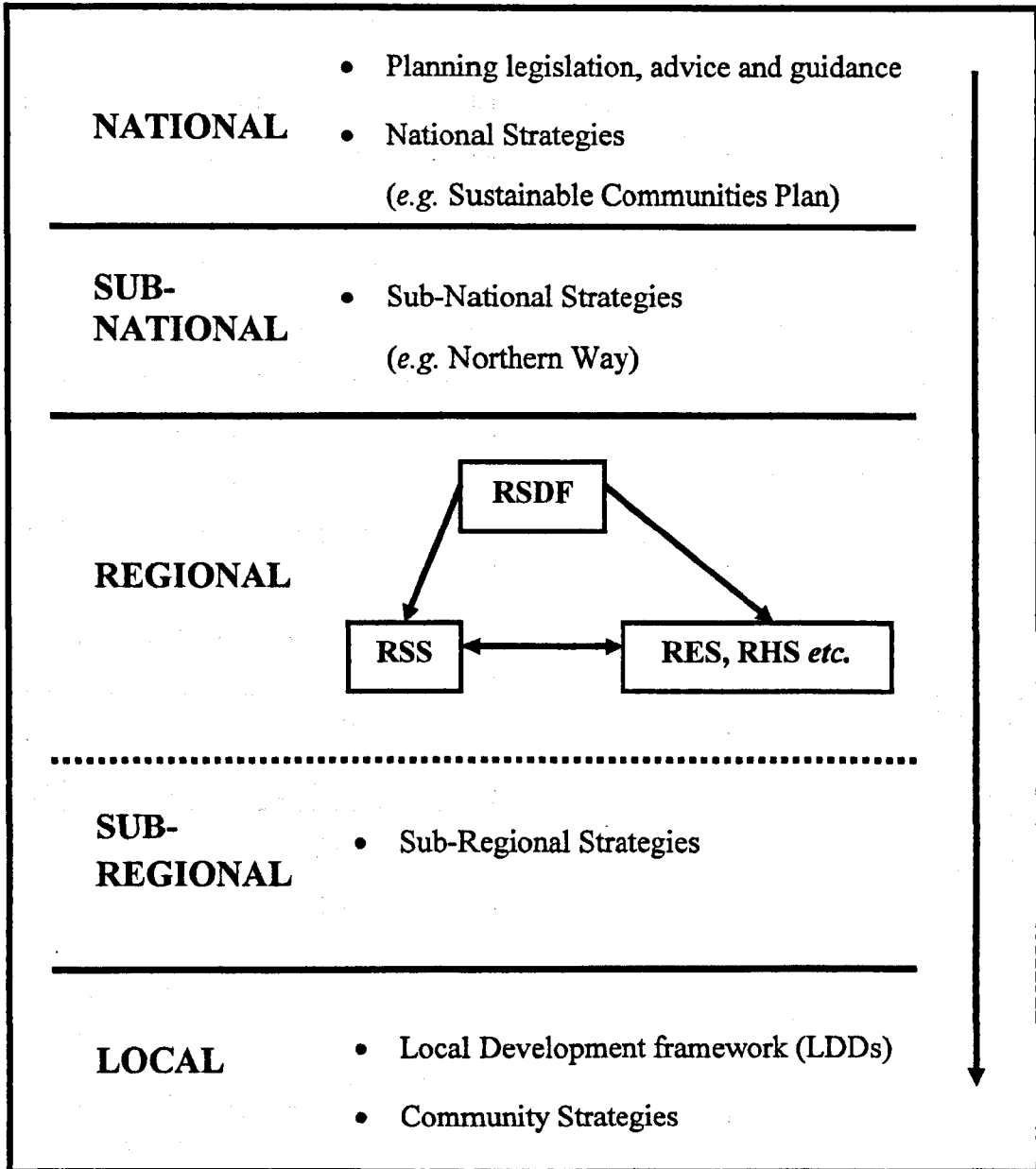
## 4.2 INSTITUTIONAL MAPPING

As stated in Chapter Three, approaches to institutional mapping are dependent on the needs of the map maker. In the context of this study the purpose is to assist in understanding the relations between actors and organisations in two different episodes of producing draft RSSs. The institutional maps will therefore also prove useful in attempting to understand the implications of integrating spatial policy for regional governance more generally. The purpose of this section, however, is not to provide a comprehensive institutional map, as this is something that will be developed throughout the findings chapters. So, in addition to considering the integration of spatial policy in this chapter, a full institutional map can only be achieved through also examining the RSS process (Chapter Six) and the manner in which this process reflects on professional cultural change in regional spatial planning and associated evolving governance structures (Chapter Seven). As a result, the intention here is to offer an initial overview of the organisational and policy structures that contextualise regional spatial planning in both regions, including the working structures of each RA.

Both regions operate under the same general regional spatial planning policy and organisational structures that were discussed in Chapter Two. Figure 4.1 provides an overview of this policy structure, within a national, sub-national, sub-regional and local context. One can see that there is a clear cascade of spatial planning policy, in a vertical, top-down manner. National government dictates planning policy through legislation, advice and guidance, and draws up relevant national and sub-national plans such as the Sustainable Communities Plan (ODPM, 2003c) or the Northern Way growth strategy (ODPM, 2004b) respectively. Together, these national government policies and plans inform the regional and local planning policy structures, which have also been established by central government. At the regional level this is primarily through the RSS and its associated Sub-Regional Strategies (S-RSSs), (hence the dashed lines between the regional and sub-regional levels,) along with the RSDF, which provides an over-arching structure for a region's sustainable development policy. The RSS is a statutory document providing the spatial planning framework for a region and is expected to mutually integrate with RES and RHS

policies. In a similar, but stronger sense LDFs are also required to operate within the strategic spatial policies set out in the RSS (ODPM, 2004).

**Figure 4.1: The National Spatial Planning Context of the Region**



This national spatial planning policy structure provides a background against which to consider the policy context of both regions. Table 4.1 illustrates the broad range of policy strategies that exist in the case study areas. This list is by no means exhaustive list, but assists in giving an indication not only of the range of policy and associated documents that are relevant to regional spatial planning, but also the complexity that is involved in attempting to coordinate and integrate the spatial aspects of such

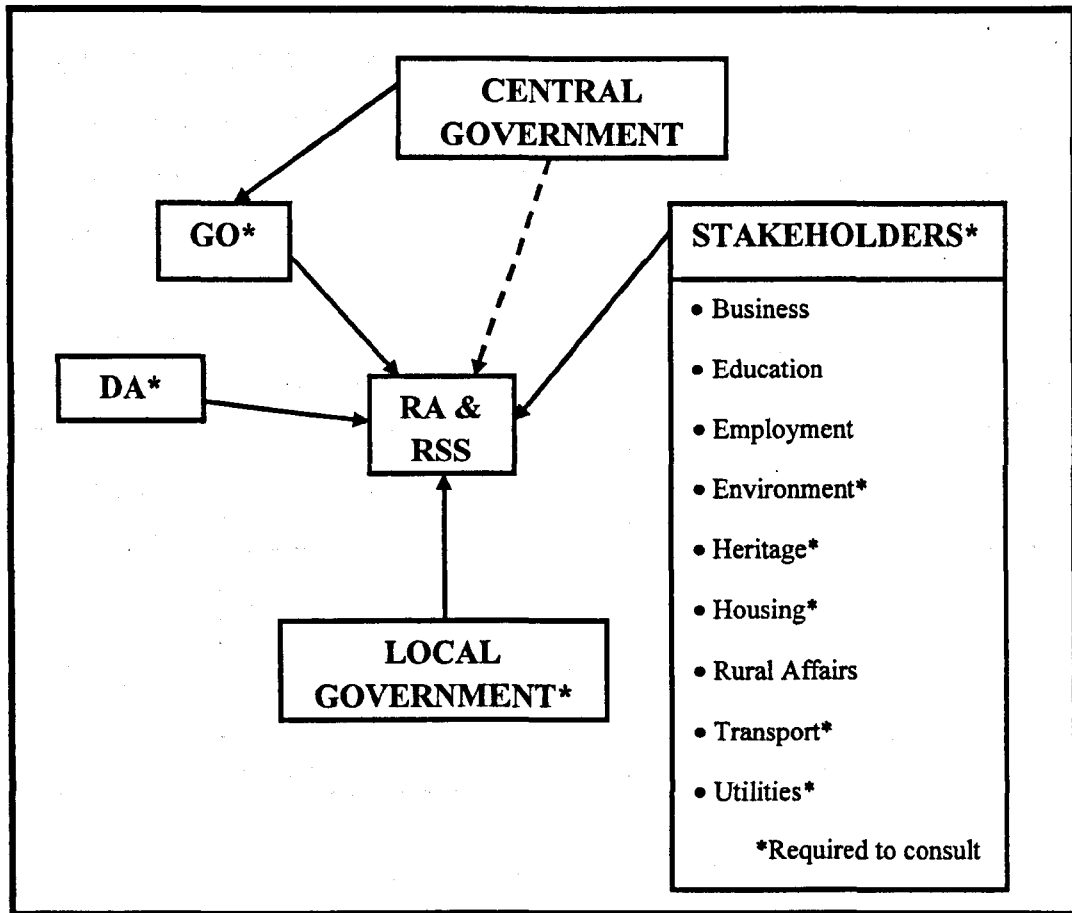
policy, in a balanced manner, to achieve sustainable development. The range of organisations involved in the production of each of these strategies and the complexity of their associated policy networks reinforces this point. As each of these policy documents and networks in turn link to a range of other stakeholders in the region and beyond to local, national and EU scales.

This complex web of policy interrelations in both regions is illustrated in Figure 4.2, which presents the network of spatial policy stakeholders involved in just one episode of spatial policy making; the RSS preparation process. As discussed in Chapter Two, this involves the primary regional stakeholders of the RA, GO and DA, along with local government and to some extent central government. The latter connection is limited by the fact that central government department inputs are supposed to be coordinated by the GO (ODPM, 2004a, Appendix D). As will be discussed in the next chapter, both cases studied indicated that this coordination was sometimes lacking; hence the dashed line in Figure 4.2.

**Table 4.1: Regional Strategies in the North West and East Midlands Regions**

Regional Strategy	NORTH WEST			EAST MIDLANDS		
	Y/N	Published	Lead Org(s).	Y/N	Published	Lead Org(s).
Draft RSS	Y	2006	RA	Y	2006	RA
RES	Y	2006	DA	Y	2006	DA
RSDF/IRS	Y	2005	RA/DA/GO	Y	2005	RA/DA/GO
RHS	Y	2006	RHB	Y	2004	RHB
Environment	N	----	----	Y	2002	RA
Rural	Y	2006	GO	Y	2007	GO
Health	Y	2003	RA/DA/GO/ DoH/NHS	Y	2003	RA
Innovation	Y	2007	DA	Y	2007	DA
Climate Change	Y	2002	RA/DA/GO/ EA	Y	2006	RA
Europe	Y	2003	DA	N	----	----
Culture	Y	2001	Reg. Cultural Consortium	Y	2006	Reg. Cultural Consortium

**Figure 4.2: A View of RSS Stakeholders**



The governance web of actors and policies that feeds into the RSS process is made much more complex through the inclusion of a range of other business, environmental, transport, housing *etc.* stakeholders. Each of these brings a diversity of cultural capital, covering a range of policy areas that draw on their related networks. It is compulsory for the RA to consult those stakeholders marked with an asterisk; although the RA is encouraged to consult more widely to include those policy stakeholders without an asterisk (ODPM, 2004a). This leads to the question as to how both RAs have managed these complex networks in general and in relation to the RSS process more specifically. The first aspect of this question will be considered here, while the second part will be covered in detail in Chapters Five and Six.

The NWRA and the EMRA have cut this complex policy cake in broadly similar ways. Both RAs have (executive) boards that are answerable to RA members. RA membership consists of approximately two thirds regional local government

councillors and about one third Social and Economic Partners (SEPs). The SEPs cover a range of policy interests broadly concurrent with the policy stakeholders listed in Figure 4.2. Table 4.2 illustrates the NWRA policy structure, which it divides across three main boards, the first dealing with Europe and sustainability, the second dealing with review and scrutiny and the third addressing matters related to planning, transport and housing.

**Table 4.2: North West Regional Assembly Policy Structure**

<b>RA</b>	<b>Policy Board</b>	<b>Advisory Group</b>
<b>North West Regional Assembly and Executive Board</b>	Europe and Sustainability	- Equality and Diversity Group - Regional European Partnership - SEPs Group
	Review and Scrutiny	
	Planning, Transport and Housing	- Housing Group - Regional Transport Group - Regional Planning Group

The former and latter boards are advised by a number of sub-policy groups, each consisting of a range of relevant policy stakeholders. It is interesting to note that there is a general SEP advisory group, which covers a wide range of policy issues not addressed in the other groups and is closely networked to the Europe and Sustainability Board to feed primarily into sustainability issues. The NWRA structure has also ensured close networks and therefore working relationships between housing, transport and regional spatial policy more generally.

Table 4.3 illustrates a broadly similar division of policy areas in the EMRA, however, there are a noticeably larger number of more detailed specialist advisory groups, such as for example those dealing with waste, freight and agriculture, under the Regional Housing, Planning and Transport Joint Board, which do not have specific equivalence in the NWRA. The environmental and social groups also illustrate more specific policy detail as opposed to the more generalist approach of NWRA, although in a similar sense, these groups also appear to have strong links to sustainability issues.

**Table 4.3 – East Midlands Regional Assembly Policy Structure**

RA	Policy Board	Advisory Group
<b>East Midlands Regional Assembly and Board</b>	Regional and Communities Policy Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Energy Group</li> <li>- Environment Group</li> <li>- Investment for Health Group</li> <li>- Promoting Sustainable Development Group</li> </ul>
	Regional Scrutiny Board	
	Regional Housing, Planning and Transport Joint Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regional Housing Group</li> <li>- Regional Technical Advisory Board on Waste</li> <li>- Transport Group</li> <li>- Freight Group</li> <li>- Agricultural Waste Stakeholders Forum</li> </ul>

The above discussion helps to illustrate the crucial structural elements of the complex institutional map that constitutes regional spatial planning policy and actors/organisations in both cases, including the networks that link them, both within the regions and also beyond to national and local levels. The national and regional spatial planning contexts (Figure 4.1 & Table 4.1) are testament to the dense range of policy issues involved, as are the policy structures of both RAs (Tables 4.2 & 4.3). Also one cannot fail to appreciate this overall complexity through considering the web of networks involved in the RSS preparation process, which is just one episode of regional spatial planning (Figure 4.2). Having sketched out the basics of the institutional map, this chapter now turns its attention to the draft RSSs to examine the manner in which spatial policy is integrated within the RSS as a document and between the RSS and other principal regional strategies that have broad spatial implications.

### **4.3 THE INTEGRATION OF SPATIAL POLICY IN THE RSS**

As discussed in the conceptualisation of integrated spatial planning in Chapter Two, ‘spatial’ planning by its very nature is integrative and involves bringing together the spatial aspects of all policies that impact on place. In this sense the draft RSSs will be integrative if they are spatial in policy terms and are explicit in relation to how policy will be delivered. It is proposed here to assess RSS policy coordination and

integration through three triangulated steps, which draw in part on the approach used by Harris & Hooper (2004) to assess the spatial content of public planning documents in Wales. The three steps involve:

- 1). Examining the internal spatial content of the draft RSSs as an indication of how space and place are treated and therefore how coordinated they are;
- 2). Assessing the SA of each draft RSS to consider the coordination of spatial policy in terms of sustainable development;
- 3). Considering the extent to which each RSS has provided for delivery through its IP and related RFA, indicating how the RSS will move beyond spatial policy coordination to integrated delivery.

#### **4.3.1 The Spatial Content of the RSSs**

In order, so assess the coordination of spatial policy within the two draft RSSs, it is necessary to consider the spatial policy content of each RSS and the coherency with which this is expressed. This involves a consideration of:

- 1). The overall layout of the document and how policies cascade throughout the RSS, from the initial vision and objectives, through to the regional and sub-regional policy frameworks;
- 2). The overall regional framework, including the key diagram, regional development principles and the regional spatial framework such as the use of settlement hierarchies;
- 3). The sub-regional framework, including strategic spatial functional area concepts such as city regions that are intended to provide sub-regional spatial coherence;
- 4). References to spatial data such as tables, maps, and other thematic and spatial criteria;
- 5). References to intra- and inter-regional planning strategies and their respective organisations, including cross-boundary considerations;
- 6). Other general implicit and explicit geographical references.

It is through considering these spatial elements that we get what Harris & Hooper (2004) refer to as a sense of how space and place are treated; of how coordinated and integrated they are.

### **A). *The North West RSS***

The NW RSS is divided into five parts, with a vision at the beginning. The vision is prefaced with a statement of the physical, economic and transport assets of the region; the social and environmental challenges faced by the region; and ongoing regeneration and housing provision efforts. It then paints a vision for 2021 of a sustainably developed region, with strong economic and social bases and a high quality environment. As shown in Box 4.1 the vision expresses strong spatial intent, referring implicitly to an integrated and balanced polycentric spatial structure, which is expressed explicitly through a city-region model that integrates hinterland and

#### **Box 4.1: North West RSS Vision**

By 2021 we aim to see Manchester and Liverpool firmly established as world class cities thanks to their international connections, highly developed service and knowledge sectors and flourishing culture, sport and leisure industries. The growth and development of the Central Lancashire City Region as a focus for economic growth will continue, building on the existing individual strengths of the urban centres around commerce, higher education, advanced manufacturing and resort tourism. The region's towns and cities will offer strong and distinctive centres for their hinterlands, with attractive, high quality living environments that meet the needs of their inhabitants; our areas of natural beauty will become the setting for viable, rural communities that enjoy increased prosperity and quality of life, without any compromise to the character of their surroundings.

By 2021 we will see a North West that has realised a higher quality of life for all its citizens through improved prosperity, embracing the principles of sustainable development, thereby reducing economic and other disparities within the North West and with the UK as a whole.

(NWRA, 2006a, p.2)

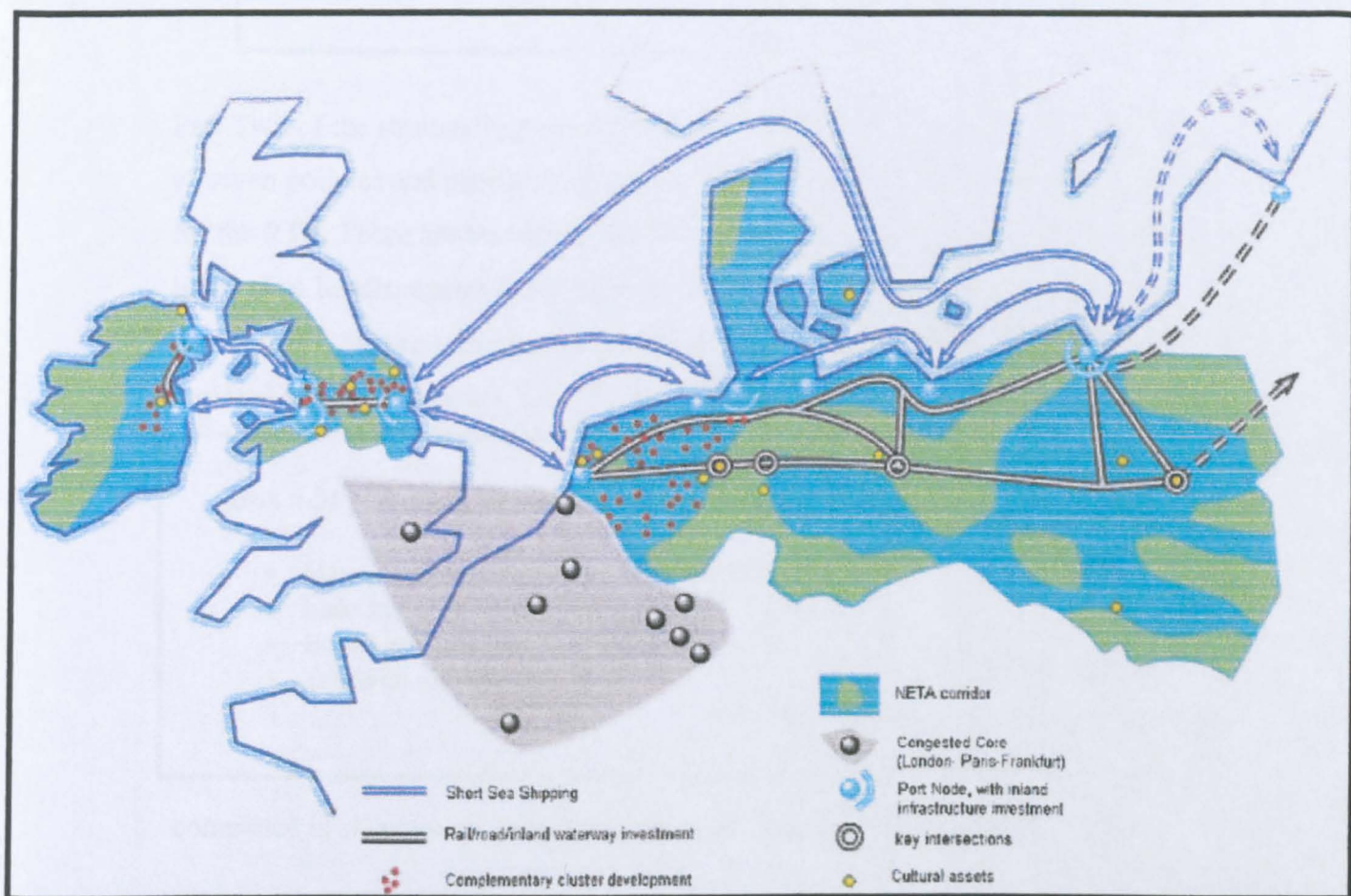
rural areas. In policy terms further coherence is brought to this spatial structure through the stated desire for sustainable development. The timescale of 2021, however, detracts somewhat from the strategic spatial intent of this draft RSS, as it does not provide for at least the minimum fifteen to twenty year time horizon required by central government in PPS 11 (ODPM, 2004a).

The strategy continues in Part One to set out the role and purpose of the RSS and its relationship to the RTS. The general strategic and policy context of the NW region is then described. Strategically the region is placed in the context of the North



European Trade Axis Corridor and the North of England, but as demonstrated in Figure 4.3, the map representing this area is vague in terms of information and in a visual sense is difficult to read as it appears fuzzy. The strategic opportunities of each of the

**Figure 4.3: The North European Trade Access Corridor Context of the NW Region**



(NWRA, 2006a, p.4)

NW's sub-regions are also discussed, along with a general overview of the economic, social and environmental challenges facing the region. The wider policy context of the RSS is then explored in relation to sustainable development and alignment with key strategies within the NW, such as the RSDF, RHS and RES.

Relationships to the national Sustainable Communities Plan (ODPM, 2003c) and the Northern Way (ODPM, 2004b) are also noted, along with recognition of the influence of the ESDP's (CEC, 1999) principles of balanced and sustainable regional development.

#### **Box 4.2: NW RSS Regional Policy Framework**

- Working in the North West: Achieving a sustainable economy;
- Living in the North West: Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society;
- Transport in the North West: connecting people and places;
- Enjoying and Managing the North West: Environmental enhancement and protection;
- Sub-regional policy frameworks.

(NWRA, 2006a, pp.10-11)

Part Two of the strategy begins with a description of the plan's objectives, in terms of seven policies and proposals relating to the RSS and eight policies and priorities for the RTS. These are brought together, somewhat, in an overview of the RSS, listing five headline aims that constitute the regional and sub-regional policy frameworks that are presented in Parts Three and Four of the RSS respectively. The regional policy framework listed in Box 4.2 illustrate a close relationship with the

#### **Box 4.3: NW RSS Regional Development Principles**

- Make more sustainable, transparent decisions;
- Make better use of land, buildings and infrastructure;
- Ensure quality in development;
- Tackle climate change.

(NWRA, 2006a, p.13)

RSS's vision, while again emphasising policy coordination through sustainable development. Similar sustainable development

coherence is also evident in the Regional Development Principles (Box 4.3).

#### **Box 4.4: NW RSS Settlement Hierarchy**

- Manchester City Region;
- Liverpool City Region;
- Central Lancashire City Region;
- Cumbria and North Lancashire
- South Cheshire

(NWRA, 2006a, p.16)

Part Two concludes with the Regional Development Framework which is divided into five main policies. These policies relate to settlement hierarchy, key service centres, rural areas, coastal areas and green belts. Together these

urban, urban-fringe, and rural spatial classifications cover the entire region, emphasising sustainable spatial development criteria, along with general



relationships to other regional, national and European policies. Of particular importance here is the re-emphasis of the vision's 'city-region' concept in terms of settlement hierarchy, which is illustrated in Box 4.4. The hierarchy emphasises the primacy of the Manchester City Region and concurs spatially with the NW sub-regions addressed later in the plan (see Figure 4.4: NW RSS Sub-Regions).

A concern arises regarding the coordination of spatial policy in Parts One and Two of the NW RSS relating to the distinction drawn between the RSS and the RTS. For example, as described above, at the beginning of Part One the general regional objectives are separated into two lists, one list for the RSS and the other for the RTS.



#### **Box 4.5: NW RTS Policies and Priorities**

- Support economic growth and business competitiveness through tackling congestion;
- Support regeneration and reduce social exclusion through the development of effective, integrated transport networks within, to and between the North West's city regions;
- Underpin the gateway functions of the region's main airports and ports through improved surface access;
- Improve the public realm in all the North West's economic centres through the introduction of an integrated range of more sustainable modes of transport;
- Support regeneration, reduce social exclusion and encourage sustainable tourism in rural areas through enhanced accessibility, by integrated transport networks;
- Reduce the wider environmental, social, health and quality of life impacts of road transport and infrastructure through the development of a structured framework for managing and improving the region's highway network;
- Encourage economic development and maximise regeneration potential in the peripheral sub-regions of Furness and West Cumbria by enhancing access to key employment locations;
- Contribute towards the aims and objectives of the Regional Freight Strategy and in particular, facilitate opportunities for increasing the movement of freight by rail and on water.

(NWRA, 2006a, p.8)

This policy differentiation is reinforced throughout the RSS, as all subsequent policies that explicitly pertain to transport issues are marked with the transport symbol, illustrated in Box 4.5. No other spatial policy sector is given this distinction in the RSS, which further emphasises a general sense of fragmentation as opposed to

coordination between spatial and transport policies. The draft RSS therefore falls short on requirements to integrate the RTS into emerging RSSs (ODPM, 2004a). This fragmentation occurred in the NW as the RTS was developed before the spatial framework of the RSS. Despite this explanation, as one can see from the RTS objectives in Box 4.5, there is an obvious relationship between these and the economic, social and environmental objectives of the RSS in general. Many interviewees supported this view, stating that there was a need to ensure that transport concerns were integral to and not a separate part of the RSS. Some of these views are expressed in Box 4.6 and are supported by recent findings by Baker & Sherriff (2009), who observed that RSS stakeholders felt the labelling of transport policies was not clear or consistent.

Part Three of the RSS sets out the detail of the regional policy framework described above, while Part Four deals with the sub-regional policy frameworks, which reflect the settlement hierarchy. Table 4.4 lists these sub-regional frameworks, along with descriptions of their spatial roles.

**Box 4.6: NW RSS Stakeholders' Views of Integrating the RSS and RTS**

“In terms of transport, the resulting RSS is only a little integrated, but not to a great extent....There is the issue of the use of transport policies....This approach incorporates transport into the RSS, but doesn't integrate it....Where the symbol appears in the RSS, it is not clear what it is identifying....Also at the beginning of the document, RTS objectives are separate, but need to be part and parcel of the document.”

(Transport Policy Officer, GONW, 2006)

“The separation of transport and spatial policy in the RSS is reflected by how the DoT issues their own RTS guidance, separate from the ODPM guidance for the RSS. This is not very helpful as this fragmentation in the centre has become replicated in the RSS.”

(Economy and Regeneration Planner, GONW, 2006)

The RSS also includes a separate non-statutory S-RS covering West Cheshire/North East Wales (WC/NEW). This inter-regional strategy supports integrated spatial

policy delivery across both sides of this border, at a local level. It is firmly rooted in balancing the three spheres of sustainable development, providing sub-area spatial perspectives in this regard and addressing the concerns of housing, transport and economic development (Cheshire County Council *et al.* 2006).

**Table 4.4: Sub-Regional Policy Frameworks of the NW RSS**

<b>Sub-Regional Policy Framework</b>	<b>Spatial Role</b>
Manchester City Region	Focuses on supporting the region's economy, the regeneration of its inner-areas, and housing and transport improvements. In this regard, sub-area policies are offered for the inner-areas, the southern and northern parts of the City Region and the regional town of Warrington, covering a range of housing, transport and economic regeneration aims.
Liverpool City Region	Is very similar in aspirations to that of Manchester, regarding the economic, urban and transport regeneration of the city region. It also divides into sub-areas, covering Liverpool city centre, the northern part of the city region and West Cheshire.
Central Lancashire City Region	Described as a polycentric city region and includes the four towns of Blackpool, Preston, Blackburn and Burnley. This emphasises balanced economic development and transport links.
Cumbria and North Lancashire	Sets out overall and sub-area priorities for Cumbria, emphasising the concentration of development and the availability of regional investment sites. Other policies address supporting the local economy in North Lancashire and addressing social pressures in the Lake District.
South Cheshire	Very briefly addresses promoting Crewe as a key regional town.

(NWRA, 2006a)

This WC/NEW S-RS and the sub-regional policy frameworks together cover the entire region (see Figure 4.4) and constitute a coherent spatial perspective that coordinates the RSS's policy framework, within the context of the strategy's development principles and spatial framework. What is most interesting, however, is the manner in which they all revolve around the functional spatial concept of city-regions and implied polycentricity, as set out originally in the vision. In this respect one can see the horizontal coordination of territory and spatial policy across the region, along with vertical coordination from this level through to the Northern Way

(ODPM, 2004b). This document appears very influential in this respect, and should ensure that following the city-region model in the NW will assist spatial coordination with the other two northern regions. There are, however, questions surrounding the manner in which this concept has been applied to the designation of the Central Lancashire City Region (CLCR), as only 12% of this area is urbanised. This led several senior regional planners to question the inclusion of central Lancashire as a city-region within the RSS (see Box 4.7). No such misgivings, however, were expressed within Lancashire. This may be due to the manner in which the CLCR by definition takes a balanced view of the four main urban centres of Blackpool, Preston, Blackburn and Burnley, avoiding any prioritisation and therefore potential local conflict that such prioritisation may entail within that sub-region.

Another important question arising from the NW RSS's use of the city-region concept is the distinction between the CLCR, which the RSS describes as polycentric and the Manchester and Merseyside city regions which it does not (see Table 4.4). Several respondents pointed out that all the NW's city regions are polycentric, the only difference being scale. (see Box 4.7, second quote). In this sense, all three city-regions together could alternatively be viewed as one single polycentric city-region, which was suggested as an option by the senior spatial planner at GONW. For

#### **Box 4.7: NW RSS Stakeholders' Views Critical of the CLCR Designation**

"...[I] question the designation of central Lancashire as a city region. It is not one and it will never be. Preston alone has a [more] significant strategic role....The RSS started out with a coherent city-region model that has now gone too far."

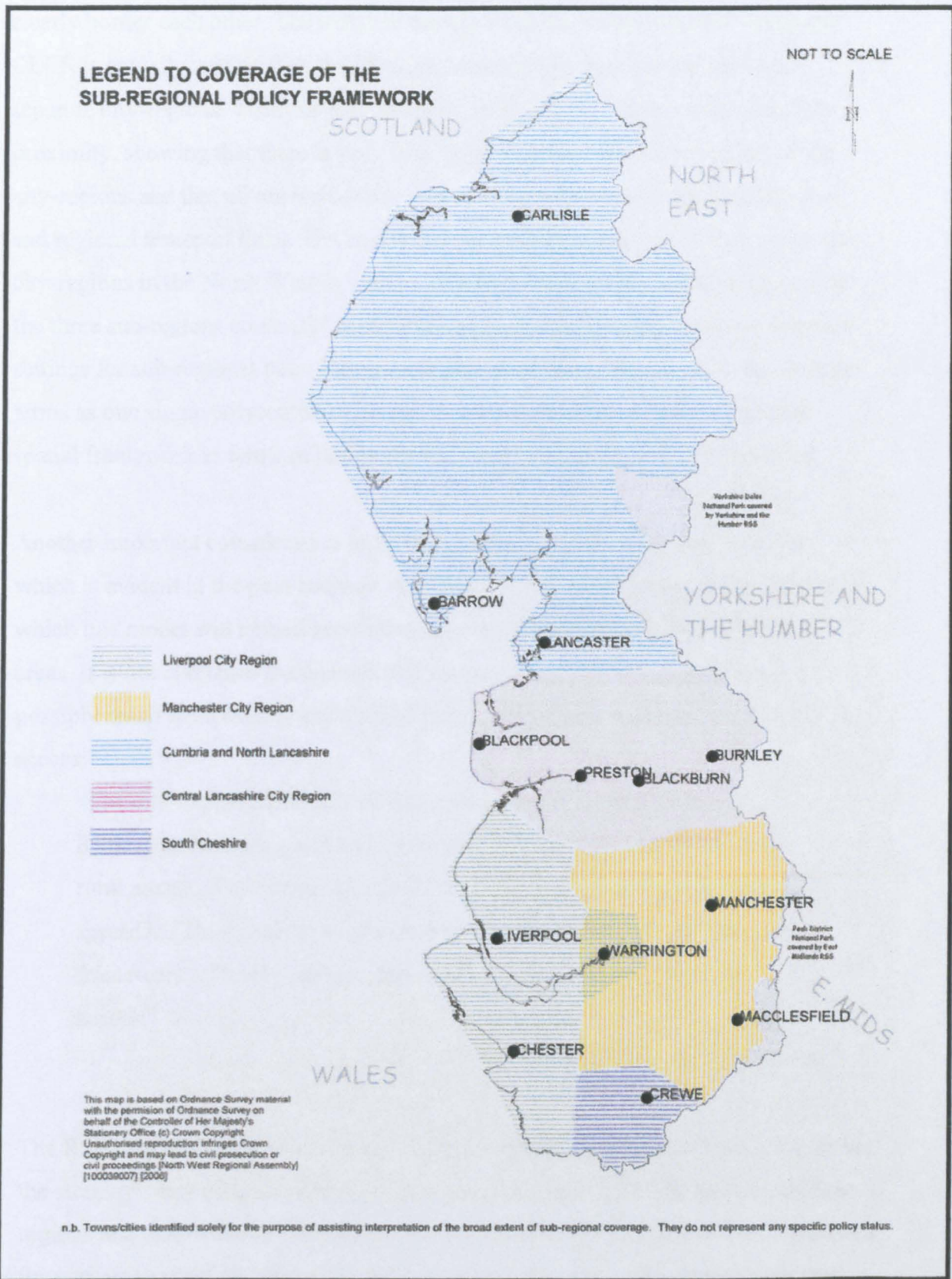
(Economic and Regeneration Planner, GONW, 2006)

"There is the issue of how the Central Lancashire City Region will work....It has no core city like Manchester and Merseyside. Take for example Manchester that has a strategic regional core and is functional and has a polycentric shape, with transport leading to the centre,...so [it] is very sustainable as a city-region...."

(Senior Planner, AGMA, 2006)



**Figure 4.4: The NW RSS Sub-Regional Policy Framework Areas**



(NWRA, 2006a, p.12)

example Figure 4.4 illustrates that each of these supposedly separate city-regions clearly border each other. The distance between Blackpool and Burnley within the CLCR is actually greater than the distance between Liverpool and Manchester; separate city-regions. The RSS Key Diagram in Figure 4.5 also demonstrates this proximity, showing that there is very little separating the core areas of each of the city-regions and that all are well connected to each other by international, national and regional transport links. The continued designation, therefore, of three separate city-regions in the North West is worthy of further consideration. Although each of the three sub-regions could still be considered in their traditional territorial identity settings for sub-regional policy detail, actually integrating them together in strategic terms as one single polycentric city-region could strengthen the RSS's regional spatial framework in terms of policy coordination, integration and prioritisation.

Another important consideration in relation to the use of the city-region model, which is evident in the plan and was raised by several interviewees, is the manner in which this model will spread benefits to the rest of the region, in particular rural areas. It is not clear how this spread will happen and a lack of attention here could possibly result in an overall unbalanced spatial framework in the sense of equity and access:

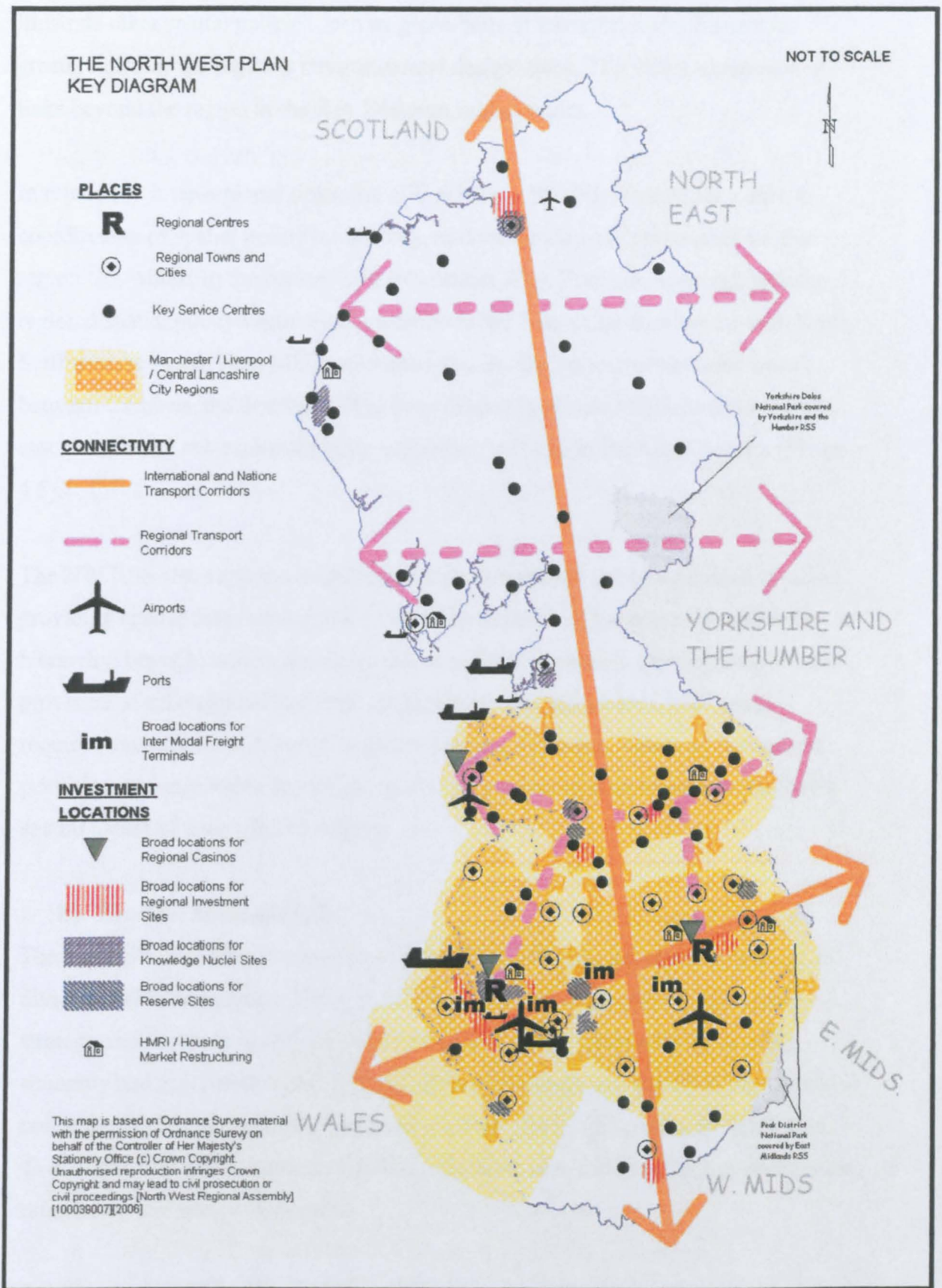
“The city-region model....is an integrative spatial concept in the RSS,...but there are questions. How will the city-region approach help rural areas?...This is not clear [in] the RSS. For example how benefits will spread?...[This] leads to concerns regarding the equity of the RSS spatial framework....[It is] possibly unbalanced....and [there are] issues of access.”

(Rural Policy Officer, GONW, 2006)

The RSS also illustrates a broad range of other spatial components. Figure 4.5 shows the strategy's key diagram, which gives a general indication of the location of city regions and other centres, the connectivity elements of the region and broad locations for various types of investment. Other maps are utilised throughout the document, relating to biodiversity, the road and rail networks and the sub-regional areas. All of these maps, along with those presented here in Figures 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5 are blurred in a visual sense and therefore lack clarity and impact. The use of maps in the RSS in



Figure 4.5: NW RSS Key Diagram



(NWRA, 2006a, p.9)

general, however, appears to be limited in that there is also an opportunity to illustrate other spatial policies such as green belts or transport inter-changes in greater detail or the region's environmental designations. The visual expression of links beyond the region in the Key Diagram is also vague.

In relation to inter-regional links, the NW S-RS for WC/NEW provides a strong coordination of spatial policy in this area, as does the city-region concept for the region as a whole, in the context of the Northern Way. There is, however, an inter-regional spatial policy vagueness in relation to the South Cheshire border with North Staffordshire in the West Midlands region and in relation to cross boarder links between Cumbria and Scotland. This is evidenced by a lack of information in both cases within the sub-regional policy supporting text and in the Key Diagram (Figure 4.5).

The NW RSS also supports its policy content through the use of a number of tables providing spatial data relating to a range of topics such as the region's settlement hierarchy; broad locations for regionally significant economic development and the provision of sub-regional and local employment land; urban area floor space requirements; the distribution of regional housing provision; transport investment priorities; and renewable energy generation targets; all of which indicate the strong spatial nature of policy in the strategy.

### ***B). The East Midlands RSS***

The EM RSS is divided into two main parts. The first part, the regional strategy, is divided into three sections. These in turn deal with the core strategy, the spatial strategy and the topic based priorities or regional policy framework of housing, economy and regeneration, natural and cultural resources and the RTS. Part One also considers the implementation, monitoring and review of this part of the RSS. Part Two of the strategy contains four S-RSs, which are also followed by implementation, monitoring and review intentions.

Part One is prefaced with a background to the region. This introduces the physical extent of the region and the role of the RSS, its intention to cover the period to 2026 and the manner in which its policies have been coordinated in the context of the EM

IRS –(i.e. EM RSDF). A demographic and spatial trend overview of the region is then offered, along with a summary of the main economic attributes of the region's five sub-areas. The background section concludes with an overview of the EM region in a national and European spatial context. In the absence of a national spatial plan for England, the national spatial context of the RSS draws on an English Regions Network report; *Regional Futures: England's Regions in 2030* (ERN, 2005). This report allowed for a consideration of economic and demographic trends, which were then expressed in terms of inter-regional linkages and associated spatial implications between the East Midlands and its neighbouring English regions. These cross-boundary issues were expressed succinctly in one diagram, which is illustrated in Figure 4.6 and lists the primary economic, social and environmental spatial concerns of neighbouring regions that relate to the EM. The European spatial context of the EM is also expressed, emphasising the region's access to Trans-European Network routes, which are illustrated in map form and shown here in Figure 4.7. Although this European contextual map is clearer in a visual sense than the same map in the NW RSS, it is actually more vague in relation to the information displayed.

The core strategy places itself firmly within a European policy context, emphasising the principles of the ESDP; and in a UK national policy context, drawing close links with the policies and priorities of the national sustainable development strategy (DEFRA, 2005). The regional context is expressed through the EM IRS's vision (See Box 4.8), which the draft RSS adopts as its own vision emphasises the overarching nature of the IRS in the EM and results in strong coordination of spatial policy between the two strategies. This vision is very strong and explicit in terms of sustainability, clearly dividing these concerns along economic, social, environmental and spatial lines. The explicit reference to sustainable spatial development differs from the NW RSS vision, which does so implicitly through referring to its city-region models. The EM vision in contrast, however, gives no reference to the polycentric city-region nature of its 'Three Cities sub-area', even though this sub-area is fundamental to this draft RSS's spatial framework. Indeed, the city-region concept is not used at all in any part of the strategy, except when referring to neighbouring region's city-regions that have been identified in other emerging draft RSSs. This is not surprising if one considers the sub-national context of *Smart Growth: The Midlands Way* (AWM & EMDA, 2004), which also abstains



**Figure 4.6: EM RSS Inter-Regional Linkages and Relationships**

**North West**

- Impact of Manchester City Region and the 'Northern Way' on north-west Derbyshire
- Role of Manchester Airport for north-western part of East Midlands Region
- Role of Peak District National Park in relation to recreation needs of the Manchester City Region
- Role of the A628 Corridor through the Peak District National Park in relation to transport routes between Yorkshire & The Humber and the North-West Regions.

**Yorkshire & The Humber**

- Important strategic transport links along M1, Derby/Nottingham-Sheffield/Leeds Main Line and A1, East Coast Main Line and Trent Navigation
- Impact of the Sheffield City Region and the 'Northern Way' on north-east Derbyshire/north Nottinghamshire
- labour and housing market links between Grimsby/Cleethorpes and north Lincolnshire
- Role of Peak District National Park in relation to recreation needs of the Sheffield and Leeds City Regions
- Role of ports of Grimsby and Immingham, particularly in relation to Lincolnshire food industry

# East Midlands

**West Midlands**

- Important strategic transport links along M6/M45, West Coast and London-Birmingham Main Lines, West Midlands-Felixstowe Route M42/A42/A38/M69/A50 and Derby/Nottingham-Birmingham Main Line
- Inter-relationship between roles of NEMA and Birmingham Airports
- Pressures for logistics sites in M1/M6 and A50 corridors
- Motor industry linkages with West Midlands
- National Forest as a key cross-boundary project
- Functional/labour market links between Daventry and Rugby/Coventry plus Hinckley and Nuneaton/Bedworth/ Coventry, and south Derbyshire and Burton/Tamworth/Birmingham
- Role of Peak District National Park in relation to recreation needs of the Potteries and the West Midlands Conurbations

**South East**

- Important strategic transport links along West Coast Main Line, Midland Main Line, East Coast Main Line, M1 and A43
- Economic linkages (motorsport and high-tech engineering) between the Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire
- Functional/labour market linkages with Milton Keynes and Banbury close to the Regional boundary
- Role of Milton Keynes in accommodating future growth, as part of the Sustainable Communities Plan Growth Area
- Impact of South East housing market on Northamptonshire and South Lincolnshire
- Role of Heathrow and Gatwick Airports

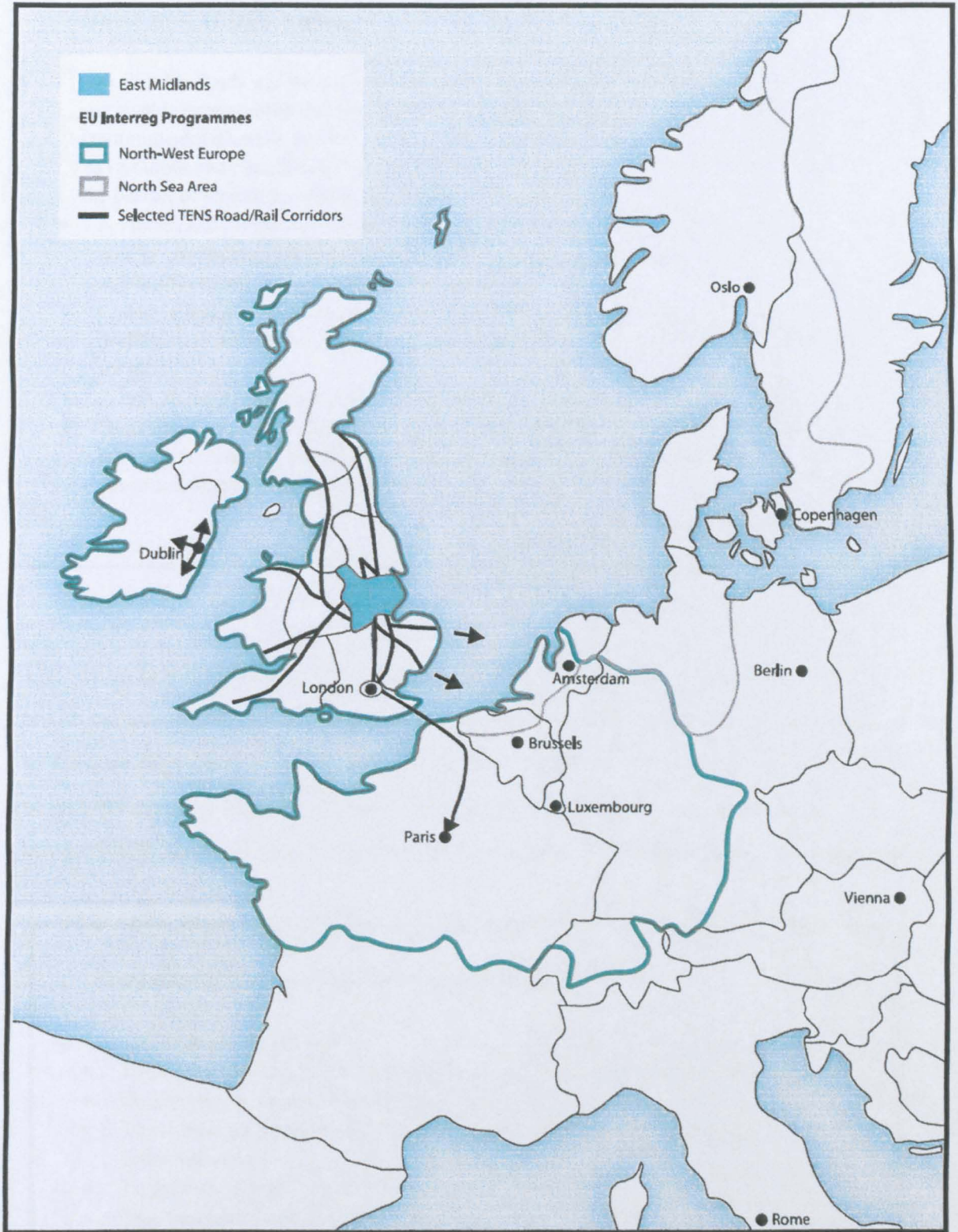
**East of England**

- Important strategic transport links along Midland Main Line, East Coast Main Line, M1 and A14
- A14 provides an East/West Trans-European Transport Network Route and access to the key East Coast Ports of Felixstowe and Harwich
- Role of Felixstowe-Nuneaton Route in accommodating rail freight
- Role of Luton and Stansted Airports
- Functional/labour market linkages with Peterborough close to the Regional boundary
- The Wash as a shared environmental asset and World Heritage Site
- Shared issues of flood risk management with East Anglia
- Shared importance of horticulture and the food industry

(EMRA, 2006a, p.6)



**Figure 4.7: EM RSS North West European Spatial Context**



(EMRA, 2006a, p.7)

from explicitly using the city-region concept, instead referring to the EM and WM regions together as a 'supra-region'.

#### **Box 4.8: EM RSS Vision**

The East Midlands will be recognised as a Region with a high quality of life and sustainable communities that thrives because of its vibrant economy, rich cultural and environmental diversity and the way it creatively addresses social inequalities, manages its resources and contributes to a safer, more inclusive society. This will be achieved for the benefit of present and future generations through the integration of:

- A vibrant and competitive economy with increased productivity characterised by high quality employment learning and skills, enterprising individuals, innovative businesses and improvements in the physical infrastructure;
- Cohesive and diverse communities that empower and engage people, are safe and healthy, combat discrimination and disadvantage and provide hope and opportunities for all;
- A rich, diverse and attractive natural and built environment and cultural heritage;
- Sustainable patterns of development that make efficient use of land, resources and infrastructure, reduce the need to travel, incorporate sustainable design and construction, and enhance local distinctiveness.

(EMRA, 2006a, p.8)

The vision is followed by a consideration of the regions ten core objectives, which are an expansion on the spatial objectives of the IRS. These objectives in turn relate to the core objectives of other regional strategies such as the RES and RHS. The core objectives listed in Box 4.9 expand on the earlier vision and are very strong in sustainability terms. There does not, however, appear to be any explicit carry through

#### **Box 4.9: EM RSS Regional Core Objectives**

- To reduce social exclusion;
- To protect and enhance the environmental quality of urban and rural settlements;
- To improve the health of the Region's residents;
- To improve economic prosperity, employment opportunities and regional competitiveness;
- To improve accessibility to jobs, homes and services;
- To protect and enhance the environment;
- To achieve a 'step change' increase in the level of the Region's biodiversity;
- To reduce the causes of climate change;
- To reduce the impacts of climate change;
- To minimise adverse environmental impacts of new development and promote optimum social and economic benefits.

(EMRA, 2006a, p.9)

of the vision's spatial context, which is expressed in the core objectives in a very tacit manner. This exclusion increase the possibility that only an experienced spatial policy practitioner would be aware of the implied spatial intent of, for example, objectives relating to social exclusion, accessibility or environmental protection. Also of note is that these core objectives differ in terms of integration from the policies and proposals of the NW RSS, in that there is no separation of transport policies.

Section Two sets out thirteen policies that together make up the spatial framework of the RSS (see Box 4.10). The approach here differs from the NW RSS in a number of ways. Rather than having development principles separate from the spatial framework, the EM RSS combines these two approaches into one spatial framework. Unlike the NW RSS, the EM strategy does not explicitly develop a spatial hierarchy at the outset and use this to dictate development priorities; instead it sets out a sequential approach for development in the first policy of its spatial framework. The sequential approach emphasises sustainability, stating that development should first be directed to suitable sites within and adjoining urban areas. This is reinforced by subsequent policies which stress development in the region's five principal urban areas: the three cities, as well as Lincoln and Northampton, followed by its growth

#### **Box 4.10: EM RSS Spatial Framework**

- A regional approach to selecting land for development;
- Promoting better design;
- Concentrating development in urban areas;
- Regional priorities for development in rural areas;
- Development in the Eastern Sub-Area;
- Overcoming peripherality in the Eastern Sub-area;
- Regeneration of the Northern Sub-area;
- Development in the Peak Sub-area;
- Development outside the Peak District National Park;
- Managing tourism and visitors in the Peak Subarea;
- Development in the Southern Sub-area;
- Development in the Three Cities Sub-area.

(EMRA, pp.10-22)

towns, sub-regional centres and rural areas. The failure to use an explicit settlement hierarchy and prioritise between the five principal urban areas is an unusual step in terms of spatial structure and related spatial policy, although the use of

such a hierarchy is not a requirement in PPS 11 (ODPM, 2004a). It is possible that the strong emphasis in the EM RSS on sustainable development justifies this

decision, ensuring an equitable distribution of economic and development benefits to all five main urban areas, as opposed to prioritising one area over another.

Part Two of the EM draft RSS deals with the region's four S-RSs, which are described in Table 4.5. Unlike the NW RSS, these do not cover the whole region and in a spatial sense are not concurrent with the regional sub-areas listed in Box 4.11. Each S-RS emphasises a sequential approach to site selection that reflects the regional spatial framework.

**Table 4.5: Sub-Regional Strategies of the EM RSS**

S-RS	Spatial Role
Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy	This dates from 2005 and covers the whole of Northamptonshire. It was developed after the government identified the area as a potential major growth area in the wider South East, in RPG 9 (DETR, 2001) and subsequently the Sustainable Communities Plan (ODPM, 2003c). It sets out the key spatial characteristics of the area and addresses the scale, timing and location of development associated with employment, transport and other infrastructure, within the context of sustainable development. Explicit housing and employment targets are set for its six growth towns, along with implicit spatial references, for example to health, social care and education. It is also an inter-regional strategy, also forming a S-RS part of the East of England and South East RSSs.
Three Cities Sub-Regional Strategy	This is an intra-regional and covers Derby, Nottingham and Leicester. Its purpose is to guide the sustainable regeneration and growth of the sub-area.
Northern Sub-Regional Strategy	This S-RS is intended to address development issues in urban centres in this area, with particular attention to economic and transport infrastructure development.
Lincoln Policy Area Sub-Regional Strategy	This strategy emphasises the regeneration of Lincoln City in relation to housing, employment, tourism and cultural activities, deprivation and transport accessibility.

(EMRA, 2006a)

As with the NW RSS, these S-RSs come together to provide an overall coherence to regional and sub-regional spatial policy, within the context of overall development objectives, the spatial framework and other relevant sectoral policies. The lack of concurrency, between the RSS's sub-areas and S-RSs, detracts somewhat from the coordination of spatial policy within the strategy and contrasts with the more



succinct and concurrent sub-regional framework expressed in the NW RSS. Such concurrency, however, is not a requirement in PPS 11 (ODPM, 2004a), which states that S-RSSs should only be developed as necessary. A clear distinction has been noted in this regard between comprehensive sub-regional spatial framework coverage in the northern regions of England as opposed to a more patchy sub-regional

**Box 4.11: EM RSS Sub-Areas**

- Eastern Sub-area;
  - Northern Sub-area;
  - Peak Sub-area;
  - Southern Sub-area;
  - Three Cities Sub-area.
- (EMRA, 2006a, p.1)

approaches in the midlands and south (Haughton *et al.*, 2010). This deficit of comprehensive sub-regional policy coverage led some interviewees to express fears regarding the role of rural areas, stating that a gap may open up between rural and urban areas in terms of spatial equity (see for example Box 4.12).

**Box 4.12: EM RSS Stakeholder Concerns for Gaps in Sub-Regional Policy Coverage**

“What is emerging is the difficulty that the present process is having in filling the gap left by removing the structure plans .... The RPG never dealt with this, so the RSS may have to go some way to justify itself.... A lot more sub-regional detail is required, especially for rural areas and smaller settlements.... I have been banging on about this to the RA for some time.... The time given to rural issues in the process was not enough, there was not enough time to do it properly.... A strength in the process should be that you can test the feasibility of the RSS at the sub-regional level... Of course we need more work on this.”

(Regional Policy Officer, CPRE, 2006)

The EM RSS also uses the spatial concept of growth points that emanated from the Sustainable Communities Plan (ODPM, 2003c). These growth points are designations granted by central government to urban areas that made a convincing case for accelerated, additional economic and housing growth and could show how this would relieve pressure on high demand areas and tackle affordability. In June 2006 the government awarded growth point status to Leicester/Derby/Nottingham (Three Cities Sub-Area); Lincoln and Grantham (Eastern Sub-area); and to Newark (Northern Sub-area) (Land Use Consultants, 2006). These designations are non-statutory and so will need to be tested in the EIP as part of the RSS. The RSS also makes reference to urban extensions in Part One and although this is another useful spatial concept, underlining the strategy’s attempt to integrate urban policy, it is

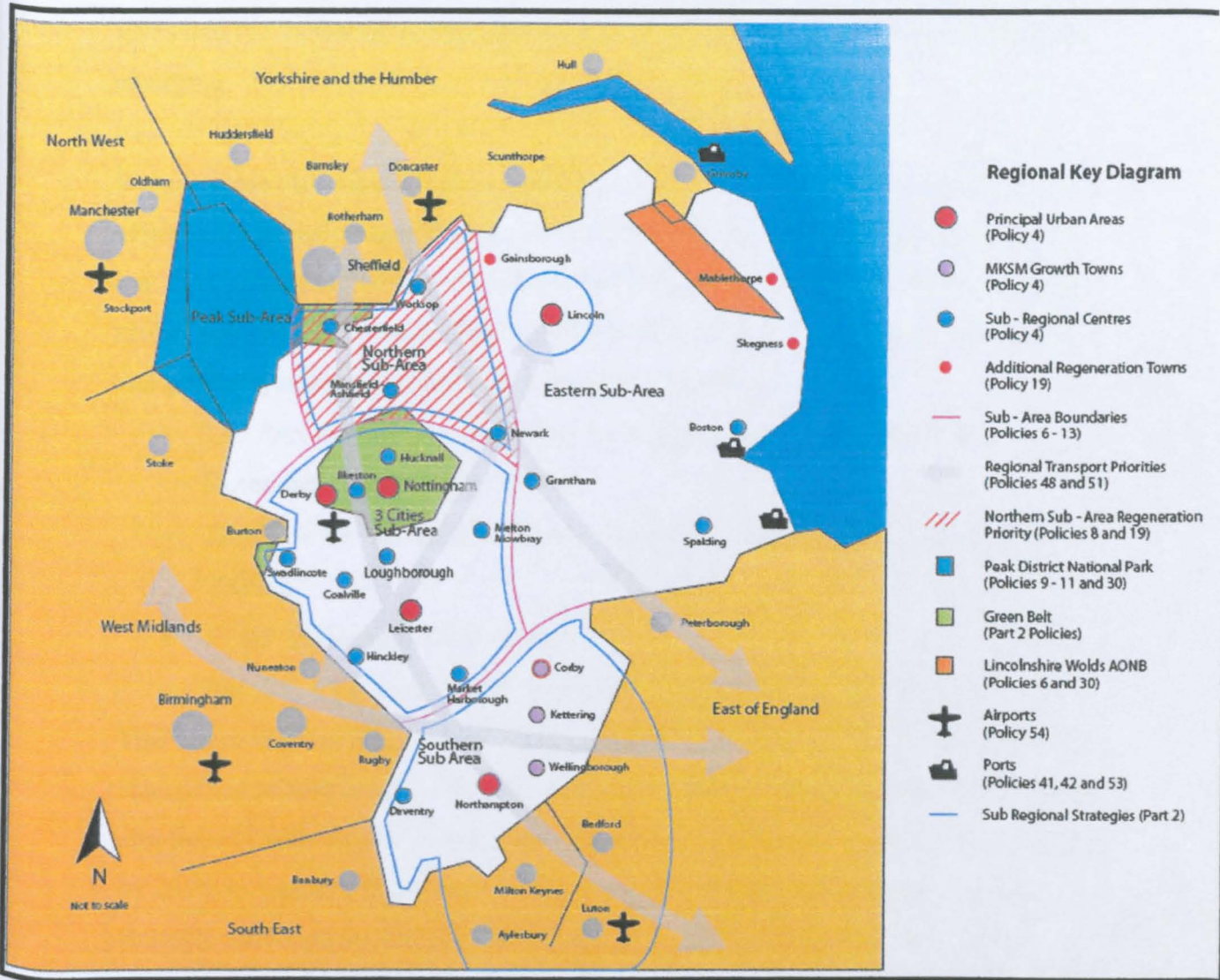
questionable as to whether this is acceptable within an RSS, as it may be deemed too locationally specific and therefore only worthy of inclusion in the relevant LDF.

The EM draft RSS also contains other spatial policy detail in the form of maps, tables and graphs. Figure 4.8 shows the EM RSS Key Diagram. The presentation of this map is considerably clearer in a visual sense than the NW RSS Key Diagram, but contains similar detail. It fails, however, to illustrate regional road and rail networks and therefore infrastructure corridors, even though this information is fundamental to underpinning regional economic, social and transport spatial policy. Although gray arrows give an indication of regional transport priorities, the exact intention of these and their relationship to neighbouring regions is not clearly presented.

Unlike the NW RSS, however, this RSS provides a greater number of maps, but fewer tables and graphs displaying spatial data. The maps, in addition to those already discussed, detail the regional public transport network and a range of environmental designations. A few tables provide spatial data in relation to housing provision and affordable housing and a small number of graphs refer to waste management requirements and capacity shortfalls.

The EM RSS also has a strong emphasis on inter-regional links, recognising, for example, that neighbouring regions may also be operating similar concentration strategies to their own ends and the need to take account of such concerns so the EM RSS does not conflict with these approaches. This emphasis is exemplified by references in the S-RSs to inter-regional linkages and related spatial policy concerns regarding neighbouring northern regions that are following the Northern Way growth strategy. The RSS is also strongly integrated in an inter-regional sense with the RSSs of the EE and the SE, as all three regional RSSs share the S-RS for MKSM (GOSE, GOEM, GOEE, 2005). As explained in Table 4.5, the MKSM S-RS was inspired by the communities plan (ODPM, 2003c) and emphasises an inter-regional focus on the sustainable spatial development of six growth towns.

**Figure 4.8: EM RSS Key Diagram**



(EMRA, 2006a)

### C). Discussion

Overall, both draft RSSs present well coordinated spatial policy in the context of coherent spatial frameworks, although several ‘teething’ problems were noted in both cases. In the NW the time scale of the strategy, the separate treatment of RTS policies, the definition of separate city-regions, the lack of detail regarding certain inter-regional links and the blurred appearance of maps are issues that require further attention. In the EM draft RSS spatial policy coordination could be strengthened through attending to issues such as emphasising the polycentric nature of the three cities sub-area, the development of a more explicit settlement hierarchy and creating concurrency between the S-RSSs and the strategy’s sub-areas. Both RSSs could also benefit from more detailed Key Diagrams. These spatial policy coordination

difficulties can, however, be understood in the context of the draft nature of both RSSs and the 'newness' of the regional spatial planning context from which they are emerging.

Despite these difficulties, both regions appear to have made a reasonably good first effort at coordinating spatial policy in their RSSs. It is important to note, however, that through no fault of their own, both draft RSSs were already out-dated in certain spatial policy contexts soon after their publication, due to the issuing of new PPSs and general guidance by central government. These included:

- The *PPS 1: Planning and Climate Change supplement*, published in December 2006 (DCLG, 2006a);
- *The Code for Sustainable Homes* published in the same month (DCLG, 2006b);
- *PPS 3: Housing* (DCLG, 2006c);
- *Building a Greener Future*, published July 2007 (DCLG, 2007).

This has resulted in a lack of coordination of RSS spatial policies regarding climate change and related issues, such as the setting of carbon reduction targets. Both RSSs also need to address new government guidance to aim for zero carbon house building by 2016. In addition PPS3 makes explicit recommendation that RSSs should set strategic provision for travellers and gypsies (DCLG, 2006c). Such constantly changing central government guidance has been noted by others (Baker & Sherriff, 2009) and no doubt these matters will have to be addressed by the respective GOs after the EIP Inspector Reports have been published.

Having considered the spatial policy coordination in both RSSs, the next sub-section considers a brief overview of their sustainability, the second lens used in this section to assess the degree of spatial policy coordination and integration.

#### **4.3.2 Sustainability Appraisal of the RSSs**

SA (which also incorporates SEA in the UK) provides another lens through which to assess the coordination of spatial policy in both RSSs. As required by the government (ODPM, 2004a) the two draft RSSs were issued with SA reports. A SA report provides some of the preparation context of the draft RSS and considers the

positive and negative impacts that its objectives and policies may have in relation to the sustainable development of a region (Entec, 2006). In this sense it acts as a concurrent process to RSS preparation, testing the range of policy options at each stage in the strategy's development against an agreed set of sustainability principles. This section therefore considers the SA of each draft RSS, before proceeding to a general discussion of what the reports reveal about spatial policy coordination and integration in terms of the study's contextual framework lens of 'frames of reference', *i.e.* the integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, within a territorial context.

#### **A). North West**

The SA of the NW draft RSS (Entec, 2006) was carried out through a framework that was based on the region's RSDF, *Action for Sustainability (AfS)* (NWRA, 2004) and the North West *Integrated Appraisal Toolkit (IAT)* (NWRA, 2003). The framework was used by regional stakeholders during the process to appraise the strategy, leading to the identification of problem areas and the suggestion of mitigating actions, which were passed to the RSS preparation team for consideration. This was supplemented by Entec, the SA consultants, with scoping research of the key sustainability issues

#### **Box 4.13: SA of RSS - Key Sustainability Issues Facing the North West Region**

- Climate Change
- Air and Water Quality
- Historic Environment
- Landscape Quality
- Local Environmental Quality
- Biodiversity
- Transport
- Economy and Inclusion
- Image
- Population
- Communities
- Education
- Health and Well Being
- Energy and Resource Efficiency and Waste

(Entec, 2006, p.3)

facing the region, many of which have spatial implications, such as transport, economy and social inclusion (see Box 4.13). The SA identified the city-region concept as a fundamental spatial concept in addressing sustainability issues facing the region, particularly in its ability to address sub-regional spatial and resource inequities and identify suitable options in this regard.

**Table 4.6: NW SA Changes to the Draft RSS**

<p><b>DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To engage and work with all the regions communities;</li> <li>• Defining environmental excellence;</li> <li>• Emphasising employment provision for key service centres;</li> <li>• Empowering all local communities in the region.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>POLICY</u></b></p>	
<p>Working in the North West</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The importance of local workforces close to sites for Regionally Significant Economic Development;</li> <li>• The importance of town centres for cultural, educational and residential use;</li> <li>• The importance of local, healthy food retailing to convenience shopping.</li> </ul>
<p>Living in the North West</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Energy, water and waste efficient housing;</li> <li>• Engaging local communities and the house building industry;</li> <li>• Increased housing densities;</li> <li>• The delivery of affordable housing.</li> </ul>
<p>Transport in the North West</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A transport hierarchy that reduces the need to travel;</li> <li>• Reducing the growth in air travel;</li> <li>• Protecting local rural environments from traffic impacts;</li> <li>• EIA and AA of investment priorities.</li> </ul>
<p>Enjoying and Managing the North West's Natural Assets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasising this policy in context of economic growth and regeneration;</li> <li>• Increased target for recycled sources;</li> <li>• Need to phase waste management facilities in advance of new development;</li> <li>• Recognise shortfalls in renewable energy targets.</li> </ul>
<p><b>SUB-REGIONAL POLICY FRAMEWORK</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reemphasising environment against economic and transport objectives;</li> <li>• Reversing traffic growth;</li> <li>• Environmental capacity assessments of identified growth;</li> <li>• Manchester City Region prioritisation of environmental, social and spatial needs of communities;</li> <li>• Liverpool City Region recognition of different communities and the world heritage status of the City's waterfront;</li> <li>• Central Lancashire City Region recognition of other priorities such as traffic mitigation, skill and education training and broadband access.</li> </ul>

(Entec, 2006, pp.6-8)

The SA of the final draft RSS provides an interesting overview of a number of sustainability concerns that required attention. This suggested a number of changes to the development principles, regional development framework, and the sectoral and



sub-regional policies, which are summarised in Table 4.6. In relation to the development principles and framework, the SA advocated emphasis on engagement and empowerment of all regional communities, in particular those in rural areas. The sectoral and sub-regional policy advice emphasised a number of spatial principles that required mitigation and/or enhancement, in particular the strategy's clear bias in being economically and transport led. The SA therefore recommended a more balanced focus, through greater emphasis on social and environmental policies, such as health, proximity to work, resource efficiency and affordable housing. Additional spatial concerns included the need to increase housing densities and reduce air travel.

The latter issue was of particular concern to some interviewees regarding the sustainability of a proposed expansion at Manchester Airport:

“Meanwhile, the proposals for the growth of airports in the region have no regard for CO2 emissions....This makes the RSS less integrated [in] terms of spatial policy and the sustainable development it is supposed to deliver.”

(Regional Policy Officer, CPRE, 2006)

#### **Box 4.14: NW RSS Stakeholder Views on Relationship Between AfS and RSS**

“The degree to which AfS is influential across the region is limited. It [was] involved in teasing out sustainability issues in the RSS process....the objectives of sustainability assessment....But this was the limit of its influence on the RSS process...,it just informed policies....Since AfS was published the government revised the national sustainable development strategy *Securing the Future*....The national document is used and referred to more in NW region than AfS. People automatically assume the new national document takes precedence over the regional document. The national document is very good and comprehensive.”

(RSDF Policy Officer, RA, 2006)

A number of additional RSS sustainability concerns were also raised in the interviews. These predominantly centred on the weak influence of AfS on the RSS, beyond its use as a basis for the SA process. AfS was described as having a strong influence at the beginning of the RSS preparations process which weakened as the RSS neared completion. It appears that many of the RSS stakeholders looked to the national sustainable development strategy (DEFRA, 2005) rather than AfS to inform

their sustainability concerns (see Box 4.14). The reasons for this lack of influence are multi-faceted and are discussed in greater detail towards the end of this chapter in relation to AfS as an over-arching regional strategy.

Additional concerns were also raised by policy officers in EN and the CsA regarding the lack of any acknowledgement in the strategy of environmental capacity/limits or ecological footprints, although it was recognised that there was insufficient data to support this and that the NW needed to do more work in this regard. In the mean time the IAT would continue to be used to assess plans and the AfS Sustainability Checklist for individual schemes.

### **B). East Midlands**

The SA for the EM draft RSS was prepared by Land Use Consultants (LUC, 2006), who developed an assessment framework based on a range of sources. These included the objectives and indicators of the IRS, the objectives of other relevant regional strategies such as the RES and RHS, and a consideration of base line information and key sustainability issues facing the EM region. As one can see from Box 4.15, the key issues were predominantly environmental, with transport and

#### **Box 4.15: SA of RSS - Key Sustainability Issues Facing the East Midlands Region**

- Transport and Accessibility
- Biodiversity
- East Coast Nature Conservation
- Declining Landscape Quality
- Low Woodland Cover
- Air Quality
- Agricultural Pollution
- Loss and Damage to Cultural Heritage
- Regional domestic waste
- Water Shortages and Flood Risk

(LUC, 2006, Box 1)

accessibility the most explicit spatial concerns. As with the NW RSS SA, the EM's process was concurrent to its RSS preparation, providing advice and suggestions to RA staff throughout the strategy's development. Options for the Three Cities regions and the other sub-regional areas were also considered (LUC, 2006). The RSS's four S-RSs were assessed through separate SA reports, which then fed into the main SA.



**Table 4.7: EM SA Changes to the Draft RSS**

<b><u>SPATIAL FRAMEWORK AND SUB-AREAS</u></b>	
Eastern Sub-Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possibility of increasing net out-commuting;</li> <li>• Increased housing impacts on historic character of Lincoln and on land around Peterborough.</li> </ul>
Northern Sub-Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to encourage sustainable live-work patterns.</li> </ul>
Peak Sub-Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Efficiency savings needed in water use and planned river extractions.</li> </ul>
Three Cities Sub-Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The need improvement of public transport provision.</li> </ul>
Southern Sub-Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The need to protect the historic and natural environment.</li> </ul>
<b><u>CORE OBJECTIVE</u></b>	
Housing Stock	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concern regarding water resources and biodiversity.</li> </ul>
Reducing Health Inequalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More emphasis on encouraging healthy lifestyles.</li> </ul>
Enjoying Heritage and Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased pressure on cultural assets due to housing and transport policies.</li> </ul>
Improving Community Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No suggested change.</li> </ul>
Development of Social Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No suggested change.</li> </ul>
Increasing Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for Appropriate Assessment of Natura 2000 sites;</li> <li>• More explicit attention to local biodiversity.</li> </ul>
Natural and Cultural Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scale of development impacting on character of region;</li> <li>• Impact of transport development on landscape and historic and natural environment;</li> <li>• Reduction in the extent of 'tranquil areas'.</li> </ul>
Prudent Management of Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintaining balanced supply and demand for water resources;</li> <li>• Capacity issues for sewage treatment;</li> <li>• Possible loss of best and most versatile agricultural land;</li> <li>• Proposed development in areas at risk of flooding;</li> <li>• Air quality issues regarding road priorities.</li> </ul>
Minimising Waste/Increasing Recycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No suggested change.</li> </ul>
Energy Efficiency and Independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The negative effects of increased private car use.</li> </ul>
Sustainable Transport Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reducing travel need should be at heart of strategy;</li> <li>• Increased air travel and impacts on climate change.</li> </ul>
High Quality Employment Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More emphasis on assisting rural areas.</li> </ul>
Culture of Enterprise and Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No suggested change.</li> </ul>
Modern Economic Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing the right type of land.</li> </ul>

(LUC, 2006, paragraphs 55-111)

In general the SA proposed a number of changes to the overall spatial strategy, the detail of which is summarised in Table 4.7. In the context of the spatial framework

and sub-areas, mitigation and/or enhancement was suggested in relation to sustainable living patterns and environmental quality. A whole range of other issues were suggested in relation to the strategy's core objectives, particularly health, housing, and resource and environmental protection. Stakeholder satisfaction with the SA process differed somewhat in the EM, where there was a general level of satisfaction expressed that the IRS had supported SA, highlighting inconsistencies and enabling better integration of spatial policy (see Box 4.16).

**Box 4.16: EM RSS Stakeholder Views on SA and IRS**

"Integrating all spatial policy in the RSS is almost impossible to achieve,...[But] SA and the IRS has helped in achieving integration...."

(Regional Policy Officer, EN, 2006)

"The SA was different from before and helped integration....[It] highlighted inconsistencies in [the] plan....and with the IRS was helpful in raising issues."

(Regional Planner, English Heritage, 2006)

**C). Discussion**

As part of the SA, both RSSs were required to carry out an Appropriate Assessment (AA) of possible impacts on Natura 2000 sites. This assessment was begun, but not completed in time for either draft, as it became a requirement late in their preparation processes. Therefore, at the cut-off point for the cases studied in early 2007, both regions were completing their initial scoping of this exercise. It is important to note that the AA exercise will be based on a rigorous application of the precautionary principle and will therefore require those undertaking the exercise to prove that the plan will not have a significant impact on the conservation objectives of the protected sites. Where uncertainty or doubt remains, an adverse impact should be assumed (Land Use Consultants, 2006). This requirement will set the bar very high for regional spatial policy options that pertain to Natura 2000 sites, which have extensive coverage in both regions.

It is clear from this overview of the SAs of both RSSs, that there were apparent, but more fine grained sustainability and therefore spatial policy integration inconsistencies, such as the economic bias in the NW RSS or the potential danger to natural and cultural assets in the EM RSS. Through raising these more subtle integration discrepancies the SA reports have therefore assisted RSS policy in becoming more integrated in terms of frames of reference and territory.

### **4.3.3 Implementation and Delivery of the RSSs**

All RSSs are required to provide an overview of their intentions to monitor and review the strategy's progress, with associated targets and indicators (ODPM, 2005c & 2005d). It is intended that this monitoring will feed into annual monitoring reports produced by each RA (ODPM, 2004a). In addition each RSS is required to have an IP, that sets out how policies will be achieved and the associated delivery agencies and funding streams that will be utilised to ensure this. The IP is in turn linked to the RFAs documents, which as stated in Chapter Two, were drawn up by every region in early 2006 on direction of the Treasury, to assist in prioritising regional spending for housing, transport and economic development (HM Treasury *et al.*, 2005).

The IP and RFA together give an indication of how spatial policy is moving beyond coordination to integration, in the sense that it is being delivered, not just by one organisation who has consulted others in its policy preparation, but by a whole range of partner agencies that are integrating their policy concerns and funding streams into policy delivery. An overview of these factors will now be considered in relation to each case study, before concluding this section and progressing to consider the horizontal integration of spatial policy across both regions in relation to their respective RSSs.

#### **A). North West**

The NW RSS IP (known as the Implementation Framework, NWRA, 2006b) is a separate document from the draft RSS and predominantly consists of a large number of tables. These tables address the regional development principles, the regional development framework and the regional policy framework in relation to delivery mechanisms, such as strategies and actions; the lead organisations identified for delivery; and organisations that will have a supporting role. Each of these policies

are cross-referenced with other relevant policies. An example of the implementation mechanism tables is illustrated in Figure 4.9 and focuses on the RSS’s regional development principles.

**Figure 4.9: NW RSS Implementation Mechanisms for the Regional Development Principles**

Policy	Delivery Mechanisms	Lead Organisation	Supporting Organisations	Cross References
DP1 – Regional Development Principles	Local Development Frameworks / Development Control	Local Planning Authorities	Other implementation organisations identified in this framework	See Appendix A for further guidance on implementation
	Development Proposals	Private Sector – Developers		
	The Action for Sustainability Integrated Appraisal Toolkit for the North West 2003	NWRA		

(NWRA, 2006b, p.7)

Appendix A of the IP provides additional written guidance on how the principles, frameworks and policies of the RSS should be implemented, in the context of AfS and the IAT. Appendix B then sets out the monitoring framework for implementation. This consists of two main tables. The first table, shown in Figure 4.10 lists the seven regional priorities of the RSS against policies that will assist in achieving these and their respective headline targets.

The second table then lists the headline targets by regional framework and policies, along with their respective indicators, the RSS policies that will be measured and the origin of each of the indicators, such as for example AfS, the RES or the ODPM’s core regional indicators. Figure 4.11 illustrates a section of this table relating to the regional framework. Together the IP’s implementation mechanism tables, the headline target table and the targets and indicators table relate to the implementation, monitoring and review intentions expressed at the end of the draft RSS and are intended to feed into government requirements for an annual RSS monitoring report (ODPM, 2004a).

Despite the enormous detail provided in the NW RSS IP, there is a general vagueness regarding how the NWRA will take the lead in different ‘deliveries’ and what



proportional contribution the RSS will make to achieving these in relation to other strategies and their respective organisations. There is also a lack of clarity regarding

**Figure 4.10: NW RSS Headline Targets for Regional Priorities (Outcomes)**

Outcome (See Draft RSS, Chapter 4)	Policies which will help to achieve this outcome	Headline Targets
Improved, sustainable economic growth, closing the gap with parts of the country that have the highest economic performance;	RDF1, RDF3, RDF4, W1, W2, W3, W5, W6, W8, RT1, RT3, RT4, RT5, MCR1, MCR2, MCR3, MCR4, MCR5, LCR1, LCR2, LCR3, LCR4, CLCR1, CNL1, CNL2, CNL4	2006 – 2009 – achieve GVA growth above the England average By 2026 – Close the GVA/head gap with the England average
A more competitive, productive and inclusive regional economy, with more people in employment that utilises and develops their knowledge and skills;	RDF1, RDF2, RDF3, RDF4, W1, W2, W3, W4, W5, W6, W7, W8, L1, RT1, RT2, RT3, RT4, RT5, RT8, EM2, EM17, MCR1, MCR2, MCR3, MCR4, MCR5, LCR1, LCR2, LCR3, LCR4, CLCR1, CNL1, CNL2, CNL4, CH1	To achieve a regional employment rate of 80% by 2020, and eliminate major sub regional variations and variations between key groups
The development of urban, rural and coastal communities as safe, sustainable, attractive and distinctive places to live and work and visit;	DP1, RDF1, RDF2, RDF3, RDF4, RDF5, W3, W4, RT2, RT5, RT6, RT7, L1, L2, L3, L4, L5, EM1, EM2, EM3, EM4, EM5, EM6, EM17, MCR1, MCR2, MCR5, LCR1, LCR4, CLCR1, CLCR2, CNL4, CH1	Reduce derelict land by X% of 2005 levels by 2021
The reduction of economic, environmental, educational, health and other social inequalities between North West communities;	RDF1, RDF2, RDF3, W1, L1, L2, L3, L5, RT1, RT2, RT7, EM3, EM4, EM5, MCR1, MCR2, MCR4, MCR5, LCR1, LCR2, LCR4, CLCR1, CNL1, CNL2, CNL3, CNL4, CH1	Reduce North West proportion of individuals in households with income levels less than 60% of UK average to 10% by 2015
The protection and enhancement of the region's built and natural environmental assets, its coastal areas and unique culture and heritage;	DP1, RDF1, RDF2, RDF3, RDF4, RDF5, W6, W7, L3, RT2, EM1, EM2, EM3, EM4, EM5, EM6, EM7, EM9, EM10, EM11, EM14, EM17, MCR1, LCR1, LCR2, LCR4, CLCR1, CLCR2, CNL2, CNL4, CH1	To maintain the upward trend in all native and woodland bird species and reverse the long term decline in the farmland bird indicator by 2020
The active management and prudent use our natural and man made resources and the most efficient use of infrastructure;	DP1, RDF1, RDF2, RDF3, RDF4, W4, L4, RT1, RT2, RT5, EM1, EM2, EM5, EM7, EM8, EM9, EM10, RM11, EM12, EM13, EM15, EM16, EM17	By 2010 at least 10% (rising to at least 15% by 2015 and at least 20% by 2020) of the electricity supplied in the North West should be provided from renewable energy sources
The introduction of a safe, reliable and effective integrated transport network that supports opportunities for sustainable growth and provides better links with jobs and services.	DP1, RDF2, RT1, RT2, RT4, RT5, RT7, RT8, MCR1, MCR4, MCR5, LCR1, LCR4, CLCR1, CNL1, CNL3, CNL4, CNL5	X % increase proportion of journey to work trips undertaken by non car modes

(NWRA, 2006b, p.34)

the weight attached to objectives and how unforeseen conflicts between them may be resolved.

The IP does, however, recognise the potential for problems in implementation. These challenges are identified as organisational cooperation and commitment, insufficient and/or short term funding and the need to coordinate strategies that may be at different stages in their development. It also discusses courses of action to overcome



these, including a strong approach to prioritisation and the development of better working relationships, especially with lead organisations (NWRA, 2006b).

**Figure 4.11: NW RSS Regional Framework Targets and Indicators**

Targets (where applicable)	Indicators	Policies measured	Notes
<b>Theme – Regional Framework</b>			
	% of new development on previously developed land or by conversion of existing buildings	DP1	North West Vital Sign indicator
70% of new dwellings on previously developed land or by conversion of existing buildings	% of new and converted dwellings on previously developed land	DP1, L4	ODPM core output indicator
	% of new dwellings completed at > 30, 30 – 50 and > 50 dwellings per hectare, by local authority area	DP1	ODPM core output indicator
Meet Kyoto targets by 2012 to reduce CO2 emissions to 12.5% below 1990 levels	To be developed	DP1, RTF2, EM15, EM16, EM17	
	Index of Multiple Deprivation	RDF1, sub regional policies	Adopted RSS AMR indicator
X % of new development within the Urban Areas of Regional Centres, Regional Towns and Cities	To be developed	RDF1, sub regional policies	
	Amount of completed retail, office and leisure development	RDF1, sub regional policies	ODPM core output indicator Adopted RSS AMR indicator
	Amount of completed retail, office and leisure development in town and city centres	RDF1, sub regional policies	ODPM core output indicator Adopted RSS AMR indicator
	Recorded crime rates	RDF1	Adopted RSS AMR indicator Contextual indicator NW Vital Signs indicator
	No. of farm businesses assisted through diversification support	RDF3, EM1, W6	
	Additional area (ha) of woodlands and forestry through diversification support	RDF3, EM1	
	Additional area (ha) brought under agri-environment schemes	RDF3, EM1	
Developed, undeveloped and remote coastline defined in all Coastal Local Development Frameworks by 2010	Local development Frameworks	EM6	

(NWRA, 2006b, p.35)

In general this IP is extremely vague about the actual resources available for implementation, even though this is crucial information to assist in understanding whether the IP can actually deliver the RSS's policy in an integrated manner. In this sense it would be useful to know the financial implications for delivering policies, especially the large number of transport infrastructure priorities that the draft RSS



has identified. The timescales and trajectories for implementation and delivery would also introduce greater lucidity, suggesting that the IP needs to consider financial and temporal phasing. Some of these concerns regarding the integrated delivery of spatial policy are clarified by the NW RFA.

The NW RFA is placed firmly in the context of the recently reviewed RES, RHS and RSS. It offers a clear regional vision and priorities, which are closely related to all three strategies, such as maximising growth opportunities of the three city regions and ensuring ongoing growth in the rural economy (NWDA & NWRA, 2006). In addition, it draws on the three strategies to identify the main barriers the NW is facing in relation to weaknesses in the housing market, the effectiveness of key transport infrastructure, and the high level of ‘worklessness’ and concentrations of low productivity in the region as a whole. In order to address these issues it identifies forty five transformative actions that can be taken forward *via* the RFA. These, as with the requirements of RFAs (HM Treasury *et al.*, 2005) focus on housing, transport and economic development and include the prioritisation of regional transport infrastructure needs. In this sense, the NW RFA aligns the spending priorities of the RES, RHS and RSS to create an integrated approach and links these to outputs, for example in terms of numbers of jobs, new businesses, training and affordable homes (NWDA & NWRA, 2006), which are illustrated in Figure 4.12. The RFA lists the priorities for the three main policy areas, along with the methodologies for arriving at these. Clear links are offered here to the relevant regional strategies and this is again expressed in a series of tables at the end of the document, which link each scheme to a promoting authority, the level of RFA

**Figure 4.12: NW RFA Indicative Headline Outputs 2006/07 to 2015/16**

Indicative Outputs	Number (2006/7 – 2015/16)
No. of jobs created or safeguarded	140,000
No. of businesses created	22,000
No. of people assisted in skills	180,000
No. of dwellings improved	59,000
No. of affordable housing completions	18,000
No. of “committed” transport schemes completed	18
No. of new transport schemes completed or underway	25

(NWDA & NWRA, 2006, p.5)

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**Figure 4.13: NW RFA Investment Programme 2005/06 to 2017/18 – Scheme by promoting authority and contribution of RFA**

NOTE: All costs have had optimism bias removed (on the advice of DIT) and are standardised to 2005 prices for comparison purposes  
 Total scheme costs are not shown - only the amount required from the Regional Funding Allocation is shown

Scheme	Promoting Authority	2005 /06	2006 /07	2007 /08	2008 /09	2009 /10	2010 /11	2011 /12	2012 /13	2013 /14	2014 /15	2015 /16	2016 /17	2017 /18	RFA Funding (millions)
A34 Alderley Edge and Nether Alderley Bypass.	Cheshire			1	12	13.5	13								39.5
A556 (M6 to M56) Improvement.	Highways Agency									10	36	40	21		107.0
Access to Port of Liverpool Improvement.	Highways Agency											3	22	20	45.0
Ashton Northern Bypass Stage 2	Greater Manchester					2	3.5	2	0.8						8.3
Bidston Moss Viaduct (Junction 1 of the M53 motorway).	Merseyside							10	10	10	5				35.0
Blackpool and Fleetwood Tramway Upgrade – Phase 1.	Blackpool		5	5	5	5	12	10.6	11	13.1					66.6
Bolton Town Centre Public Transport Strategy	Greater Manchester								6	7	10.8				23.8
Completion of Heysham to M6 Link.	Lancashire				3	14.5	22.5	31	21.6						92.6
Crewe Green Link Road (Southern Section).	Cheshire					3	3								6.0
Crewe Rail Gateway.	Cheshire					5	16.3	11.3							32.6
East Lancashire Rapid Transit.	Blackburn with Darwen				1	2	3	5	5	4					20.0
Edge Lane/Eastern Approaches.	Merseyside		9	6.8											15.8
Glossop Spur.	Greater Manchester				1.5	6.6									8.1
Greater Manchester Authorities Highway Retaining Walls Strengthening Scheme.	Greater Manchester			1	1.5	1.5	2	10	10	9					35.0
Greater Manchester Urban Traffic Control (GMUTC).	Greater Manchester		1	1.5	3	3	3	2.1							13.6
Hall Lane Strategic Gateway.	Merseyside		8	4.5											12.5
Leigh-Salford-Manchester QBC.	Greater Manchester			1	3	8	16	16.7							44.7
M60 JETTS QBC.	Greater Manchester				1	2	2	2.1	15.9	24					25.4
Mersey Gateway.	Hallton							8	28	28					64.0
MetroLink Extensions.	Greater Manchester									40	80	85	55		260.0
Rochdale Interchange.	Greater Manchester		1.5	2.5	5	1									10.0
SEMMMS Relief Road Scheme.	Greater Manchester				2	4.5	4	7	13.3	3					33.8
Silver Jubilee Bridge Major Maintenance Scheme.	Hallton				3	5	6	6	6	5					31.0
Thornton to Switch Island Link.	Merseyside					1	5	2.3	1						9.3
Yellow School Buses.	Greater Manchester									5	5	7	5	3.7	25.7
<b>Total New (up to 2015/16)</b>			24.5	23.3	41	77.6	121.3	124.1	128.6	131.5	131.8	135	N/A	N/A	938.7
<b>Total Committed</b>		67.842	95.442	117.004	70.85	35.56	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	387.698
<b>Total Estimated Spend (up to 2015/16)</b>		67.842	120.942	140.304	111.85	113.16	121.3	124.1	128.6	131.5	131.8	135	N/A	N/A	1326.398
<b>Regional Allocation/Planning Assumption</b>		113	115	117	119	121	123	125	128	130	132	135	N/A	N/A	1358
<b>Difference (negative figure denotes annual overspend)</b>		45.158	-5.942	-23.304	7.15	7.84	1.7	0.9	-0.6	-1.5	0.2	0	N/A	N/A	31.602

(NWDA & NWRA, 2006, p.26)

funding and the time horizons involved. See for example Figure 4.13.

The close integration of regional spatial priorities in the RFA is not surprising when one considers that the main regional bodies; the NWRA, NWDA and GONW were all involved in the preparation of the document. They used existing governance and inter-regional working arrangements, including the RHB, the Regional Transport Forum through the RA and the RES Advisory Group. The final document was agreed jointly by the RA and DA.

It is worthy of note that the RFA also discussed how the document could be taken in future directions. The constituent authors have agreed to jointly monitor progress in taking the document forward and have expressed a wish to improve and expand on their work. They suggest using the agreed RFA regional principles to develop a future Integrated Regional Framework which would be grounded in sustainable development. Within this context they also express a desire to engage with central government and lobby for a broader number of RFS funding streams, such as education and skills; rail improvements; and Housing Market Renewal funding (NWDA & NWRA, 2006). In addition they also express a desire for greater spatial planning and strategy alignment at the centre, which would move beyond the Northern Way to develop a national spatial plan involving all English regions and the government. In this sense the NW RFA not only provides the detail needed to understand how NW spatial policy will be integrated in terms of delivery, but it also acts as a manifesto for regional partners, suggesting how they could build upon the integrated approach that has emerged from working on the RFA. This work was acknowledged by interviewees as aiding policy integration later in the RSS process:

“Aiding RSS policy integration in terms of delivery was the necessity that the region had to work together as they had to influence the future of central government RFAs.”

(Senior Spatial Planner, St. Helens MBC, 2006)

### **B). *East Midlands***

The EM IP (EMRA, 2006a) is divided into two sections, which are part of the draft RSS, as opposed to being a separate document. The first section addresses the



*Figure 4.14: EM RSS Implementation Plan Framework*

Policy No.	Policy Title	Regional Core Objective(s)	Responsible Organisations	Implementation Mechanism(s)	Key Indicator(s)	Target(s)
1	Regional Core Objectives	-	All	Local Development Frameworks Local Transport Plans (including Accessibility Strategies) Economic Development Strategies Other Relevant Plans and Strategies	All	All
2	A Regional Approach to Selecting Land for Development	a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h,i,j	Local Authorities Developers	Local Development Frameworks	Proportion of housing completions achieved on previously developed land or through conversions  % of new houses, employment land and floorspace developed within or adjoining urban areas  Development served by public transport	60% of housing completions  Targets to be developed

(EMRA, 2006, p.69)

regional IP at the end of Part One of the RSS and the second section provides the same for the S-RSs at the end of Part Two. Both consist of a series of tables, illustrating what regional core objective each policy will meet, along with the responsible organisations, implementation mechanisms and the key indicators and targets that will measure this. An example is provided in Figure 4.14 in relation to part of the RSS's core objectives. The main delivery partners will include local government, mainly through LDFs, in addition to a broad range of agencies and government departments covering economic development, housing, education, leisure, waste, highways, environment and public health. Unlike the NW RSS IP, there is no cross-referencing between policies. Of greater concern, however, is that the IP tables have absolutely no supporting text, they simply appear as an add-on to the plan, without any context or expression of general intention.

As one can see from a sample IP table in Figure 4.14, the EM IP also exhibits similar problems to those observed in the NW IP, in that there is no weight attached to the objectives or mention of the RSS's contribution to meeting them. There is also no reference to lead organisations or how potential conflicts may be resolved. As a result there is a need to give some reference to the financial implications of and timescales for, implementation. These issues are also apparent in relation to the S-RSs IP. For example, Figure 4.15 demonstrates, the MKSM S-RS provides no detail regarding local, regional and national delivery agencies, which are vaguely defined. It is therefore necessary, as in the NW case, to see if the RFA document can bring greater transparency to the details of delivery.

**Figure 4.15: MKSM S-RS Potential Infrastructure Funding Sources**

Infrastructure Item	Estimated Cost (£ billion)	Funding Source <sup>41</sup>
Mass Transit	£04	PFI, LTP, Bus Companies, Sec 106
Rail Improvements	£0.5	PFI, LTP, TOCs, Sec 106
Highways Improvements	£0.7	Central Gov, PFI, LTP, Sec 106
Utilities (off-site)	£1.1	Utility Cos & Sec 106
Secondary Healthcare	£1.9	NHS & PFI
Education	£1.7	Sec 106, PFI, LEAs
Community Facilities	£0.7	LAs & Sec 106
Affordable Housing	£1.3	Housing Corporation

(GOSE, GOEM, GOEE, 2005, p.113)

The EM RFA illustrates a broadly similar approach to the NW RFA. It was developed through joint working arrangements between the GO, DA and RA and also involved other stakeholders from local government, learning and skills, and employment. They carried out three consultation events involving over one hundred and fifty regional organisations, and also received advice and technical input from regional public policy professionals (EMDA & EMRA, 2006). The document states the basis on which it was reached, ranging from consensus between partners and a solid evidence basis, to the aligning of RFA funding streams that may be associated with this. This is followed by clear links to the other main regional strategies; the RSS, the RES and the RHS; both their aims and objectives and their themes and priorities. The RFA integrates these strategy elements together into a list of challenges faced by the region and the individual sub-areas, such as diversifying the region's economic base and realising the full potential of urban areas (EMDA & EMRA, 2006). As with the NW RFA, the EM document also lists the main priorities for economy, housing and transport, how these were arrived at, how they link together and the methodology and stakeholder consultation that led to this. Tables provide detail in relation to each of the preferred packages of schemes, the leading authority of each scheme, and the associated levels of funding, timescales involved and expected outcomes. This detail is illustrated for example in Figure 4.16, which lists the preferred package of road schemes. In the future, the RFA plans to take forward a regional balance sheet to analyse patterns and dynamics of the public and private sector investment in the region, which it is felt would strengthen the methodology utilised for evaluating investment priorities (EMDA & EMRA, 2006). From this overview of the EM RFA one can see that it integrates regional spatial policy and moves it towards delivery through a comprehensive approach that is clearly lacking in the RSS IP.

### **C). Discussion**

Taken together, both RSS IPs and their respective RFAs provide interesting insights into the approaches taken and the spatial policy impacts that will result. Turning first to the IPs, it is clear that they are in reality very detailed monitoring and review documents, with scant delivery details, beyond references to other strategies and organisations that will assist in delivery. This is particularly evident in the EM RSS

**Figure 4.16: EM RFA Preferred Package of Road Schemes**

SCHEME NAME	AUTHORITY	STATUS	EMRFA Request (@ Forecast Outturn)	First Year (package) (Year 1)
Connecting Derby Phases 2 & 3	Derby City	WIP	£20,650,850	2005/6*
Upperton Road Viaduct	Leicester City	PA	£19,100,000	2005/6*
Mansfield Town Centre Regeneration Transport Improvements Package	Nottinghamshire	none	£7,767,734	2006/7*
Markham Employment Growth Zone (MEGZ)	Derbyshire	PA	£12,608,898	2005/6*
Ilkeston-Awsorth Link Road	Derbyshire	PA	£10,400,000	2006/7*
Hucknall Town Centre Improvements	Nottinghamshire	none	£7,164,648	2007/8
A453 Widening (M1 J24 to A52 Nottingham)	Highways Agency (Notts & Leics)	TPI	£68,490,160	2008/9
London Road Rail Bridge	Derby City	none	£6,933,508	2010/11
Loughborough Integrated Transport Scheme	Leicestershire	none	£16,095,486	2009/10
A509 Isham to Wellingborough improvement	Northamptonshire	none	£18,865,540	2010/11
A509 Isham Bypass	Northamptonshire	PA	£15,704,000	2008/9
A43 Corby Link Road	Northamptonshire	PA	£13,225,860	2008/9
Nottingham Ring Road	Nottingham City	none	£19,412,484	2008/9
Earl Shilton Bypass	Leicestershire	PA	£14,675,440	2007/8
A1073 Spalding to Eye improvement	Lincolnshire	PA	£53,156,393	2007/8
Coastal Access Imp Pt 2 - A158 Burgh Le Marsh Bypass	Lincolnshire	PA	£14,469,841	2008/9
Lincoln Eastern Bypass	Lincolnshire	none	£111,449,495	2nd Five Years
Pleasley Bypass	Nottinghamshire	none	£25,480,919	
A45 Stanwick to Thrapston Dualing	Highways Agency (Northampton)	none	£44,923,094	
A38 Derby Junctions	Highways Agency (Derby)	none	£97,812,181	
A617 Glapwell Bypass & Shirebrook Link	Derbyshire	none	£35,472,157	
Melton Mowbray Bypass	Leicestershire	none	£21,142,509	
A6 Kibworth Bypass	Leicestershire	none	£8,824,801	
Syston Eastern Bypass	Leicestershire	none	£9,810,124	
A8003 Caldecott Bypass	Rutland	none	£3,774,623	
Completion of Lutterworth Western Relief Road	Leicestershire	none	£6,749,339	
Wymeswold Bypass	Leicestershire	none	£6,098,063	
Sharnford Bypass	Leicestershire	none	£9,177,585	
A46/A1 Winthorpe Junction improvement	Highways Agency (Nottinghamshire)	none	£44,742,834	
A46 Newark to Widmerpool Alternative - 2 phases back to back	Highways Agency (Notts)	TPI	£269,631,505	
A46 Hobbyhorse GSJ, Leicester	Highways Agency (Leics)	none	£62,359,072	
<b>Total 'Package' Spending</b>			<b>£1,025,441,083</b>	3rd Five Years

Notes  
WIP - Work in Progress  
PA - LTP Major Scheme with Provisional Approval  
TPI - Highways Agency schemes that have entered the 'Targetted Programme of Improvements' list  
\* Scheme start predates introduction of RFA budget

(EMDA & EMRA, 2006, p.18)

IP, which provides no supporting text to contextualise RSS delivery. As a result, the IPs of both regions do little to assist in the integration of spatial policy in the sense of moving each RSS beyond basic spatial policy coordination on paper. These IP problems are of course not beyond fixing, although each region is faced with different options in this respect.

In the NW, the IP is a separate document from the RSS so it would not be treated as statutory and could therefore be adjusted as required, allowing short term flexibility. A number of additional reasons for this approach were suggested by interviewees, including:

- The need to further align other regional strategies that were then currently under review;
- The complex and ever changing nature of organisations and their strategies and the short term nature of their funding regimes;
- It allows for ongoing work with partners to continue developing the IP, providing for improved coordination and cooperation between the different organisations involved.

In contrast the EM IP as part of its RSS will make it a statutory document, which could present potential problems if it remains so. As part of the RSS the IP could therefore not be changed without undertaking the same review procedures as required for changes to the RSS. A number of EM interviewees expressed concerns in this direction, suggesting that the IP should be a separate document, which would allow for flexibility in ever changing circumstances.

The integration drawbacks of both RSS IPs are predominantly mitigated through the RFA documents, which provide the missing pieces of the implementation jigsaw. They move each RSS beyond the coordination of spatial policy into the dimension of integrated delivery, with real world partners, addressing associated financial and spatial implications, within specified time periods. This, however, is not so for all spatial policy, as the RFA streams only address housing, transport and economic development. But the RFAs do illustrate a leap forward in integrating these three fundamental strands of spatial policy and as expressed in the NW RFA, they aspire, with government approval, to include a wider range of funding streams in the future

to achieve greater spatial policy integration. As it stands, however, the RFA can be described as an over arching regional strategy for the policy areas it addresses. This is particularly so, as the RFA not only brings together the priorities of each of the main regional strategies, but decides on an order of priority and clearly links priorities to investment schemes.

#### **4.3.4 Conclusions**

Drawing together the three approaches to assessing RSS spatial policy coordination and integration in this section, it is possible to discern a number of implications. In general, spatial policy is well coordinated within both draft RSSs, with the exception of a small number of spatial framework incoherencies that require further consideration in relation to conceptual spatial emphasis. Although the IPs were shown to have several limitations, the coordinated nature of RSS spatial policy is taken further in terms of delivery through the RFAs, illustrating that regional spatial policy is moving closer to integration.

The coordinated nature of RSS spatial policy was greatly assisted through the SAs in both cases, which picked up on the finer detail of spatial policy inconsistencies through the context of sustainable development. This demonstrates a clear distinction between spatial policy being coordinated and integrated, and spatial policy being sustainable. So although considering spatial policy coordination within the RSSs and its integration in terms of delivery is a good measure of spatial policy integration, it is not a measure of sustainability. On the other hand, sustainability is a good measure of spatial policy integration; as by its very nature it must be integrative in its assessment of spatial policy. From this point it is possible to conclude that SA provides a type of higher order assessment of the integration of spatial policy, illustrated by the finer grain policy inconsistencies that it picked up on in both draft RSSs. This is of course important in the context of spatial planning, due to its stated statutory purpose of delivering sustainable development.



#### **4.4 AN ASSESSMENT OF SPATIAL POLICY INTEGRATION BETWEEN REGIONAL STRATEGIES**

Having assessed the internal coordination and integration of spatial policy in both RSSs, it is now necessary to consider the horizontal integration of RSS policies with the spatial policies of other regional strategies *i.e.* the RES, the RHS and the RSDF. Together with the RSS these strategies comprise the main spatial intentions of each region. Therefore, the level of integration between them provides an indication of the ability of both RSSs to meet government requirements for integrating the RSS with these other strategies (ODPM, 2004a).

In order to assess the approaches to spatial policy integration in both cases studied this section utilises the typology of regional spatial policy integration that was developed as part of the conceptual framework in Chapter Two. The typology consists of four elements, namely cross-referencing, integral coordination mechanisms, over-arching regional strategies and integrated regional strategies. Each of these typological elements will be considered in turn, along with the implications this has for integrating regional spatial policy.

##### **4.4.1 Cross-Referencing**

###### **A). *North West***

The four NW strategies considered here use cross-referencing to refer to each other, emphasising in their introductions how they have taken account of each other and have considered the necessity of mutual alignment. Table 4.8 lists cross-referencing quotes from each strategy and 'bolds' references to other strategies. Both the RES and RSS are strongest in this regard. The RES emphasises alignment as crucial to the delivery of the strategy's aims, while the RSS discusses how it, along with the RHS and RES should complement each other, while also taking account of the sustainable development principles of AfS. In a similar manner, the RHS expresses as a key objective, its alignment with the spatial context of the RSS and the economic context of the RES and describes this as a rolling forward process. The RHS, however, offers no reference to AfS and likewise, AfS does not cross-reference to the RHS, expressing instead its assistance in the SA of the RES and RSS. This absence of coordination between the RHS and AfS is concerning as housing is a key aspect of achieving sustainable development in the region.

**Table 4.8: Cross-Referencing Between the NW RES, RHS, RSS and Afs**

<p><b><u>Regional Economic Strategy</u></b></p> <p>“Aligns with other major regional strategies, including the <b>Regional Housing Strategy</b> and the <b>Regional Spatial Strategy</b> (which includes the <b>Regional Transport Strategy</b>) and identifies the key points that need to be reflected in those strategies in order to deliver the RES....Reflects other significant regional frameworks, including <b>Action for Sustainability</b>, the <b>Regional Equality and Diversity Strategy</b>, the <b>Regional Skills Partnership Priorities</b>, the emerging <b>Regional Rural Delivery framework</b> and the <b>Regional Health Improvement Plan</b>.”</p> <p>(NWDA, 2006, p.12)</p>
<p><b><u>Regional Housing Strategy</u></b></p> <p>“A key objective for the Board has been to work with the North West Development Agency (NWDA) and North West Regional Assembly (NWRA) to ensure that the <b>RHS, RSS and RES</b> are aligned.... the Board will work to ensure that completed suite of documents align with one another.... the drafting teams for all three documents have been working closely together throughout the RHS review process. They will continue to do so as the RSS and RES evolve.”</p> <p>(NW Regional Housing Board, 2005, p.5)</p>
<p><b><u>Regional Spatial Strategy</u></b></p> <p>“A number of strategies exist to guide development in the North West, the most important of which are the <b>Regional Economic Strategy (RES)</b>, <b>Regional Housing Strategy (RHS)</b> and <b>RSS</b> itself. All deal with different, but related, aspects of public policy and must therefore complement each other....Throughout 2004/2005, the three key regional bodies – The North West Regional Assembly (NWRA), Government Office North West (GONW) and North West Regional Development Agency (NWDA) – have worked together to find a way of aligning these three strategies....A key test of how successful RSS – and the North West itself – is in achieving its ambitions will be the extent to which spatial development in the region adopts the principles of sustainable development....reflected and developed in....”<b>Action for Sustainability</b>”, the region’s sustainable development framework, revised in 2004. The Implementation Framework contains more details of the relationship between policies in this RSS and “Action for Sustainability” priorities.”</p> <p>(NWRA, 2006a, p.6)</p>
<p><b><u>Action for Sustainability</u></b></p> <p>“Action for Sustainability works to embed sustainability within regional strategies and activities and to integrate our economic, environmental and social progress to develop sustainable, mutually reinforcing, solutions....a sustainability appraisal of the <b>Regional Economic Strategy (RES)</b>....a sustainability appraisal of the <b>Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)</b>.”</p> <p>(NWRA, 2004, p.8)</p>

**B). East Midlands**

The EM strategies considered also widely use cross-referencing as a policy coordination mechanism, as exhibited in the quotes illustrated in Table 4.9. In a far

**Table 4.9: Cross-Referencing Between the EM RES, RHS, RSS and IRS**

**Regional Economic Strategy**

“The Strategy is fully integrated with other key regional and inter-regional strategies and plans, in particular, the **Regional Spatial, Transport and Housing Strategies**. Strong links are also made to regional priorities for innovation; sustainable food and farming; environmental enhancement and protection; energy and waste management; freight; education; community safety and cohesion; culture and health.”

(EM DA, 2006, p.14)

“Annex D of this Strategy provides more detail on how the RES links to other regional strategies within the framework of the **Integrated Regional Strategy**.”

(EM DA, 2006, p.15)

**Regional Housing Strategy**

“The **Regional Housing Strategy (RHS)** is part of the **Integrated Regional Strategy (IRS)**, sitting alongside the **Regional Economic Strategy (RES)** and the **Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)** that is developed from **Regional Planning Guidance (RPG)**.”

(EM Regional Housing Board, 2004, p.4)

**Regional Spatial Strategy**

“Government guidance recommends regional strategies such as the **Regional Plan** and the **RES** should be drawn up within an overarching sustainable development framework to ensure consistency. In the East Midlands this is provided by the **East Midlands Integrated Regional Strategy (IRS)** developed by the **East Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA)**. Within an overall policy framework it comprises four themes: Environment; Social; Economic; Spatial.... The **Regional Plan** primarily supports the spatial theme of the **IRS** (which includes transport), and the **RES**, the economic theme. **EMRA** is leading the development of the environmental and social themes, including health and social exclusion. All elements of the **IRS** policy framework have been used to inform the development of the **Regional Plan**.”

(EMRA, 2006a, p.3)

**Integrated Regional Strategy**

“The **IRS** Framework ensures that policies and strategies are not prepared in isolation but in a compatible and integrated way. The **Regional Economic Strategy, Regional Spatial Strategy, Regional Environment Strategy** and the family of social strategies - **Investment for Health, Housing and Time for Culture** – are examples of some of the component strategies of the **IRS** Framework. They have been developed within the context provided by the **IRS** Framework and together will help the region move towards its vision, objectives and priorities.”

(EMRA, 2005, p.4)

more coordinated manner than the NW, however, all strategies acknowledge their position as component strategies within the context of the IRS. In this way the RHS, RES and RSS mutually acknowledge that they sit alongside each other under an overarching sustainable framework that is provided by the IRS. Within this

framework the RES, RSS and RHS also note how they provide policy contexts for each other. So for example the RHS refers to its need to be joined up with the RES and RSS, while the RES explicitly states its intention to provide the economic context for RSS land use and spatial development policies. It expresses a desire to be mutually supportive and reinforcing and aspires that the RFA will assist in this. The RSS, however, is not so explicit in its cross-referencing, but rather does so tacitly in its introduction through an extended reference to the IRS. This can be understood when read alongside the IRS, which expresses a desire to coordinate the policy of the RSS, RES and RHS across the environmental, social and economic frames of reference and across territory in the spatial sense.

### **C). Discussion**

In both cases studied cross-referencing is popular in all four strategies, but rather than expressing this throughout the documents, the links to other strategies are expressed in their introductions. In this sense cross-referencing is used in both cases as a means of setting the broader scene or policy context for each strategy, the RSS for example placing its spatial policy content within a wider economic, housing and sustainable development public policy remit. It appears that the EM IRS has provided a more lucid framework for cross-referencing than AfS in the NW, which again emphasises the less central role of AfS in assisting spatial policy integration in its region.

#### **4.4.2 Integral Coordinating Mechanisms**

##### **A). North West**

All four NW strategies use a range of integral coordinating mechanisms that assist in coordinating their spatial policies. A number of mechanisms are used, which include similar visions and objectives, the basing of policies on joint research and evidence bases, the use of identical spatial concepts such as housing markets, and city-regions that express strong links to the *Northern Way* (ODPM, 2004b) and the mainstreaming of sustainable development throughout the documents.

The RSS, RES and RHS all express very similar visions, although each are couched within the particular spatial, economic and housing policy slants of their documents respectively. For example, Table 4.10 compares the visions of the RSS and RES. As

one can see from the parts highlighted in bold, both visions exhibit many commonalities, such as a highly developed knowledge economy, the elimination of economic disparities, a high quality of life for all and vibrant rural areas. The RHS

**Table 4.10: North West RSS and RES Visions Compared**

**RSS Vision:**

“By 2021 we aim to see **Manchester and Liverpool** firmly established as world class cities thanks to their **international connections, highly developed service and knowledge sectors and flourishing culture, sport and leisure industries**. The growth and development of the Central Lancashire City Region as a focus for **economic growth** will continue, **building on the existing individual strengths** of the urban centres around commerce, **higher education, advanced manufacturing** and resort tourism. The region’s towns and cities will offer strong and distinctive centres for their hinterlands, with **attractive, high quality living environments** that meet the needs of their inhabitants; our areas of **natural beauty** will become the setting for **viable, rural communities that enjoy increased prosperity and quality of life**, without any compromise to the character of their surroundings.

By 2021 we will see a North West that has realised a **higher quality of life for all its citizens** through **improved prosperity, embracing the principles of sustainable development**, thereby **reducing economic and other disparities** within the North West and with the UK as a whole.”

(NWRA, 2006a, p.2)

**RES Vision:**

A dynamic, sustainable international economy which competes on the basis of **knowledge, advanced technology and an excellent quality of life for all** where:

- 1). **Productivity and enterprise levels are high, in a low carbon economy, driven by innovation, leadership excellence and high skills;**
- 2). **Manchester and Liverpool are vibrant European cities and, with Preston, are key drivers of the city-regional growth;**
- 3). **Growth opportunities around Crewe, Chester, Warrington, Lancaster and Carlisle are fully developed;**
- 4). **Key growth assets are fully utilised (priority sectors, the higher education and science base, ports/airports, strategic regional sites, the natural environment especially the Lake District and the rural economy);**
- 5). **The economies of East Lancashire, Blackpool, Barrow and west Cumbria are regenerated;**
- 6). **Employment rates are high and concentrations of low employment are eliminated.**

(NWDA, 2006, p.3)

vision also expresses similar intent, emphasising sustainable urban and rural communities, as does the AfS vision, which emphasises economic, social and environmental sustainability. A large number of RSS stakeholders in the NW expressed a desire for one integrated strategic vision which all strategies in the

regions would use. The vision approach of the EM was suggested, which is discussed below.

The objectives for each of the strategies also act as internal coordination mechanisms between the strategies as they overlap in many respects. So, for example, both the RES and RSS express similar economic intentions in relation to support for business; skills and education; people and jobs; infrastructure; integrated transport; and quality of life. In an environmental sense the RSS and AfS share a number of common objectives such as economy in the use of land and buildings; the active management of mineral resources; and the need to mitigate and adapt to climate change. In terms of housing provision the RHS and RSS objectives also overlap. So, for example, the four priorities of the RHS for urban regeneration; affordable homes and balanced communities; decent homes in thriving neighbourhoods and addressing social exclusion; all find commonalities in the objectives of the RSS, RES and AfS.

The RSS also shares integral coordinating mechanisms with the RHS and RES through the use of similar policies and spatial concepts. For example, the RSS states that in its preparation the RA, GO and DA:

“...have worked together to find a way of aligning [the] three strategies, including: joint commissioning of research; shared representation on working and steering groups; and the use of shared evidence on economic scenarios, housing markets, transport priorities and other relevant issues.”

(NWRA, 2006, p.6)

This approach provided for fundamental commonalities between policies in all three strategies. For instance the regional policy framework of the RSS (see Box 4.2) of a sustainable economy; a healthy society; integrated transport and environmental enhancement and protection; are strongly echoed in the chapter themes in the RES, which address business; skills and education; people and jobs; infrastructure; and quality of life. These themes are also clearly represented in the four priorities of the RHS referred to above.

In relation to spatial concepts the RHS, RES and RSS all use the same city-regions and sub-regional divisions, the same settlement hierarchies and the same sequential

approaches to development. All three strategies attribute their use of the city-region concept to the *Northern Way* (ODPM, 2004b). Other identical spatial concepts are the use of identical sub-regional housing market areas in the RSS, RHS and RES, which is also reflected in the fact that the RHS depends on the RSS for sub-regional housing allocations. The RES and RSS also exhibit spatial policy commonalities through the use of the same strategic regional sites for development, the same prioritisation of transport projects and the identification of Chester as a location of significant economic potential. The high level of common integral coordinating mechanisms in the RES, RHS and RSS is understandable, not only through the use of common evidence bases, but also due to the fact that they were reviewed around the same time. As a result all three strategies connect growth and social imperatives in the same manner, while also emphasising the same housing and transport policies and the use of the same targets and indicators for monitoring and evaluation. In this respect it is not surprising therefore that the SA of the NW draft RSS discussed above found the strategy to have a strong economic bias.

AfS as the regions RSDf has also acted as a crucial coordinating mechanism for the RES and RSS in that it has provided the same basis for the SA of both strategies, ensuring greater consistency between the two in terms of sustainable development, in addition to the mainstreaming of sustainability within each of the strategies. This relationship does not exist between the RHS and AfS, in part due to the fact that there is no statutory requirement for a SA of the RHS. As stated, the RHS does not in any part refer to AfS, by-passing this strategy to instead draw on national government guidance on sustainable issues, such as the Sustainable Communities Strategy (ODPM, 2003c). So, although it is concerning that the RHS does not draw in a horizontal sense on established regional sustainable development policy, it is comforting to note that it draws from a different source ensuring that sustainability concerns are integrated into housing policy.

### **B). *East Midlands***

The use of integral coordination mechanisms is also widespread in the EM strategies reviewed and in some respects these are much more closely aligned than those in the NW. This is particularly evident in the use of visions. As illustrated in Table 4.11 the EMs, IRS, RSS and RHS all use identical visions, which the latter two strategies

**Table 4.11: The EM RSS/IRS/RHS and RES Visions Compared**

<p><b><u>RSS/IRS/RHS Vision:</u></b> “The East Midlands will be recognised as a region with a high quality of life and sustainable communities that thrives because of its <b>vibrant economy, rich cultural and environmental diversity</b> and the way it <b>creatively addresses social inequalities</b>, manages its resources and contributes to a safer, more inclusive society.”</p> <p>(EMRA, 2006a, p.8)</p>
<p><b><u>RES Vision:</u></b> “By 2020, the East Midlands will be a <i>flourishing region</i> - with <b>growing and innovative businesses, skilled people in good quality jobs</b>, participating in healthy, inclusive communities and living in thriving and attractive places.”</p> <p>(EMDA, 2006, p.9)</p>

explicitly took from the IRS as constituent strategies within the IRS framework. The vision of the RES, although different in its expression, shows many commonalities with the vision of the IRS, as shown in Table 4.11, which ‘bolds’ similar key concepts. In this way both visions aspire to a thriving or flourishing region; with a vibrant economy or growing businesses and quality jobs; with a more inclusive society or an inclusive community.

The coherence with which the four EM strategies coordinate their objectives is best illustrated by the sustainable development objectives of the IRS, illustrated in Table 4.12. There is a very high degree of overlap between these objectives and those of the RSS, displayed in Box 4.9 above (p.140). In fact, every RSS objective, although not grouped in the same manner, finds a resonance in the four themes and respective objectives of the IRS. So for example RSS objectives such as reducing social exclusion and improving health; environmental and biodiversity protection and enhancement; improved access to jobs and housing; or energy conservation and reducing the need to travel; all strongly overlap with IRS objectives. Due to this strong coordinating role of the IRS in the EM as the region’s fulcrum for sustainable development, the RSS objectives also find an almost identical resonance with the objectives of the RES and RHS, although understandably, the objectives of the latter two strategies are couched in language that more strongly emphasises their economic and housing policy slants. In addition to this closer coordination of strategy objectives than was observed in the NW, the understanding in the EMs that the RSS,



**Table 4.12: IRS Sustainable Development Objectives by Theme**

**Social**

- To ensure that the existing and future housing stock meets the housing needs of all communities in the region;
- To improve health and reduce health inequalities by promoting healthy lifestyles, protecting health and providing health services;
- To provide better opportunities for people to value and enjoy the region's heritage and participate in cultural and recreational activities;
- To improve community safety, reduce crime and the fear of crime;
- To promote and support the development and growth of social capital across the communities of the region.

**Environmental**

- To protect, enhance and manage the rich diversity of the natural, cultural and built environmental and archaeological assets of the region;
- To enhance and conserve the environmental quality of the region by increasing the environmental infrastructure;
- To manage prudently the natural resources of the region including water, air quality, soil and minerals;
- To minimise energy usage and to develop the region's renewable energy resource, reducing dependency on non-renewable resources;
- To involve people, through changes to lifestyle and at work, in preventing and minimising adverse local, regional and global environmental impacts.

**Economic**

- To create high quality employment opportunities and to develop a culture of ongoing engagement and excellence in learning and skills, giving the region a competitive edge in how we acquire and exploit knowledge;
- To develop a strong culture of enterprise and innovation, creating a climate within which entrepreneurs and world-class business can flourish;
- To provide the physical conditions for a modern economic structure, including infrastructure to support the use of new technologies.

**Spatial**

- To ensure that the location of development makes efficient use of existing physical infrastructure and helps to reduce the need to travel;
- To promote and ensure high standards of sustainable design and construction, optimising the use of previously developed land and buildings;
- To minimise waste and to increase the re-use and recycling of waste materials;
- To improve accessibility to jobs and services by increasing the use of public transport, cycling and walking, and reducing traffic growth and congestion.

(EMRA, 2005, p.9)

RES and RHS each have a specific constituent role within the IRS has resulted in the EM RSS being more balanced in sustainable spatial policy terms, exhibiting none of the economic bias observed in the NW RSS.

Both the EM's RSS and RES have drawn on each other to create a number of other mechanisms that ensure coordination of these strategies. In terms of economic policy, the RSS uses the same evidence base as the RES, while in a spatial context the RES uses very similar development principles. For example, both strategies emphasise maintaining a supply of land for economic and housing uses, sequentially concentrating first on existing urban areas, emphasising high standards of design and infrastructure and utility connectivity, while ensuring general accessibility and social cohesion, along with diversification in rural areas. In respect of these they share the same road, rail, public transport and airport priorities, along with regional priorities for employment land, housing and regeneration. This coordination of economic and spatial policy is further reinforced through the use of the same sub-areas in both strategies, along with overlapping targets and indicators for monitoring and evaluation.

The RHS also utilises a number of integral coordination mechanisms, ensuring a close coherence with the RSS. As with the RES it uses identical sub-areas and the same sequential approach to development that is expressed in the RSS, in addition to similar targets and indicators. Close alignment between the RSS and RHS is also ensured through the same policies such as balance, inclusion and affordable housing in urban and rural areas and through the use of identical housing market areas, which of course is not surprising as the RHS draws on the RSS for sub-regional housing figures.

Sustainable development has also acted as a fundamental integral coordination mechanism in the EM and in a much more overt manner than in the NW. As stated, that IRS has been crucial in this respect, so in addition to providing the regional context for visions and objectives of the RSS, RES and RHS, the IRS has also acted as the basis for SA of the former two strategies. Therefore the IRS has ensured that sustainable development has been unequivocal in its mainstreaming throughout all three documents, therefore guaranteeing close coordination between all their policies.

### **C). Discussion**

Integral coordinating mechanisms are widely used in the strategies of both cases studied. They exist in a number of guises, including similar visions and objectives and similar policy expressions and spatial concepts. Together these approaches appear to provide a relatively coherent framework of common language to coordinate regional spatial policy. This suggests the emergence of a common spatial narrative in each region across different sectoral planners regarding how they conceptualise their region and its future development. Such a common regional narrative should increase mutual understanding and assist in integrating policy and spatial policy actors/organisations, therefore reducing the potential for conflict. Without doubt, the key integral coordinating mechanism used by all strategies is the mainstreaming of sustainable development. As noted above, this is advantageous, as it ensures that more fine grained inconsistencies between spatial policies are more likely to be recognised and mitigated, moving spatial planning closer to delivering on its intended purpose.

#### **4.4.3 Over-Arching Regional Strategies**

##### **A). North West**

Over-arching regional strategies, as defined in Chapter Two, typically fulfil the role of an overall guiding strategy, within which other regional strategies sit. Such a strategy typically identifies areas with problems, pressures and opportunities and deals with avoidance measures. In addition to cross-referencing and integral coordinating mechanisms, it also sets out targets and indicators driving all regional strategies (Hammond, 2003) and makes explicit commitments to delivery. In the NW AfS fulfils this role, while the RSS, RES and RHS illustrate certain traits that allow them to be classed as 'proto' over-arching regional strategies.

The RES, RHS and RSS all exhibit over-arching regional strategy elements, but stop short due to their policy specificity and ability to deliver. In addition to their prolific use of cross-referencing and integral coordinating mechanisms throughout their content, all three of these strategies identify problems, opportunities and avoidance measures. This can be seen for example in the RHS, which takes an integrated approach to addressing the very different types of housing markets that exist across the NW; or in the RSS and RES which address the potential problems faced by rural

areas and how best to use regional assets in order to overcome such spatial and economic imbalances. All three strategies also feed into and underpin each other, but their policy specificity sectoralises somewhat their expression of targets and indicators and all three fall short in relation to the implications of their delivery, particularly regarding detail of funding streams and temporal phasing.

The Region's RSDF, AfS, is an over-arching regional strategy, which was clearly illustrated above in relation to the manner in which its sustainable development aspirations are integral to the regional strategies considered. AfS sets out a clear framework of regional objectives, as illustrated in Table 4.13, within which all strategies operate. These objectives cover all policy concerns from enterprise, innovation and social equity to biodiversity and landscapes, education and active citizenship. It also provides a common monitoring framework, which is incorporated by all strategies into their own monitoring and evaluation frameworks. Overall though, AfS has been at its strongest as an overarching regional strategy through its use as an agreed set of sustainable development principles, which have provided the basis for the SA of strategies within the region, therefore ensuring greater consistency in spatial policy.

As confirmed by the NW RA RSDF policy officer above (Box 4.14, p.149), the over-arching role of AfS was inhibited somewhat through the way it was regarded by some RSS stakeholders, who referred instead to the National Sustainable Development Strategy (DEFRA, 2005). Other stakeholders explained this was due to reluctance by the DA to regard the AfS as over-arching, instead insisting that all strategies be seen on the same level, and indeed such 'parity of esteem' regional strategy issues have been noted by others (Cooper Simms, 2002; Pearce & Ayres, 2006). Another interviewee stated that the AfS steering group had only ever 'preached to the converted', never promoting the strategy widely among public sector organisations, therefore creating a situation where it was only narrowly regarded. The EM IRS approach was suggested as a more suitable model (see Box 4.17). Despite these general drawbacks regarding AfS, it has still managed to impact in an overarching manner, although not in the comprehensive way of the EM IRS.

**Table 4.13: AfS Regional Objectives by Regional Strategy**

<b>Regional Objective</b>	<b>Strategy</b>
Mainstream sustainable development and integrate activities across the region	AfS
Raise public awareness of issues and solutions through education sustainable development	AfS
Sustainably produce and manage energy resources	Regional Sustainable Energy Strategy
Manage waste sustainably, minimise its production and increase reuse, recycling and recovery rates	Regional Waste Strategy
Improve the competitiveness and productivity of business	Regional Economic Strategy
Exploit the growth potential of business sectors	Regional Economic Strategy
Ensure the availability of a balanced portfolio of employment sites	Regional Economic Strategy
Develop and exploit the Region's knowledge base	Regional Economic Strategy
Deliver rural renaissance	Regional Economic Strategy
Deliver urban renaissance	Regional Economic Strategy
Secure economic inclusion	Regional Economic Strategy
Develop and maintain a healthy labour market	Regional Economic Strategy
Develop the strategic transport, communications and economic infrastructure	Regional Economic Strategy
Develop and market the Region's image	Regional Economic Strategy
Protect, enhance and manage the Region's rich diversity of cultural and built environmental and archaeological assets	Making it Count: the North West Historic Environment
Protect and enhance the biodiversity, local character and accessibility of the landscape across the region	Regional Biodiversity Strategy
Protect and enhance endangered species, habitats and sites of geological importance	Regional Biodiversity Strategy
Improve and protect inland and coastal waters	Vision for our Environment: Making it Happen
Increase the regional tree cover and ensure sustainable management of existing woodland	Regional Forestry Strategy
Achieve cleaner air for everyone	Vision for our Environment: Making it Happen
Economy in the use of land and buildings	Regional Spatial Strategy
Active management of mineral resources	Regional Spatial Strategy
Improve health and reduce health inequalities	Investment for Health Plan
Improve local access to good quality, affordable and resource efficient housing	Regional Housing Strategy
Reduce crime, disorder and fear of crime	Crime and Disorder Partnerships
Improve educational achievement, training and opportunities for lifelong learning and employability	Framework for Regional Employment and Skills Action
Increase the use of locally produced goods, foods and services	AfS
Improve choice and use of sustainable transport modes	Regional Transport Strategy
Mitigate and adapt to climate change	Regional Spatial Strategy
Restore and protect land and soil	National Soil Strategy

(NWRA, 2004, p.7)

#### **Box 4.17: NW RSS Stakeholder Views on Relationship Between AfS & RSS**

“AfS didn’t have credibility with some of those engaging in the region....The DA in particular was reluctant to buy in. Also there is a long debate in the region regarding the relationship of strategies. The DA sees all strategies at the same level, but AfS is supposed to be over arching like in the East Midlands. “

(Senior Spatial Planner, GONW, 2006)

“The AfS steering group....always preaching to the converted....never....to wider organisations , so public sector organisations may have heard of AfS, but don’t refer to or use it....But if it had taken the EM approach, things may have been different.”

(Regional Spatial Planner, CsA, 2006)

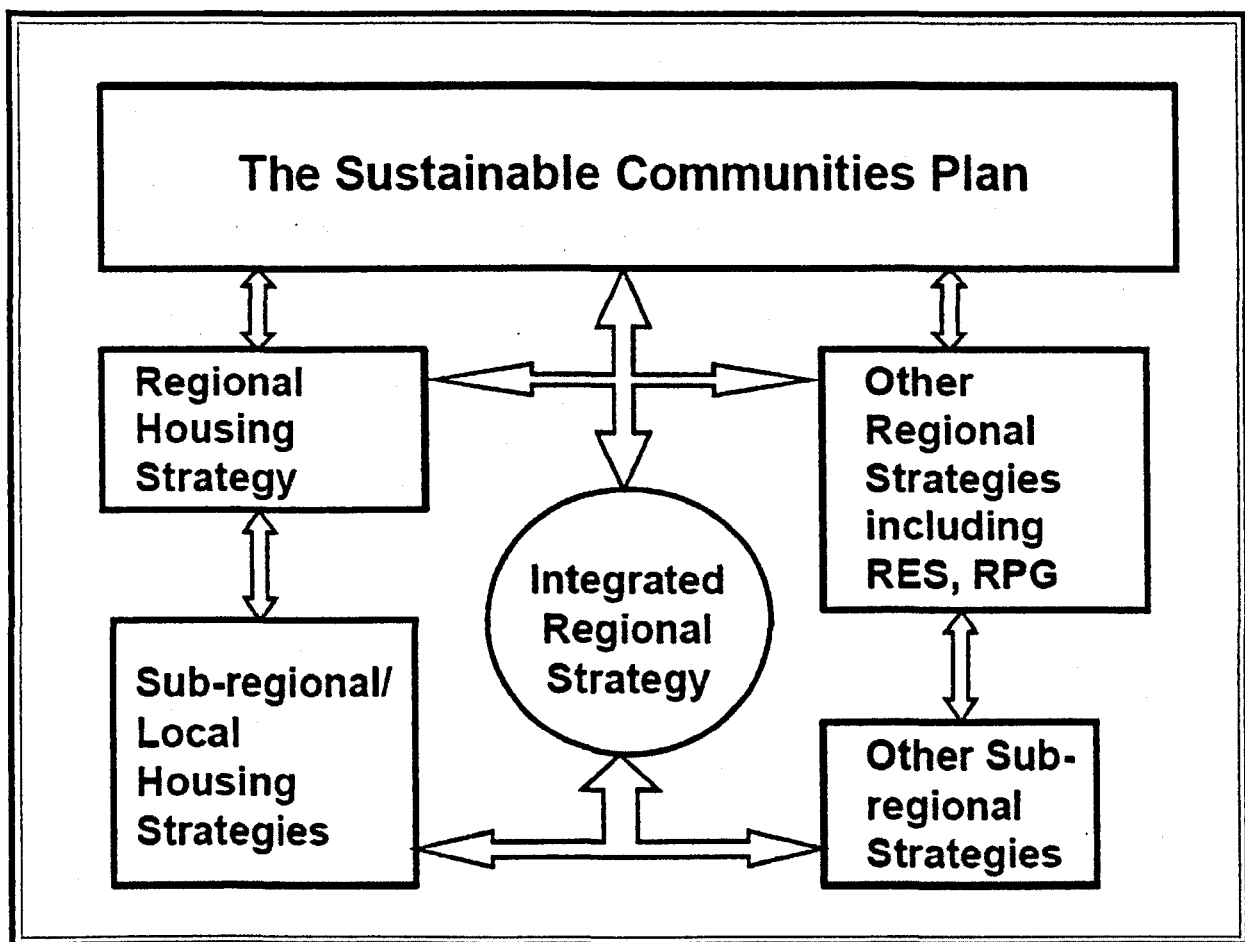
An additional NW over-arching regional strategy, which has already been discussed in detail, is the RFA, which is considered here as an extension of the RSS, RHS and RES. Although this is in effect an over-arching delivery plan for the region, it clearly draws together transport, housing and economic development policies and priorities from the RSS, RES and RHS, which it integrates in a prioritised manner, providing clear links to implementation agencies, funding streams and timescales. The RFA as an over-arching regional strategy also acknowledges problems, pressures and avoidance measures and proposes a number of targets and indicators that are clearly linked to those already expressed in the RSS, RES and RHS.

#### **B). *East Midlands***

As in the NW case, the EM RSS, RES and RHS all exhibit traits of being over-arching in the way they approach regional policy. Within their respective policy fields, they widely use the cross-referencing techniques and integral coordinating mechanisms discussed above, along with setting out pressures, opportunities and avoidance measures. For example, the RES identifies lower than average skill levels as a particular problem facing the region, suggesting investment to create a culture of innovation that begins at school; while the RSS and RHS both identify housing pressures in the south of the region and the need to coordinate for this through growth points. The overarching nature of the three documents is also expressed

through the use of a wide range of targets and indicators that drive their implementation. As in the NW, however, all strategies critically fall short of being over-arching due to their lack of specificity regarding implementation and funding mechanisms. Moreover, the specificity of their policy content limits their over-arching nature, despite the broader contextualisation of their policies within sustainable development that all three provide. This bounded sectoral specificity is illustrated in Figure 4.17 which is taken from the RHS and illustrates its context and that of other regional strategies within the Sustainable Communities Plan.

**Figure 4.17: EM RHS in the Context of the Sustainable Communities Plan**



(EMRHB, 2004, p.7)

The EM IRS goes further than AfS in the NW as an overarching regional strategy, moving beyond the supporting of SA of other regional strategies and the mainstreaming of sustainability concerns throughout their content. The IRS exhibits all elements of this type of strategy, such as identifying problems, opportunities and avoidance measures, which are contextualised through a number of cross-cutting



**Figure 4.18: Overarching Framework of EM IRS**



(EMRA, 2005, p.9)

regional challenges and sustainable development concerns. It also explicitly uses cross-referencing and integral coordinating mechanisms, as can be seen in Figure 4.18. This diagram from the IRS is unequivocal in how it places its regional vision and themed objectives at the heart of all other regional strategies and as stated above, this is overtly acknowledged in the RES, RHS and RSS, which regard themselves as sitting alongside each other as constituent strategies within the IRS framework. Furthermore the IRS provides a range of targets and indicators which also relate to its four themes and have been incorporated into the monitoring and evaluation intentions of its component strategies. Almost all interviewees were complementary of the IRS's role as an over-arching strategy that has facilitated policy integration in the region (see Box 4.18).

As with the NW, the EM RFA is considered here as an extension of the RES, RSS and RHS, but unlike the NW RFA, the EM RFA also considers itself within the context of the IRS, thereby enhancing its nature as an overarching delivery plan. As discussed, the EM RFA integrates and prioritises the transport, housing and economic policies of the RSS, RHS and RES, linking them to their respective



#### **Box 4.18: EM RSS Stakeholder Views of the IRS**

“IRS provided [a] high level context for SA and a language for discussing regional policy and all regional strategies.”

(Head Spatial Planner, EMRA, 2006)

“The IRS is there as an overarching strategy, it is very high level and I’m sure its not something that anyone could not sign up to.”

(Senior Spatial Planner, EMDA, 2006)

“The IRS has provided a clearer understanding of problems in region and now all strategies [are] saying the same thing in relation to the environment.... You have a coming together of the words and policy and [the] direction people want to go. Another benefit of IRS is that the long debate on the economy versus the environment has been pretty well explored.... [There is] a realisation that there are economic and social benefits from having a good environment.”

(Environmental Policy Officer, GOEM, 2006)

“To have an IRS is a good thing....it raises the consciousness of the importance of integration....it inspires integration....”

(Regional Spatial Planner, English Heritage, 2006)

funding streams, and implementation timescales and agencies. Furthermore, it acknowledges problems, pressures, opportunities and avoidance measures, while setting out a range of targets and indicators that are clearly linked to the RSS, RES, RHS and IRS.

#### ***C). Discussion***

The use of over-arching regional strategies in both regions provides a means to better coordinate and integrate spatial policy. While the RSDFs ensure that spatial policy is consistent and coordinated in a sustainable sense, the RFAs integrate policy in terms of delivery. Together both strategies bring greater coherence to regional spatial policy, but this is only truly comprehensive in relation to the transport, economic and housing funding strands of the RSDFs. The greatest all-embracing over-arching approach, however, is exhibited in the EM, where the RFA integrates its intentions in

the context of the IRS, in addition to the RES, RSS and RHS. The NW RFA is somewhat more limited in this regard.

One of the main reasons for choosing the cases studied was the existence of an IRS in the EM in contrast to the less integrated AfS in the NW; as the former was previously held up by central government as an ideal model to facilitate the horizontal integration of regional spatial policy. In other words, the IRS was expected to be a more sophisticated over-arching regional strategy. The evidence presented here would appear to support this original assumption in terms of policy integration. This assumption contrasts with the assertion of Snape *et al.*'s (2005) that although the IRS was useful in bringing about the integration of spatial policy, it was not in any way essential for this to happen. Taking note of this, it will be interesting in the next chapter to see if the IRS has also facilitated better policy actor integration in the EM as opposed to the NW.

#### **4.4.4 Integrated Regional Strategies**

As discussed in Chapter Two, an Integrated Regional Strategy will draw together and plan for all policies in a region, across economic, social, environmental and spatial spheres, while clearly setting out delivery mechanisms and related funding streams. There was no evidence in either case study for the existence of integrated regional strategies. A number of interviewees in both cases, however, particularly in the DAs and at a sub-regional level felt that there was definitely merit in combining the RES and RSS into one fully integrated regional strategy (see Box 4.19). This idea was not supported by all interviewees, with a single dissenting voice in each case study. Both interviewees agreed that a single regional strategy would be too complicated and too impenetrable, instead supporting the current approach of a suite of strategies that should constantly strive to improve their mutual coordination and integration.

It is important to note that although the overarching nature of the RFA and AfS in the NW and the RFA and IRS in the EM exhibit some strong characteristics of being integrated regional strategies, they fall short in several respects. This observation applies in particular to both RFAs due to their limited policy coverage and the NW AfS due to its more restricted regional policy coherence in comparison to the EM IRS. Although the IRS comes close to being an integrated regional strategy, in reality

#### **Box 4.19: EM and NW RSS Stakeholder Views of Integrating RES and RSS**

“There is a lot more that could be done to integrate the RES and RSS....A fully integrated strategy would help.”

(Senior Spatial Planner, EMDA, 2006)

“There are definitely grounds to integrate the RES and RSS....It is confusing for the public....[as] there are too many regional strategies, so some rationalisation would help”

(Spatial Planner, Nottingham City Council, 2006)

“For better integration why not have one regional strategy.”

(Senior Spatial Planner, NWDA, 2006)

“Also, [we] need a fully integrated strategy that is front-loaded, setting out the region’s role....with supporting policies to help it grow.”

(Spatial Planner, Merseyside City Region, 2006)

it is so only in name. If it were truly integrated, then it would incorporate the RES, RHS, RSS and a range of other regional strategies covering social, environmental and cultural policy issues.

The proposed integration of the RES and RSS, announced by the government in the summer of 2007 is certainly a move in the direction of a more integrated regional strategy, but again the limits of policy coverage emerge to make full integration incomplete, suggesting rather that they will be overarching in nature. The implications of this regional strategy integration are elaborated upon in the final chapter of this research.

## 4.5 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter set out to fulfil Objective Three: to examine the manner in which regional spatial policy is being integrated in RSSs. This began with establishing a basic institutional map, which illustrated the structural complexity that institutionally constitutes regional spatial planning policy, its actors/organisations and the networks that link them, both within the respective case study regional contexts and the national framework in which they sit. The multifaceted map produced illustrates a dense plethora of policies and stakeholders involved in the RSS preparation process, which is just one episode in regional spatial planning.

With a basic institutional understanding set out, the chapter then turned to a consideration of how spatial policy is integrated within the draft RSSs and between these documents and other strategies relevant to spatial policy, namely the RES, RHS and RSDF.

Both draft RSSs appear to be well coordinated in terms of spatial policy, although there were a number of 'teething' problems, in particular the distinction between spatial and transport objectives in the NW RSS and the possible need to integrate the three city regions into a single polycentric regional model. The EM RSS suffered from similar problems in relation to the absence of any polycentric conceptualisation of the three cities sub-area. Additional shortcomings were noted in both draft RSSs relating to climate change policy, carbon reduction targets and the need to establish strategic provision for travellers and gypsies. Despite these difficulties, both regions appear to have made a reasonably good first effort at coordinating spatial policy in their draft RSSs.

A consideration of the SA of each draft RSS shed further light on spatial policy coordination inconsistencies, illustrating more fine grained sustainability and therefore policy coherence discrepancies. This finding led to the conclusion that SA is therefore a sophisticated method in not only mainstreaming sustainable development throughout both RSSs, but also assisting in furthering spatial policy coordination.

The IPs of both draft RSSs assist the coordination of spatial policy in terms of monitoring and review requirements that will feed into annual progress reports. Both IPs, however, are scant in the detail of delivery, beyond references to other strategies and organisations that will assist in delivery. This is particularly a problem in the EM where the IP is part of the RSS, therefore making future short term changes more difficult than in the NW, where the IP is a separate document. Many of these IP drawbacks are mitigated by the RFAs in each region, which assist in solving the integrated delivery puzzle. They move each RSS beyond the coordination of housing, transport and economic spatial policy into the dimension of integrated delivery, with real world partners, addressing associated financial and spatial implications, within specified time periods. This is a big step in terms of integrating three essential strands of regional spatial policy and both regions aspire to taking this approach further in terms of policy coverage.

The integration of the draft RSS's spatial policy was also considered in the context of horizontal integration within each region, between the RSSs and other spatial policy strategies. The conceptualisation of spatial policy integration developed in Chapter Two proved very useful in this regard. The use of cross-referencing was popular in all strategies, particularly as a means of setting the regional policy context at the beginning of each strategy. The EM IRS was much stronger than the NW AfS as its more lucid framework assisted clearer cross-referencing between strategies in the EM. Both regional strategy suites also demonstrated the use of integral coordination mechanisms that brought about greater spatial policy coherency. These mechanisms included the use of similar visions and objectives, overlapping policies and the use of identical spatial concepts. This range of mechanisms illustrates the emergence of a common spatial narrative in each region, providing a familiar spatial planning language that is being mutually used and developed by a range of spatial planners across their respective environmental, economic and social policy sectors. Each narrative demonstrates a common sustainable spatial conceptualisation of each region and how spatial policy stakeholders see their region developing, which increases mutual understanding, assists in integrating spatial policy and actors, and reduces the likelihood of conflict.

The emergence of this common spatial planning 'cultural capital' in each region has no doubt been assisted by the over-arching nature of some of the regional strategies and the integration of spatial policy that they have brought about. Although the RSS, RES and RHS all exhibit tendencies in this direction they are in reality only 'proto' over-arching regional strategies. Their over-arching potential is limited by their policy specificity and their scant detail in relation to delivery. On the other hand, both the RSDFs and RFAs in each region exhibit many of the traits of over-arching strategies, although this only applies to the spatial aspects of housing, transport and economics. This is, however, a big leap forward in terms of regional spatial policy integration, which was strongest in the EM, where the RFA and IRS were strongly integrated, along with the RSS, RES and RHS. From this it is concluded that the EM IRS is indeed an exemplar of assisting horizontal regional spatial policy integration, due to the sophistication of its over-arching nature. In terms of integrating spatial policy this justifies the original reason for the choice of cases studied, although it remains to be seen if the EM IRS has also facilitated the integration of regional spatial policy stakeholders, an issue discussed in the next chapter as part of a broader consideration of the integration of regional policy stakeholders in the development of their RSSs.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **INTEGRATING SPATIAL POLICY STAKEHOLDERS IN THE RSS PROCESS: EXPERIENCES OF MEDIATION**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

Having examined the manner in which the draft RSSs coordinate and integrate spatial policy internally and intra-regionally, this chapter turns to contemplate Objective Four: to consider the experiences of spatial planning actors and organisations in mediating and negotiating the RSS preparation process. Assessing this will primarily involve a consideration of the experiences of a range of stakeholders who participated in the RSS process, with particular attention to the lead organisations of the various strategies considered in the previous chapter; namely the RAs, the DAs and the GOs.

This chapter is divided into two main sections. The first and principal section provides an overview of each case study's RSS preparation processes; followed by a discussion of participant's views of the process and issues they perceive to have been influential. This discussion is then drawn out further to examine stakeholder experiences of mediating and negotiating RSS preparation horizontally through regional stakeholder networks and vertically through central and local government. Following this is a brief exploration of other factors relevant to the RSS preparation process, including delivery and how stakeholders felt future RSS reviews could be improved.

The final section of this chapter reintroduces the typology of actor/organisation integration considered in Chapter Two. The purpose of this is to gain insight into the main types of spatial actor/organisation coordination and integration that permeate both RSS processes. This will complement the typological discussion of spatial policy coordination and integration at the end of the previous chapter. Together the process and policy analysis presented will assist in fleshing out a more comprehensive institutional map to contextualise the next chapter's discussion of

mediating the governance structures that surround RSS development and the professional cultural change that this has required.

## 5.2 INTEGRATING SPATIAL POLICY ACTORS AND ORGANISATIONS IN THE RSS PROCESS

### 5.2.1 The RSS Consultation Processes

#### A). *North West*

Table 5.1 sets out the main stages of consultation in the NW RSS development process. This RSS was produced to a very tight deadline in just eighteen months, as the SoS required that all three northern regions produce their RSSs within similar

**Table 5.1: Main Consultation Stages in NW RSS Development Process**

<b>Time Period</b>	<b>Phase of Development</b>
Winter 2004/2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project and other reference groups set up</li> <li>• Technical work commissioned and undertaken</li> <li>• Drafting of issues and options for key elements</li> <li>• One day conference to develop issues from online-consultation</li> <li>• Began initial SA scoping</li> </ul>
Winter/Spring 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advice from Section 4(4) authorities on sub regional spatial planning approaches</li> <li>• Informal working consultation on options for key strategic elements of RSS</li> </ul>
Spring 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation on options</li> </ul>
Spring/Summer 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drafting of RSS</li> </ul>
Autumn 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informal consultation on interim draft of RSS, including eight consultation workshops</li> <li>• SA of plan</li> </ul>
January 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publication of draft RSS, with SA report, pre-consultation statement and implementation plan</li> </ul>
Spring 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RSS deposited for consultation.</li> </ul>
Autumn/Winter 2006/2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EIP</li> </ul>

(NWRA, 2006c, p.7)



timeframes, in order to support the overall Northern Way growth agenda (Head Spatial Planner, NWRA, 2006).

The NWRA consulted widely during the preparation of the strategy, with the statutory SEPs, as required by government (ODPM, 2004a). By the end of the process, the RA had received approximately four thousand statements of support, objection and observation from over seven hundred individuals, organisations and interest groups (NWRA, 2006c). The SA of the developing RSS was ongoing throughout the process and in addition to the professional consultants involved, the RA also made a conscious attempt to engage a number of non-environmental sector stakeholders in the process. This approach was couched in a number of consultation principles that the RA followed, which were set out in the RSS Project Plan (NWRA, 2006c). These expressed the need to include stakeholders not usually heard; the need to focus resources on existing networks; to recognise the different abilities of groups to be involved; and the need to coordinate the process carefully to manage the expectations of stakeholders.

Throughout the process, the main focus for consultation was a dedicated web site, run by Dialogue by Design and facilitated by Forum for the Future. The site provided a means for all stakeholders to comment on the draft spatial framework and associated policies, at various stages during the consultation process. Other more formal consultation approaches included joint working with regional stakeholders; time limited project and other reference groups performing specific technical policy work; in addition to other groups, forums and networks that were already in existence in the region, such as the NW Rural Affairs Forum, the Regional Housing Board and the NW Coastal Forum (NWRA, 2006c).

The main consultation for the draft RSS was carried out through the RA. This consultation structure consisted of a number of advisory and priority groups until the summer of 2005, when changes in the RA resulted in a reconfiguration of the networks involved. Up until this period the advisory groups were as follows:

- 1). Planning, Environment and Transport Key Priority Group (PETKPG), which was the lead RA group on the RSS. This group constituted a range of

representatives from local government; the economic, environmental and education sectors; housing and transport groups; and utilities.

- 2). AfS Management Board, which assisted in mainstreaming sustainable development in the document and consisted of similar membership to PETKPG.
- 3). Regional Planning Advisory Group (RPAG)
- 4). Regional Transport Advisory Group (RTAG)
- 5). The Regional Technical Advisory Board on Waste (RTAB)
- 6). The Regional Aggregates Working Party (RAWP)

The latter three groups consisted predominantly of local government members, along with representatives from the NWDA and GONW.

After the RA reforms in the summer of 2005, the PETKPG was disbanded, along with all other key priority groups, except the RPAG and the RTAG, as these were seen as an effective and useful means of engaging with regional and sub-regional spatial planning and transport stakeholders. The executive board, as described in Chapter Four (Table 4.2, p.123), was then established, along with a new RSS Steering Group that was chaired by a local authority chief executive officer and consisted of a senior LA officer from each of the region's five sub-regions and a representative from the NWDA.

### **B). *East Midlands***

By the time the EM were reviewing their RSS, the region's RPG had been renewed three times since 1998. The final RPG was partially reviewed as an RSS and issued in March 2005. This was because when the EMRA had undertaken this RPG review, the planning White Paper had been issued for some time and it was clear that RPG would be replaced with the RSS. As a result the RA decided to produce a 'partially' spatial RSS, with a view to finalising it with another partial review after the PCPA and after further preparatory work had been carried out. Over this time the structure and style of the RSS has broadly continued, with the belief that "...if it ain't broke, why fix it?" (Head Spatial Planner, EMRA, 2006).

Table 5.2 provides an overview of the main stages of consultation and stakeholder involvement during the development of the EM draft RSS. According to the EM

**Table 5.2: Main Consultation Stages in the East Midlands RSS Development Process**

<b>Time Period</b>	<b>Phase of Development</b>
April – July 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Response to issue papers and project plan</li> <li>• Initial drafting of aims and objectives</li> <li>• Draft work on statement of public participation</li> <li>• Initial SA scoping report</li> </ul>
March – May 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spring seminars addressing retail, energy, waste, housing, employment, water issues, culture, transport and environmental infrastructure policies</li> </ul>
June 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• S-RS seminars covering the Three Cities sub-area; Northern sub-area; and Lincoln Policy Area sub-area</li> <li>• Final SA of draft RSS</li> </ul>
September 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publication of draft RSS, with SA report, pre-consultation statement and implementation plan</li> </ul>
September – December 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RSS deposited for consultation</li> </ul>
May – June 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EIP</li> </ul>

(EMRA, 2006b, p.2)

draft RSS Consultation Statement (published as an appendix to the draft RSS), the consultation listed a range of existing networks, including the RA advisory groups referred to in Chapter Four (Table 4.3, p.124), constituting of all the regional stakeholders required in Appendix D of PPS11 (ODPM, 2004a), including local government; business; environment; social and voluntary groups; and MEPs. The RA also took the initiative to gain the assistance of Planning Aid EM in order to consult with ‘hard to reach groups’. It did so through existing networks and promotion of the RSS consultation process through the media and the web. This included a number of seminars with the intention of raising awareness, which were recognised as being more successful than expected, assisting in increasing the profile of regional spatial planning. The Consultation Statement also sets out the main feedback received, by individual RSS policy, and states how this was taken into account. The RA acknowledged that there were drawbacks to their consultation process, including insufficient engagement with gypsy and traveller groups; an inability to utilise citizen panels, as their timetables were not concurrent with those of the RSS preparation process; and a general disappointment that more people did not attend consultation

events (EMRA, 2006b). During the consultation for the RSS, the EMRA received over eight thousand statements of support, observation and objection from approximately one thousand two hundred individuals, bodies and groups. The SA of the draft RSS was ongoing throughout the whole process and in addition to professional consultants, a range of regional stakeholders were also engaged in this process (EMRA, 2006b).

### **C). Discussion**

The consultation processes in both cases appear to have been conducted in line with government advice as set out in PPS 11 (ODPM, 2004a). The usual economic, environmental, housing and transport policy sectors were consulted, with an emphasis on using existing networks, which appears to have worked reasonably well. Of concern, however, is the manner in which the NWRA reconstituted its networks for consultation over the summer of 2005. The impact of this, if any, on the NW RSS consultation will be considered in the next sub-section, particularly in contrast to the EM, which not only retained its existing established consultation networks through the RA, but was also 'off the starting blocks' somewhat in that it already had a partially reviewed RSS. Also of relevance here are efforts by both RAs to consult with socially excluded and hard to reach groups, which did not prove easy and again suggests the necessity of focusing on whether the level of mutual policy understanding developed in more established networks actually makes consultation easier than in newer networks, where consultation may be once off. To begin to understand these issues and others surrounding the RSS preparation processes, we now turn to the views of RSS stakeholders.

## **5.2.2 Participants Views of the Process**

### **A). North West**

In general, all NW stakeholders praised the RA's RSS consultation, although there were many criticisms specific to parts of the process. The RA consulted a very broad constituency of stakeholders, which was an extremely resource-intensive process, leading some to comment that this was perhaps too extensive and not focused enough:

“It was never a case of under-representation, in fact it was the opposite, it was a scatter-gun approach....The key players were not engaged enough at the right time to shape it.”

(Senior Spatial Planner, Blackpool MBC, 2006)

Despite this concern, most stakeholders recognised the difficulties encountered by the RA in attempting to integrate a range of spatial policies and stakeholders in the RSS process, in addition to coordinating the evolving RSS with other regional and sub-regional strategies.

At the beginning of the RSS consultation process, the issues and options stage raised a number of reservations for some participating stakeholders, which centred around two main issues. The first issue related to the fact that the RSS process did not begin with a ‘blank sheet of paper’ and instead carried forward a lot of the strategic content of the extant RPG, which at that point had only recently been reviewed. This move was very strongly supported within the RA and GO (see Box 5.1), although other stakeholders were critical of the limited issues and options that resulted. Questions emanated in particular from environmental and local government stakeholders, who while acknowledging that many environmental issues were already addressed in the RPG, were critical of for example carrying forward RPG regional strategic sites for employment as ‘a box ticking exercise’ without real consideration of the

### **Box 5.1: NW RSS Stakeholder Support for Issues and Options**

“The RSS is a shift towards implementation and applying policies where as the RPG was more about policy justification with narrative and sustainable development as the core principal....So the core content of RSS is nothing new compared to RPG....Therefore starting [the RSS] with a blank page was not helpful....even though some stakeholders expected this”

(Head Spatial Planner, NWRA, 2006)

“The RA was right to take the existing RPG as the starting-point, as the RPG has only been recently reviewed through a lengthy process.”

(Senior Spatial Planner, GONW, 2006)

sustainability of such sites, such as accessibility by public transport (see Box 5.2). This limited consideration of initial issues and options relates to a second criticism, that from the outset, the NW RSS was also strongly bound by national government policies, in particular the Northern Way. As a result, spatial concepts such as city-regions were seen as a given and not an option (see Box 5.2). These concerns surrounding the beginning of the RSS process created an impression among stakeholders of a lack of meaningful engagement at the outset, and indeed this appears to have been an important reason for rationalising RA consultation networks

### **Box 5.2: NW RSS Stakeholder Criticism of Issues and Options**

“The issues and options workshops were a waste of time....It was difficult to make real progress...The options were limited to certain areas and there wasn’t much on environmental issues, but then again there maybe wasn’t much to address due to recent RPG.”

(Regional Policy Officer, EN, 2006)

“As the RA continued with the RPG there was no blank sheet of paper at the start of the RSS process....so there were no real choices in issues and options, these were already decided....This raised issues of sustainability concerns. For example the regional strategic sites for employment has been on the books for years but had not been assessed in a sustainable way, for example in terms of public transport access”

(Regional Spatial Planner, EA, 2006)

“The issues and options....were facilitated well....but there is a question that this consultation was just box ticking and this is understandable....It was difficult to understand how the issues and options were put together, hence the establishment of the RA RSS steering group and rationalisation of consultation networks in July 2005.”

(Senior Spatial Planner, Cheshire Co. Co., 2006)

“The issues and options papers were just a list of contents rather than real issues and options....They were very thematic as opposed to spatial....In fairness to the RA there was a lot of pressure from the ODOM to speed up the process....[in all] northern regions....[so there would be] coherency within the Northern Way....[so] city regions [were] a given.”

(Senior Spatial Planner, Merseyside, 2006)

in summer 2005 (Senior Spatial Planner, Cheshire Co. Co., 2006). This rationale appears to have assisted, as stakeholders acknowledged that the process became more integrated as it progressed from here.

In general, there were also prioritisation and sequencing problems in the initial phases of the process. In relation to the former, this was recognised in how the original issues and options were framed, but not prioritised, as the RA instead focused on consensus, sidestepping difficult decisions:

“So there were no clear prioritisations [at the outset] due to the need to get consensus and so the jam was spread too thinly.... The RA failed .... to take [any] big decisions.”

(Senior Spatial Planner, GONW, 2006)

The issue of prioritisation was confounded by difficulties in sequencing, in particular the manner in which key players were engaged from the outset, which impacted on their ability to shape the process. For example, the RA worked closely with GO transport planners to develop a series of transport objectives for the RSS. These were completed, however, before the spatial objectives were finalised and it was felt that this was the reason why, as observed in the previous chapter, that both sets of objectives were not integrated in the RSS:

“We were not very well integrated at the beginning from a process view, transport has done its best, but the spatial framework was developed later. The DoT guidance was followed, but without a spatial framework, so there were problems making both fully integrated....otherwise the RTS symbols would not be needed in the strategy.”

(Regional Transport Officer, GONW, 2006)

As observed above the RA utilised a number of separate advisory policy groups throughout the Strategy's development. Several stakeholders were critical, however, stating that these specialist groups were in effect, silos, resulting in a lack of cross sector learning by the different policy professionals who were participating:

“The task groups were set up and these were very siloed....containing the usual suspects.”

(Senior Spatial Planner, GONW, 2006)

For example, there were gaps noted during consultation between economic and employment issues on the one hand, and transport issues on the other:

“...there were questions surrounding the integration of transport with key employment sites....This is about coordinating where people will live and work....[It was] not necessarily thought through....”

(Regional Transport Officer, GONW, 2006)

Similar gaps with transport were also observed in relation to the city-region concept:

“There was no big impact of the city-region concept on transport policies....”

(Regional Transport Officer, GONW, 2006).

This general perception of ineffective siloed policy advisory groups led some to describe them as ‘just talking shops’ (Senior Spatial Planner, Merseyside, 2006). It is possible that this lack of cross-fertilisation of ideas during the process may have contributed to the impression of imbalances regarding the representation of environmental and economic policy actors. From the economic perspective it was felt that there was a disproportionate representation of environmental policy actors:

“One of the problems with the process....[was that] there are many government agencies on environmental issues, EA, EN, CsA *etc.*....[but there] are very few statutory consultees considered in the economic and social dimension....Environmental agencies....bring a disproportionate weight.”

(Senior Spatial Planner, NWDA, 2006)

This emphasis on environmental representation appears to have occurred; in particular, before changes to the policy advisory groups in the RA reforms of 2005 (see Section 5.2.1 above). Despite this, as noted in the previous chapter, the RSS has a strong economic emphasis, leading some environmental policy sector stakeholders to feel that their voices were somehow lessened in the resulting document and therefore retrospectively justifying their stronger representation in the advisory groups.

“At the beginning of the process, there were strong efforts to emphasise the sustainability agenda....Draft wording emphasised sustainability issues....[and] was initially endorsed....but subsequently disappeared from



the final draft RSS, which is not a balanced document....It is almost entirely economically driven.”

(Regional Policy Officer, CPRE, 2006)

This initial environmental stakeholder imbalance was noted as being corrected somewhat after the RA reforms, but the changes led in turn to a perception among some stakeholders of the emergence of a new imbalance, which involved stronger sub-regional representation on the new RSS steering group. The intention had been to draw the interests and representation of local government into the process and therefore provide a better platform for local concerns. It was felt, however, that AGMA and Merseyside representation came to dominate the process, in effect jointly addressing their own interests first before considering those of other sub-regional areas (see Box 5.3).

**Box 5.3: NW RSS Stakeholder Views on Dominance of AGMA and Merseyside**

“There was a challenge to recognise that the region is more than Manchester and Merseyside....and that the needs of the region also depend on other locations.”

(Economy and Regeneration Planner, GONW, 2006)

“After the RA reforms there was this situation too of Manchester and Merseyside drowning out the rest of the region.”

(Regional Health Policy Officer, GONW, 2006)

Overall in the consultation process there appears to have been inherent problems of under representation and/or exclusion. This perception was especially strong among statutory environmental agencies, in particular the CsA and the EA, who felt initially sidelined in the process, taking some time to find their way in; a point confirmed by GONW:

“...[there were] questions around the side-lining of environmental statutory stakeholders....There was the EA for example and its difficulty of finding a way in.”

(Senior Spatial Planner, GONW, 2006)

Under representation was also noted in relation to learning and skills, health authorities, economic partnerships, and important private sector interests such as utility companies. Questions also arose around the level of resources that were committed to consulting the public in general, even though it is generally recognised that such consultation is difficult to encourage at a regional level (Tewdwr-Jones, 2002):

“Personally I felt that too much of the RA’s limited resources went to consulting the general public....There are questions about engaging the public at the regional level....The public are more interested in the LDF....”

(Senior Spatial Planner, St. Helens MBC, 2006)

Stakeholders expressed general satisfaction with the SA of the draft RSS, which was conducted concurrently to the consultation. Some within the environmental sector were critical, however, of their exclusion on occasions from the SA. This occurred as the RA wished to open-out the process and include non-environmental actors, so as to educate others regarding the value of SA and in return receive more impartial professional decisions from those not familiar with this approach:

“SA is iterative in planning...and to do this well it should include more than the usual suspects....There is a need for other policy perspectives.... [a] need [for] a fresh set of eyes....[to] get an independent view....”

(SA Policy Officer, NWRA, 2006)

Related to SA and several other aspects of the consultation process was the manner in which the RA managed expectations; in particular, how it dealt with consultation responses in terms of drafting policies and providing feedback. The lack of expectation management was evident from that fact that several stakeholders did not always have a realistic view of how or even if their contribution would be taken account of, either within the process in general or within RSS spatial policies more specifically. The environmental sector was particularly vocal about this point, yet again emphasising the antagonism between this sector and the RA. There was a general feeling that the RA did not respond to environmental advice in policy development, which had to be constantly reiterated before being properly acknowledged by the RA:

“RA feedback was very sporadic....sometimes it conflicted [with] what they had already said....You would see new versions of policy, which sometimes were actually older versions....I felt like I was saying things again and again and [had] no idea why I was being ignored....When these concerns of all [environment] agencies were expressed....we were told that RA [did] not have enough time....[We were] told GO wanted the RA to consider other stuff....So we were in the dark a lot....”

(Regional Spatial Planner, EA, 2006)

This quote clearly illustrates a failure on the part of the RA to properly manage expectations, as the spatial planner in question did not have an unrealistic view of contributing to the RSS process, having been involved in previous RPG reviews. These failures contravened the RA’s own RSS Project Plan (NWRA, 2006c) and indeed it took some time for the RA to make clear what its main concerns were in relation to environmental priorities and how these were being advised by GONW. Greater clarity at the outset of the process could have avoided a situation where stakeholders were questioning the genuineness of the process. A similar problem was noted in relation to the web-consultation exercise, which, although being generally praised as a medium for public consultation, restricted the word content of comments. This word limit frustrated the feedback of professionals who were contributing to the process and leading many to by-pass this medium with written submissions:

“We were asked to send our initial responses over the web site....There was a limit regarding the number of words, which was very restrictive on what you could comment on....So the web site was not enough....Instead [we] sent paper responses to the RA, as did other environment agencies.”

(Regional Policy Officer, EN, 2006)

The discussion of spatial planning in Chapter Two constantly reiterated the fact that spatial planning involves moving beyond land use issues to embrace all public policy that has a spatial dimension. In this way the RSS preparation process should have provided an opportunity for the region’s spatial planners to take account of non-traditional policy areas. In the NW the health sector provided an opportunity in this regard, as a regional health policy officer seconded to GONW worked extensively over the RSS preparation process to feed health issues into the strategy. From the

outset this stakeholder worked closely with a knowledgeable planning academic and strove to educate health colleagues about spatial planning, while bringing spatial planning health issues to the RSS writers. Issues included health inequalities; access to services; and creating an environment for healthy choices. The SA process was described by this stakeholder as the easiest way to include health issues in the RSS, as AfS already provided some basis for their consideration. Outside this influence, however, this stakeholder was not very positive regarding the contribution of their work:

“In the end they paid but lip service to [my] contributions....I felt like they were getting the information, but there was no push from their side for more clarification, information or involvement in writing....So despite all the good the work, no matter what I said....the RSS team still carried on and didn't listen....The rejection of the public health ideas....was terrible for the people working on this....[We] were told public health was not on the agenda....[that] the RA just had too much on its plate....”

(Regional Health Policy Officer, GONW, 2006)

This response clearly indicates a missed opportunity on the part of the RA to take on board extensive work that was carried out to link health and spatial planning concerns. Although some cross sector learning did take place through the SA process, the RA again appears to have been irresponsible in its management of expectations. There is an apparent need here to build upon this health policy work so it will not be lost to future RSS reviews. The stakeholder in question suggested the need to build up ‘mutual learning’ spatial planning and health networks at the sub-regional level, where such networks operate relatively separately at present and from where the development of spatial planning and health policy capital, could exert greater pressure for inclusion in future RSS reviews.

Just as the city-region concept was recognised in the previous chapter as providing a strong conceptual spatial basis to the NW draft RSS, it was also recognised as providing a useful framework for RSS consultation.

“The city-region concept proved more meaningful for developing policy in the RSS process, as opposed to the regional level, which does not mean much to most people....The city-region concept worked for us as an approach to the RSS....it helped bound our approach geographically...”

(Senior Spatial Planner, AGMA, 2006)

This perspective, however, was not unanimous, as there was a feeling by those outside the proposed city-regions that this model shifted attention away from their needs during RSS preparation. Moreover, the emphasis on the city-region can be attributed to the dominance of Merseyside and AGMA on the RSS steering committee.

The use of networks for consultation throughout the process was deemed to have been beneficial in general. These were particularly successful in relation to networks that had been previously established and used in relation to the development of the extant RPG. Due to their previous experiences of close working, the RA and DA felt that their relationships were now much less antagonistic:

“Consultation networks with the RA improved....The first time the RA did the RPG, the DA was also a relatively new body....[and] there was a lot of conflict and antagonism between us and them. The second time, in order to get past the antagonism, there was a charm offensive....The RA staff realised they wanted discussion and so now [we] have a very professional relationship....We were involved in drafting policies at an early stage and so made a lot of progress.”

(Senior Spatial Planner, NWDA, 2006)

Other beneficial existing networks included those relating to biodiversity and coastal and marine issues. There was also a general consensus that housing policy networks were strong and worked well, as they had been established for some time:

“As all [the] big players have been working together in the NW for many years there is common thinking regarding housing policy in the RSS....There is consensus on approach and priorities....”

(Regional Housing Planner, GONW, 2006)

As a result, policies pertaining to these networks tended to be much better integrated into the RSS process from an earlier stage, as stakeholders were more likely to be familiar with and agreed upon the approach of each others' policy work. This did not hold true for all well established networks and as discussed above, it took some time for existing environmental networks to connect into RSS development after the RA rebalanced their representation within its consultation structure for the RSS.

All stakeholders interviewed in the NW believed that there were a number of influential factors and organisations that drove integration in the RSS, many of which have already been discussed. The RA was recognised as the principal driver, despite its apparent deference to GONW:

“The impression was given that the GO were pulling the strings....The RA [were] using this as an excuse....They were just deflecting criticism”

(Regional Spatial Planner, CsA, 2006)

After the RA reforms local government came to have a much greater influence, particularly in the case of AGMA and Merseyside. At the regional level NWDA and GONW were recognised within and outside the RA as being very influential in driving the integration of spatial policy. The city-region concept and the Northern Way were acknowledged as influential in bringing stakeholders together through shared conceptual space. This is not surprising as these concepts were strongly endorsed by the RA, DA and local government who strongly drove the process. Throughout all of this sustainable development was also recognised by many stakeholders as positively influencing stakeholder integration.

### **B). *East Midlands***

Overall there was a positive view in the EM of the RSS preparation process, which had consulted widely and had sought to include ‘hard-to-reach groups’. The RA was deemed to be open, accessible, and receptive (see box 5.4). Interviewees felt that the experience gave them a greater understanding of how iterative the development of integrated spatial planning can be:

“Integrating spatial policy is an iterative process....It takes time for the RSS to move beyond just land use....”

(Senior Spatial Planner, GOEM, 2006)

For this reason it was recognised that there would be a need for ongoing stakeholder involvement, particularly in relation to the delivery of policies:

“....delivery requires commitments from others with different agendas and priorities....This is iterative and takes time....”

(Regional Policy Officer, CPRE, 2006)

#### **Box 5.4: EM RSS Stakeholder Views of RA Management of RSS Process**

“The process has been very open ....Overall the RA [has] been accessible and open to approaches....in terms of policy development....”

(Regional Spatial Planner, English Heritage, 2006)

“The RA has worked well across the region during the consultation process....[The RA] had an open door policy to ideas....”

(Regional Policy Officer, EN, 2006)

“...the RA has been receptive to most stakeholder ideas put forward during [the] process....”

(Regional Policy Officer, GOEM, 2006)

Similar to the NW case there was a general view in the EM that the issues and options stage at the beginning of preparing the RSS was very closed. The issues and options put forward for consultation seemed to be given, and indeed the RA may have created an impression that they were inevitable (see Box 5.5). As a result the issues and options offered no real choice. The RA countered this view, stating that the issues and options stage did not take anything for granted and it just happened that those chosen were the same as those of the partially reviewed RSS (Head Spatial Planner, RA). The RA did acknowledge, however, along with other RSS stakeholders, that the limited choice of issues and options was strongly influenced by central government requirements ranging from housing figures to the growth point agenda (see Box 5.5).

As the consultation process progressed, it was generally recognised as being siloed in that different policy stakeholders were not integrating and engaging with the broader range of issues involved in RSS preparation.

“The RA was certainly aware of the importance of integration in the process....[but] inevitably these things are produced in a siloed way....So for example, economic policies by economists, housing policy by a different group of people and of course the environment groups were

separate....It was then left to the RA to integrate....Many stakeholders only saw all policy together in the draft”

(Regional Spatial Planner, English Heritage, 2006)

As a result the EM RSS process faced similar problems to the NW in that there were no real opportunities for cross sector learning, which limited any prospect for cross-fertilisation of ideas. Several interviewees did point out, however, that this was due to severe time constraints on the RA to produce the strategy.

### **Box 5.5: EM RSS Stakeholder Views of RA Management of RSS Process**

“The issues and options....didn’t take anything for granted....[We] looked at the vision and objectives [of the previous RPG/RSS] and made changes there....although [the] vision [stayed] mostly the same....[when] got to options for change....In [the] end we settled on [a] strategy similar to the one we had....Growth levels are higher though and [there] is a clearer focus on urban areas.... [The] extent to which they were real options in the context of government requirements is debatable....”

(Head Spatial Planner, EMRA, 2006)

“The issues and options in relation to growth options for the region....were pretty much given....These were the options the region had to face and their hands were tied, having for example to deliver housing options that were coming their way....[We] didn’t get much choice....just four options and had to choose....[It] was done in a way that the preferred option seemed inevitable....”

(Regional Policy Officer, EN, 2006)

“In terms of [the] options papers ....[the] levels of growth are higher than we would like....[The] levels of growth are being set by government and so it is difficult to move away from this....for example the growth point agenda.”

(Regional Spatial Planner, English Heritage, 2006)

The balance of stakeholders in the EM RSS process also proved problematic for some of those involved, although this disquiet was in no way on a par with the stakeholder imbalances discussed in the NW case. EMDA expressed concern that some policy sectors were more strongly represented than others in the RSS process and that not all relevant actors in each policy sector were engaged. So for example, although the RSS is recognised as being strong on housing, there were questions as



to why the Home Builders Federation (HBF) was not more closely involved in the process:

“The consultation still involved the same key groups....There was little representation of private and business interests....They do have a narrow focus....but still should be included....The RA never set out to change the consultation structures and welcome in people that should have been there....including the HBF....This is a missing link....[as] developers should be involved in formulation of policy in the RSS.”

(Senior Spatial Planner, EMDA, 2006)

This relates to a general issue of stakeholder under-representation in the EM RSS process. As with the NW case, there appears to have been weak representation from the economic and social sectors. EMDA pointed out that even though they represented an extremely important perspective, they were the only voice for the economic sector within the RSS coordination group, while the environmental sector had several voices. The RA defended this, saying that they had invited many economic and social groups to become involved, but most chose not to participate. Similar problems were experienced in relation to attempts to engage with the general public. Such under representation was considered worrying due to the statutory nature of the RSS:

“There are always difficulties engaging the general public at the regional level....[as the] general public reaction tends to be that they are not aware of the process....This is worrying as the RSS contains proposals for example for urban extensions, which will be contentious for the general public where it affects their local area. But the RA used Planning Aid to help with the public consultation....they did what they could.”

(Regional Spatial Planner, CsA, 2006)

The use of the SA process was generally praised as assisting in integrating spatial policy actors within the RSS process and helping to highlight inconsistencies between their perspectives. The environmental sector was particularly supportive of this approach as it was the only part of RSS development that supported cross sector learning:

“We became involved in the SA....[It] really helped to integrate different professionals into the process....For us, the process helped highlight

inconsistencies between people's policy perspectives....There was mutual learning between the RA and the stakeholders involved....For example we raised issues in relation to green infrastructure which were taken on board.....It was a very satisfactory process.”

(Regional Policy Officer, EN, 2006)

Some questions were, however, raised in relation to the soundness of part of the SA process. For example, the SA for some S-RSs was carried out very late in the day and only fed into the overall RSS SA work at this later stage. As a result, the overall SA process was somewhat hurried at the end leading to concerns, for example regarding the new growth points:

“We were involved in commenting on various draft versions of the SA....[We had] areas of concern regarding the S-RSs' SA....[and] the lateness of preparing these....There was concern as they were late feeding into the overall SA for the RSS....[There] was a sense of the process being hurried....so there is concern regarding the growth directed in the EM though the new growth point announcement by national government.... We have concerns here for landscape character and local distinctiveness.”

(Regional Spatial Planner, CsA, 2006)

The real intentions of the RA in relation to consultation were questioned by some respondents. This centred around whether consultation involved commenting on draft policy, entering into dialogue regarding its content or negotiating to achieve a more consensual approach. Although it was generally recognised that negotiation would be very time consuming, it was felt, particularly among senior spatial planning and policy officers, that more genuine dialogue as opposed to recording their comments would have been a more fruitful approach:

“The RSS process raised the question of what you mean by consultation. Is it about commenting or is it about dialogue? So it is an issue of who to involve and how much time you have....If you mean consultation in terms of negotiation you would never get anything done....A lot of experienced professionals would have preferred more genuine dialogue as opposed to just commenting....This needs to be considered for future reviews.”

(Senior Spatial Planner, GOEM, 2006)

Other concerns relating to consultation focused on what happened to the comments that people made. As with the NW case, feedback offered by stakeholders in the EM often did not come through in any way in the final document. In some cases it was not clear why this was so, while in other situations it was, such as time constraints or because stakeholder feedback often opted for lower growth rates than the region had already committed to with national government:

“....so a lot of the results of consultation have not necessarily come through in the final draft....[There were] different comments from throughout the region and different local authorities were opting for lower growth that differs from national policy....This is not surprising as the new growth points are perceived as being outside the planning process and being undemocratic....”

(Senior Spatial Planner, GOEM, 2006)

One policy sector that did feed into the RSS consultation and would have expected to come through in the draft RSS was health. The GO had a dedicated health policy officer who fed into RSS development from the earliest stages, organising events for planners to talk about health issues:

“I am the health representative on the spatial planning regional group.... In terms of the RSS I did a lot at the early stages....[such as] events for planners, to talk to them about the broader implications of planning in relation to health improvements....”

(Regional Health Policy Officer, GOEM, 2006)

The health officer was also involved in commenting on the issues and options, but was puzzled as to why they were not asked to contribute anything more. From their view the work they had done and the feedback they had provided was not taken on board, as planners have a narrow view of health issues, such as hospital locations:

“I commented on the issues and options, but wasn't asked to contribute anything beyond that....[I am] not convinced that comments were taken on board and that spatial planners understand what we are trying to do....They just think its about access to hospitals....Planners need to broaden their skills base in terms of public health impacts.”

(Regional Health Policy Officer, GOEM, 2006)

This situation echoes the NW case, where a new opportunity for spatial planners to take on board the spatial aspects of health policy has been missed, along with any cross sector learning that this would have brought. It was felt, however, that the regional spatial planning health work to date could be build upon in future, not only in the context of the RSS, but also at a local level where it may have a better chance of being taken on board by spatial planners:

“From a health point of view we need to be engaged in a whole regional planning approach....The RSS is a framework and not detailed and so the detail we need should be at local level and so [we] need to develop capacity here.”

(Regional Health Policy Officer, GOEM, 2006)

This view from health contrasts with that of the RA, which recognised the importance of health to spatial planning and expressed a desire for health to be more involved. In fact, they counter-claimed that the GO health policy officer had not really participated in RSS consultation:

“There is a person from health on the main officers group for two to three years....We haven’t seen them much during the process....”

(Head Spatial Planner, EMRA, 2006)

It is not exactly clear why such starkly different perspectives arose around the RSS process and health policy, but it does appear to relate to the management of stakeholder expectations by the RA during RSS development. As with the previous comments about style of consultation, how feedback was used by the RA or the lack of choice at the issues and options stages, the RA appears to have failed in its duty to make clear to stakeholders what they should expect from the RSS process and their participation in it. Emphasising such factors would have given stakeholders a more realistic view of their role in RSS development and decreased the possibility of feedback being generated that the RA was going to disregard.

As with the NW case, much of the consultation for the RSS was carried out through existing policy and professional networks and the RA also attempted to open up new networks between spatial planners and other policy professionals, such as the aforementioned health sector. These networks were deemed as generally positive, in particular, those which had been long established, such as transport and housing:

“The RA should be commended for trying to broaden the range of networks used in consultation...They ran topic based seminars on newer policies such as health and these were advertised widely....They employed the RTPI [Planning Aid EM] in an exercise to consult with hard to reach groups....In addition they consulted with the usual suspects through traditional networks such as housing, transport and environment, which was easier as they are older.”

(Regional Policy Officer, CPRE, 2006)

Unlike the NW, however, the RA did not use expert groups such as professional working groups as there was a general feeling that this would have clouded issues.

“What the RA didn’t do, as other regions have, was to use the professional networks as expert groups to consider policies together...This was done in the WM and was very helpful....The downside of this [approach] is that a lot of people together can cloud issues. The usefulness of this approach depends on its format and the policies being considered.”

(Regional Spatial Planner, EA, 2006)

This is understandable when one considers the rationalisation and simplification of networks in the NW during their RSS process. There was one older network that did experience problems during the RSS process, which was between the RA and DA. This relationship, which is discussed in terms of horizontal integration below, was noted as not being as cordial as the relationship between their respective sister organisations in the NW case.

In the EM, sustainable development was widely recognised as the primary key driver integrating stakeholders in the RSS preparation process:

“Sustainable development has been a key driver.... We need to meet economic and social needs without adversely impacting on the environment....

(Head Spatial Planner, EMRA, 2006)

As with the NW, although the IRS was regarded as strongly underpinning the SA process it did not in itself lend any great weight to stakeholder discussions:

“I don’t feel the IRS has helped with integrating the process....It is accepted as the region’s sustainable development document and

underpinned the SA process, assisting with policy integration. Outside this it was not referred to very often by stakeholders. In some ways [the] RSS is perceived as taking over the role of IRS as it is a statutory document.”

(Senior Spatial Planner, GOEM, 2006)

The SA process, as noted above, was also an important driver and provided the only real opportunity during the development of the draft RSS for cross sector learning. One interviewee also attributed these benefits to the RFA, although in a more limited capacity. The RA and DA, despite their differences, were noted as being key drivers in integrating stakeholders, as were environmental statutory consultees such as the EA, EN and CsA. No EM stakeholders ascribed any driving role to GOEM.

### *C). Discussion*

The consideration of stakeholder integration in both RSS processes illustrates broadly similar experiences in both cases and underlines the contested environments in which RAs have to integrate spatial policy. This echoes Tewdwr-Jones' (2002) view that the involvement of a greater number of stakeholders in spatial planning would inevitably create tensions and lead to difficulties in reconciling spatial policy, as the RSS could not be a panacea for integration.

Despite any specific misgiving that stakeholders may have had about their involvement in the process, they were generally positive about the efforts of the RAs to consult widely and understood the time and resource constraints that RA planners faced, a view supported by Pearce & Ayres (2006). Specific criticisms expressed by stakeholders mostly related to the manner in which the RAs managed engagement expectations and a failure by the RAs to clearly communicate RSS consultation intentions to stakeholders in general. The confusion around the lack of choice for issues and options is a case in point here. It made sense in both regions to carry forward recently completed work on their extant RPGs and it was understandable how issues and options were also curtailed by central government requirements. Such approaches could have been clearly communicated from the outset by both RAs, avoiding both processes commencing with a chorus of stakeholder disquiet; a situation also observed by others (Baker & Sherriff, 2009).

The full integration of stakeholders in RSS development was generally mitigated by the siloed nature of consultation groups (also noted by Baker & Sherriff, 2009); the balance between economic, social and environmental representation; and a general lack of involvement of the public. The problem of economic and social representation at the regional level has been observed previously (Pearce & Ayres, 2006); along with the general lack of interest that business has with engaging at the regional level, preferring instead to seek representation directly with central government (Short *et al.*, 2006). Additionally, although PPS 11 requires the RAs to consult the general public in RSS development, the level of time and resources that both RAs dedicated to this is questionable, as the lack of public interest at this level has been observed since the advent of RPG in the 1990s (Tewdwr-Jones, 2002). This does perhaps suggest some of the public consultation time and resources may have been better spent engaging more closely with professional policy stakeholders who are not only more knowledgeable, but also more eager to participate. Although such a refocusing of consultation efforts would be more elitist, it could assist in dealing with a range of other stakeholder concerns such as responding to feedback and stating how, if at all, it will be used (see also Baker & Sherriff, 2009). This would allow for closer integration between different policy stakeholders and facilitate cross sector learning, creating a situation where the efforts of newer policy stakeholders and their networks, such as health, can be brought into the process and cultivated.

In both cases, the concurrent SA processes appear to have been the only mechanism that offered stakeholders any opportunity to truly integrate into the development of the RSS and come away with meaningful insights of the relationships between their respective policy sectors. This powerful integrative role of sustainable development tallies with the observation in Chapter Four that SA was also a very influential driver in the integration of spatial policy on paper. In this regard, however, a crucial distinction should be noted. Whereas the EM IRS and to a more limited extent, the NW AfS were influential in the integration of spatial policy, they appear to have had no weight in integrating RSS spatial policy stakeholders. Moreover, this indicates that little has changed since the early 2000s regarding the general weak ability of RSDFs to integrate regional stakeholders (Cooper Simms, 2002)

### **5.2.3 Horizontal Integration in the RSS Process**

In general most stakeholders in both cases studied felt that they were integrated into their RSS processes in terms of consultation and advice. It was widely recognised that the consultation was much broader than the previous RPG preparation processes, representing a wider range of policy sectors and geographical perspectives:

“The difference from RPG has been engagement....which was clear and noticeable....[The RA] organised an extensive programme of public and professional engagement....[such as] seminars around many different issues....so [there were] opportunities for many to input ideas.”

(Regional Policy Officer, EN, EM, 2006)

Delving deeper, however, there were grievances among stakeholders in both regions regarding the genuineness and quality of horizontal integration in drafting the RSSs.

A key problem in both regions, which relates to the siloed consultation groups and resulting lack of cross sector learning concerns discussed above, was that there were only a limited number of regional spatial planners, who had to produce their respective RSSs within very tight time scales. This created a situation where the planners involved did not have enough time to give to the policy sector groupings, curtailing opportunities for stakeholders, particularly in newer policy areas, to gain a fuller understanding about spatial planning and the role of the RSS. On this point one stakeholder suggested:

“Regional policy stakeholders need to work together more closely, its not just about the RA understanding us, its as much about us understanding each other through a spatial perspective.”

(Regional Health Policy Officer, GONW, 2006)

This helps to shed light on why both RAs appeared to have difficulties in managing expectations and also why they disregarded a lot of feedback, as such contributions were more likely to be of little value if they were coming from stakeholders who did not really understand spatial planning and the role of the RSS. Furthermore, this justifies the above questioning of dedicating so much time and resources to general public consultation efforts. On the other hand, RA spatial planners developed the most integrated policy perspectives from the RSS process, as they were the only



actors who met all stakeholders involved and dealt with feedback covering a range of stakeholder policy perspectives. As one RA planner stated:

“It has been a helpful process to find a common view and understand other policy sectors and how they operate....This has been beneficial in its own right.”

(Head Spatial Planner, EMRA, 2006)

Despite the general loss of learning potential among non-RA stakeholders, both RAs felt that they had managed horizontal stakeholder integration as best as they could, within their resource and time constraints. Non-RA stakeholders, however, questioned the quality of learning that had taken place among RA spatial planners in their approaches to newer policy areas that had not been traditionally within their planning remit. In the NW, for example, such policy areas were listed as skills, education, health, the private sector, and emerging socio-economic policy areas such as ‘worklessness’; a finding supported by Baker Assocs. *et al.* (2006). The difficulty of coming to terms with this broader remit of spatial planning was acknowledged by the head spatial planner in EMRA:

“It was an issue of them being unfamiliar with the new spatial planning process, which is not surprising as even planners of twenty to thirty years experience are having difficulty in understanding the new system.”

(Head Spatial Planner, EMRA, 2006)

The horizontal integration of the main statutory stakeholders raised two important issues in the cases studied. Of particular note was the conflict between EMDA and EMRA and the limit placed on environmental sector representation in the NW.

The EMDA/EMRA conflict contrasted with the NW case, where the DA and RA had developed a strong working relationship during the RSS process and both were very positive in relation to the outcome. The impetus for this had come from a problematic working experience in the previous RPG process and both felt they now had a good foundation for future collaborative work (see pp.203/4). In the EM by contrast, this relationship proved much less positive. In the DA there was criticism of the RA for not utilising their evidence base, which had recently been developed at great expense for their newly updated RES:

“...we compiled a big evidence base for the RES and this [was] largely ignored by the RA in RSS preparation. We have only come together on job growth forecasts and [are] not happy with how [the] RA used these. So [there] hasn't been a close engagement.... We have a big budget for this [evidence base] and the RA is not taking advantage of this....[which] is a big omission on their part....From our perspective we have tried to engage. They have gone their own way and haven't sought to build bridges.”

(Senior Spatial Planner, EMDA, 2006)

The RA had a very different view of this, stating that the manner in which EMDA had drawn up its evidence base through the use of trend based scenarios did not suit the RA's approach to the RSS:

“With EMDA...it was a debate between two professions with two different ways of looking at the world....We debated around job and housing figures and population projections....EMDA wanted trend based scenarios which they attach greater weight to even through they are just a theory....It was a professional cultural clash.”

(Head Spatial Planner, EMRA, 2006)

As discussed above, the NW statutory environmental consultees expressed a similar level of animosity for the RA after their representation was reduced on RSS consultation groups in order to provide better balance with economic and social sectors. After their initial grumblings subsided, however, the environmental groups looked for new ways to work around what for them was an apparent problem. This led organisations like EN, the CsA and the EA to produce joint written statements when commenting on emerging RSS content (see Box 5.6), which had two results. The first is that by commenting jointly they each added greater weight to each others' concerns, ensuring that despite the limits on their representation the RA was now listening to their louder voice. This created a second benefit for horizontal integration in that it brought NW environmental stakeholders to cooperate much more closely than their sister organisations in the EM case, who as stated were well represented in EMRA:

“We chose not to put in joint responses, but have had meetings with the other environmental bodies....We have issues we all support and will support each other [at] the EIP.”

(Regional Spatial Planner, EA, EM, 2006)

#### **Box 5.6: NW RSS Environmental Stakeholder Joint Submissions**

“The CsA, EA and EH, together with the Forestry Commission jointly lobbied the RA, providing joint statutory agency responses on the RSS....on top of our own individual organisation reports.”

(Regional Spatial Planner, EA, 2006)

“The environmental partners took it on themselves to co-operate....Responses to [the] current draft of [the] RSS have been joint....Different people looked at different aspects to take on and contribute to, for example EN concentrated on biodiversity....This in turn makes things easier for the RA....There was also a joint letter from the regional directors of each of our organisations....They also met with the RA and some of the issues were addressed....”

(Regional Policy Officer, EN, 2006)

There was a general divide among respondents across both cases studied as to the appropriateness of the EIP as a forum to resolve policy conflicts that had resulted from the lack of integrated consultation discussed in this chapter. While some felt this was totally justified, others felt that the EIP should be a specialist debate and should not be a substitute for the shortcomings of proper dialogue (see Box 5.7). The reality is of course, that the EIP is a test of soundness of the plan and is not intended to as a forum to solve policy disputes, which should have already been resolved by that stage in the RSS preparation process. This finding corresponds to Baker & Sherriff's (2009) research of the NW RSS process, which observed that many stakeholders felt they were most influential on RSS policy at the EIP.

### **Box 5.7: RSS Stakeholder Views of the Role of the EIP**

“The RA sees the EIP as part of consultation and if things are not sorted now, [they] can be sorted then. I see the EIP as a place to sort irresolvable issues. So the RA are putting a lot of onus back on the government.... [I] wanted to exert influence earlier on....so [as to] guard against using [the] EIP as an all encompassing solution.”

(Senior Spatial Planner, GONW, 2006)

“More should have been done earlier on....If the consultation process was better we all wouldn't be looking to the EIP to solve these issues....”

(Regional Transport Policy Officer, GONW, 2006)

“[We] have worked with RA to advise them on drafting the strategy, but there are many unresolved issues which will have to be resolved at the EIP.

(Regional Transport Policy Officer, GOEM, 2006)

“....the EIP [is] not a substitute for resolving policy conflicts in drafting the RSS....The EIP is intended to be a specialist debate....Instead we have a stand-off between the RA and DA regarding growth scenarios....They have decided to agree to differ and wait for the EIP.”

(Senior Spatial Planner, GOEM, 2006)

#### **5.2.4 Vertical Integration in the RSS Process**

There was a range of views in both of the cases studied regarding how integrated national government and the GOs were in the RSS process. In general the GO was deemed influential, but its actual integration into the RSS process was questionable. This caused tensions at times, particularly in the NW, where the problem was recognised by planners within and outside GONW:

“We were not officially allowed to directly feed into the RSS regional policy....or to contribute or seek views from other regional RSS actors....But the relationship is a bit fuzzy as we engage with the RA and DA on a weekly basis on non-RSS views....so it is artificial to separate us from the strategy....But there is the problem of a perception of national government interference.”

(Regional Environmental Policy Officer, GONW, 2006)

This situation arises from the internal structures of GOs, where all relevant national government policy sectors feed RSS responses to GO planners, who integrate them and in turn feed into the RSS team at the RA. As a result, all GO non-planner policy sector officers work in parallel to, but not directly with RA planners in developing the RSS (Pearce & Ayres, 2006). There was a general feeling among GONW policy officers that this barrier to their full integration in the RSS process wasted learning opportunities, both in terms of gaining a better understanding of spatial planning from their GO colleagues and a working knowledge of the RSS process, so they could provide more effective future contributions (see Box 5.8).

**Box 5.8: GONW Views of their Role in the RSS Process**

“Spatial planning is a bit like an elephant, you know it when you see it, but my colleagues in GO haven’t bothered to define it for us.... We are very separate from the planning team.”

(Regional Housing Planner, GONW, 2006)

“[We] have strong links with the RA and DA....[which is] nothing to do with [the] RSS....In most other things we have very close parallels....so we leave it to our planning colleagues to get on with it....In GO [the] planning team run the show.”

(Regional Environmental Policy Officer, GONW, 2006)

In order to overcome the general GO siloed approach to policy, GOEM had re-organised itself, through creating multi-disciplinary virtual policy teams operating on an area basis, allowing in theory for a greater degree of ‘learning about planning on the job’ by non-planner policy officials. This appears to have worked well:

“We get to see a lot of other views like housing *etc.*....The area based approach to the virtual teams in GO seems to have worked well....For a non-planner you pick it up as you go along.... We work with planners on a day to day basis....I have received no formal training, but in planning terms have come to understand when, what, why and how....It has been on the job training....This has worked very well, for example discovering aspirational stuff that may not be deliverable....Equally planners are

learning from the rest of us non-planners....Its all about the same core skills.”

(Regional Transport Policy Officer, GOEM, 2006)

Despite these reforms and general positive attitude within GOEM, there was still disquiet in the EM, as in the NW, regarding the reluctance of the GO to advise on RSS content:

“The GO have not been very helpful or forthcoming with information.... They have seemed very reluctant to advise on how the RSS should develop....”

(Senior Spatial Planner, EMDA, 2006)

It appears that even informal or ‘unofficial’/‘off the record’ advice was not forthcoming from GO in either case, which frustrated regional planners. They felt that GO should have provided more direction and advice when, therefore assisting in integrating the RSS sooner, and reducing the potential for conflict at the EIP and the extent to which the RSS would require redrafting subsequent to this. As a result RA planners in both cases went directly to central government departments for advice. Senior GO planners in both regions responded to such charges in the same way as senior RA planners did to similar integration criticisms, in that they had integrated all relevant national government perspectives and fed these as appropriate into the RSS process. For example:

“GONW has provided clear links with the centre.... We have acted as a focal point at every stage in RSS preparation, vertically coordinating and integrating the various requirements of central government departments. But the RA did not always use us as a conduit for this and this was a problem, sometimes they by-passed us here and went directly to the centre and would get conflicting views.”

(Senior Spatial Planner, GONW, 2006)

RSS participants outside and within the GOs were very critical of the role of national government departments in the RSS process. As with GO, they were recognised as influential, but not integrated and were criticised for their lack of joined up thinking, for example in relation to health and spatial planning:

“We need to develop the integration agenda....We need greater emphasis from the national perspective on the public health implications of spatial planning....The lack of this at present is due to central government departments, there is little coordination between them and so the process of regional integration is slowed down.”

(Regional Health Policy Officer, GONW, 2006)

Those planners that had dealings with government departments acknowledged that each department had very different ideas as to how their policy area was to contribute to RSS development. When requesting advice some departments provided clear responses, some did not respond at all, while others appeared vague and unsure:

“Central government could do more to join up ....There is still a tendency for departments to operate in a siloed mentality....Each department shouts for their requirements....[I] tried to get several departments together at the pre-draft stage, but several didn't even turn up....Of the departments that did, some didn't really understand the regional context.”

(Regional Transport Policy Officer, GONW, 2006)

This lack of clarity was also acknowledged by GONW who stated that when the RA sought advice nationally from a government department, this sometimes contradicted the advice they had received from the same department (Senior Spatial Planner, GONW, 2006). In other situations different government departments had conflicting advice and/or proposals, which the RA, DA and GO were expected to resolve at regional level during the RSS process; a situation long observed in relation to sustainable development (see Tewdwr-Jones, 2002). A commonly cited contradiction was the Aviation White Paper (DoT, 2003) promoting airport expansion, which conflicts with the national sustainable development strategy (DEFRA, 2005) and more recent government policy that calls for a reduction in carbon emissions. As one planner stated:

“Government expects the regions to square the circle, as they say we can't expect them to join up.”

(Head Spatial Planner, NWRA, 2006)

In this way, many stakeholders saw the EIP, not just as a forum to resolve their own disputes, but also as an opportunity to pass the buck back to central government and place the onus on them to resolve their own policy conflicts.

Vertical relationships to local government were somewhat different across the two cases studied and were strongly influenced by perceptions of the RA and what its role should be. In the EM, the RA was generally regarded by spatial policy actors and organisations, among others, as being a strategic partnership of local government with a range of social, economic and environmental partners:

“In relation to abandoning the RA idea.... We have a good relationship with the counties and unitaries and they underwrite employment in [the] RA.... This does not involve the districts. So we are closely aligned with local government.... but we are saddled with the RA title and we’re really a regional strategic partnership in the EM. We don’t like the RA title.”

(Head Spatial Planner, EMRA, 2006)

The EM RA, therefore, never truly had the same devolved government aspirations as the NW RA. This has resulted in a general tendency in the EM for strong local government influence on the RA. Despite this, some sub-regional working relationships were strained in the RSS process and stakeholders described two main factors as contributing to this. The first related to the fact that some counties and unitaries, as discussed, were very late in engaging and fulfilling their role in the -RSs. This resulted in last minute strategies with some questionable intentions, accompanied by rushed SAs that held back the entire RSS process. The second problem encountered in such vertical, bottom-up approaches was that the counties also generally failed to inform the districts of RSS preparation progress and obtain their feedback to pass on to the RA. This claim, however, was countered by a senior local government planner:

“To the best of my knowledge all counties tried to engage with their districts.... It was difficult to cultivate interest in them.... EMRA tried to engage them early in the process, along with all parish councils.... It was a waste of resources as very few responded.... [I’m] not sure they have the strategic capacity for RSS engagement.”

(Senior Spatial Planner, Leicester City Council, 2006)

This view was supported from within EMRA:

“...the parish councils said three months was not long enough to respond, which is pushing it slightly.... We only have twelve months to do the work, we can’t consult forever and have to make decisions.... Three months is long enough if people are really interested.”



(Head Spatial Planner, EMRA, 2006)

This contrast between the weak level of interest from districts and parish councils in RSS development, as opposed to the strong vertical working partnership between EMRA and strategic local government may be related to the fact that the RSS was taking over the strategic planning functions of Structure Plans and part one of UDPs. As a result the counties and unitaries saw it in their interest to be closely involved in RSS production and would have had relevant experience to contribute in this regard.

In the NW, the role of local government differed from the EM. Even though local government had a similar level of representation in NWRA as in EMRA, the actual strength of influence of local government was much weaker in NWRA earlier in the RSS process. This related to an expectation that the RA would become an elected body and so as an organisation it had sought to carve out a strong regional role for itself at an early stage. Several interviewees acknowledged that the rejection of elected regional assemblies in the North East in late 2004 was also influential on the changes to the RA structures that followed within six months:

“The RA found itself in a do-do as they [were] trying to expand into other non-traditional areas of business....Local government spoke of the cost and said the chief executive was empire building....After elected RAs were abandoned local government decided to take control back, which was an influence on the RA reforms....”

(Regional Housing Planner, GONW, 2006)

A second factor that was influential on the RA reforms carried out by local government in the NW was that the initial RSS development process was viewed as very policy sector based, emphasising the horizontal integration of policy through policy officers, which it was felt was drowning out local voices:

“Before the reforms the RA was thinking about the RSS in policy terms....There wasn't enough sub-regional emphasis....[and] local voices were being drowned out....This changed [after the reforms] and helped the counties get a much stronger voice.”

(Senior Spatial Planner, Cumbria Co. Co., 2006)

As a result the consultation structures of the RSS preparation process were changed, allowing each of the region's constituent counties to closely coordinate and drive the

process through a new steering group. In this way, local government became much more influential in the latter part of RSS development. This of course created its own set of additional criticisms, which have been discussed earlier, such the dominance of Manchester and Liverpool, the imposition of a city-region model and the rebalancing of environmental representation. This dominance of the vertical over the horizontal has long been noted in English regional planning (Stephenson & Poxon, 2001)

### **5.2.5 Delivering the RSS**

Almost all stakeholders in both case study areas recognised the importance of implementing and delivering the RSS and in fact this was viewed as a major difference between the RSS and previous RPG (see box 5.9).

#### **Box 5.9: RSS Stakeholder Views of the Ability of the RSS to Deliver**

“In comparison to the RPG [the RSS] has a much more structured approach to delivering the project plan and its implementation....There has been an integrated approach to policy development in the RSS and now there needs to be an integrated approach to policy funding and delivery.”

(Head Spatial Planner, EMRA, 2006)

“One of the weaknesses of RPG was that it could be ignored....it was a very laudable document with positive statements....The RSS can't be ignored as it is statutory and it is about delivery....”

(Regional Spatial Planner, EA NW, 2006)

This distinction was also seen in the way stakeholders defined spatial, as opposed to land-use planning, as including delivery, which is discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. Some interviewees, however, aired a note of caution, suggesting that implementation would not happen unless everyone was signed up in full to the RSS and that each of those on board knew what their contribution to delivery was:

“The RSS is about delivery of the strategy, it has an implementation plan....Therefore we need to get people on board so they know what they have to deliver....Clear delivery mechanisms are very important....”

(Senior Spatial Planner, GONW, 2006)

In this way, the RSS processes was not viewed by stakeholders as finished when the RSS as a document was finalised; the drafting of the strategy was viewed as just one

part of an ongoing regional spatial planning process of strategy making, delivering and reviewing:

“Overall the key thing about the RSS is implementation.... We spend ages developing these plans, so the key thing is to ensure that change happens.... We need to make sure the RSS is delivered.... Ongoing monitoring and cooperation is essential.”

(Regional Spatial Planner, EA EM, 2006)

Many planners viewed integrated delivery as a way of overcoming policy and stakeholder coordination problems that had occurred during RSS preparation and as a means of maximising benefits to their regions. As discussed in Chapter Four, the GOs, RAs and DAs in both regions had concurrently gained experience co-authoring RFAs for the Treasury, which integrated and prioritised regional economic, housing and transport policies for delivery. It was felt that this approach was strengthening and integrating regional relationships, as regional stakeholders had to work together or they would lose out:

“Aiding stakeholder integration on the RSS was the necessity that the region had to work together as they had to influence the future of central government RFAs.”

(Senior Spatial planner, St. Helens MBC, 2006)

## **5.2.6 Improving the RSS Preparation Process**

### ***A). North West***

Much of the RSS process integration discussion has implicitly touched on a range of different issues that stakeholders felt required attention if future RSS reviews were to work better. In the NW it is not surprising, therefore, that there was a strong view from local government that future RSS development would work better, not only with clarified roles and responsibilities, but with a smaller, but stronger cross-representation of different spatial policy actors and organisations. In this regard, the need to consult the general public at this strategic level was also questioned:

“One of the problems with RSS consultation is that thousands are consulted.... Maybe it would be better to bring together a smaller number of agencies to drive the RSS.... A small number of agencies who were key to the process.”

(Senior Spatial Planner, AGMA, 2006)

A number of stakeholders from GONW suggested the need to have a stronger vision set out at the beginning of the process, which considered what the end product would be, therefore offering a clearer direction for steering the process. An alternative suggestion from within NWRA proposed that a future RSS could be developed around highly contested regional resources, therefore producing a strategy that was realistic in terms of implementation:

“You have the new area of open strategies....a new technique for planning....Strategies are developed around highly contested resources ...[and] potential projects and their benefits are listed.”

(RSDF Policy Officer, NWRA, 2006)

Integrated Regional Strategies were also suggested as an alternative to the RSS, ensuring that all regional policy stakeholders were fully integrated in future strategy revisions.

In the context of their perception of exclusion from the RSS process it is not surprising that environmental organisations generally suggested the need for more time and resources in future RSS consultation, along with considered feedback on all submissions:

“Consultation would work better with more resources and time....[as well as] explanation and feedback on why things are happening, especially why comments have not been taken into account.”

(Regional Spatial Planner, EA, 2006)

This general view, as discussed, and as suggested by other stakeholders, requires a more concerted effort on the part of the RA to manage the expectations of stakeholders so they would have a realistic view of what to expect from the process. Related to this were proposals for the RA to remove some of the consultation bureaucracy and to make the process more transparent, supported by a general consensus that the RA should be more willing to use non-RA policy officers in writing pools to assist in developing RSS policy, as it had in the previous RPG process:

“The process would have been better with writing pools....effectively working groups to write policies and consider links with other policy sectors and other regions.”

(Regional Policy Officer, EN, 2006)

This links to other general concerns regarding the need for planners to be more involved in future consultation groups. Additionally, although it was felt that the web based approach was an innovative medium for consultation, in future word limits should be removed for statutory consultees.

More investment in evidence and data was also recommended as an approach to reducing future stakeholder conflict, with funding coming from central government who should be supporting research and intelligence:

“There should be better investment in evidence and data....We don't have the capacity at GO....The Treasury should be more involved here....It is in the interests of central government to fund better research and intelligence.”

(Senior Spatial Planner, GONW, 2006)

National government was also advised to provide clarification in relation to the manner in which strategies are carried forward during review as opposed to a completely new consideration of issues and options on each occasion.

### **B). *East Midlands***

There was general agreement in the EM that the timescale for producing the RSS was too short. As with the NW case, this was a particularly strong view among environmental stakeholders, but EMRA was also in general agreement. The RA suggested that perhaps there was a way to get the RSS produced within the same time constraints, through allowing more overlap between writing the document and consultation, which at present consisted of roughly two years consultation and only one year of actual writing:

“It takes three years to do a review....Twelve months is a bit too short to draft the strategy with the rest of the time spent on consultation....Perhaps there could be overlap between the two, allowing more time to work on drafting the plan.”

(Head Spatial Planner, NWRA, 2006)

Other stakeholders suggested that perhaps stakeholders would be better integrated in future strategy development if the RES and RSS were reviewed at the same time, or that central government could go further and develop Integrated Regional Strategies, which would consist of a suite of strategies covering all relevant policy areas:

“In terms of integrating stakeholders there is scope to look at the feasibility of one regional strategy for everything....It could consist of a suite of documents covering all relevant regional policy....setting out the different policies together, so each stakeholder would know the role they have to play....”

(RSDF Policy Officer, EMRA, 2006)

An interesting parallel to the NW case emerged from the EM proposals for improving future RSS preparation. This centres on the strong role of environmental organisations in the EM RSS process, an issue that had been addressed in the NW case. There was concern from the economic perspective that the environmental voice was too loud in RSS development and that future RSS engagement should make a concerted effort to balance stakeholder representation across the economic, social and environmental spheres of sustainable development:

“For us sustainable development has three spheres....In the EM the environmental sector has had a louder shout than economic and social issues and this has not been taken on board enough....Some seem to think that sustainable development is just about environmental sustainability, yet we see all three [spheres] as important and hope the government will pick up on this.”

(Senior Spatial Planner, EMDA, 2006)

### **5.3 AN ASSESSMENT OF SPATIAL ACTOR/ORGANISATION INTEGRATION IN THE RSS PROCESS**

The above discussion provides a detailed overview, through an interpretative understanding of stakeholders' views, of the manner in which both RSS processes operated. As informative as this is regarding the integration of spatial policy, actors, and their respective organisations in the RSS process, there is a conceptual vagueness

regarding the type of actor/organisation integration involved and the depth or closeness of relationships therein. So although we can see a wide range of participants who are integrated into the process, it is important to understand the styles of integration in question. This will therefore bring greater clarity regarding the quality of networks integral to RSS development and provide a greater understanding of the dynamics involved. With this in mind the types of relationships observed in both RSS processes will now be discussed in relation to the hierarchy of approaches to spatial actor/organisation integration that were conceptualised in Chapter Two.

### **5.3.1 Consultation in Policy Development**

As can be observed from the above account, consultation in RSS development was the most fundamental form of actor integration in the process. In this sense it was the driving force of actor integration. A wide and varied range of stakeholders were consulted through a variety of mediums in order to create greater ownership of the resulting strategy. The RAs' approaches to engaging stakeholders resulted in a number of different styles of consultation. This ranged from stakeholders being informed about the RSS process, to stakeholders being listened to through workshops and/or submitting comments on various RSS drafts. In this sense both RAs were found to be generally receptive, but in these situations the RAs were very much the dominant partner. For example, regional environmental agencies in both cases perceived their consultation communication with their RA to be one way, in that they were invited to comment on what the RA put before them, without any real opportunity to enter into dialogue. Approaches such as dialogue and negotiation appear to have been used in a more limited manner by RAs and usually in cases where they were on a more level playing field with the stakeholder, such as DAs, GOs and local government. Examples here include the relatively close working relationships between all of these bodies during RSS preparation, specifically in relation to district level housing figures; prioritisation of infrastructure development; the development of sub-regional functional areas such as city-regions; and the development of many of these spatial elements in the RFAs that resulted from negotiation between these regional partners.

Another element of consultation that was observed to a limited extent in both processes was that of cross-fertilisation. So, although there were problems in relation to siloed policy advisory groups, there were positive signs that various policy professionals were developing more coordinated perspectives with spatial planners. Several examples of this were observed in both cases. In the NW and EM, GO health policy officers worked extensively to develop greater understanding within their own sector of spatial planning issues, and with spatial planners and other RSS stakeholders, on understanding the relationship between their policy views and health issues. Despite the fact that in both cases, much of the health policy officer work did not come through in either final draft RSS, the championing of health policy had created sufficient mutual understanding between those involved to lay the groundwork for future work in this area and to ensure this also focused on the sub-regional level.

Another example of cross-fertilisation was found in relation to consultation between transport policy officers and spatial planners in the East Midlands. Previous to this, spatial planners had tended to take a simple expansion strategy in relation to the region's road network. Transport policy officers who had built networks with sustainable development policy actors developed an alternative perspective on the situation. This involved the curtailment of traffic growth and positive attempts to influence a modal shift in behaviour to public transport. With the integration of the RTS into the RPG in the beginning of the 2000s, transport policy officers and spatial planners began to develop stronger networks that were utilised for consultation. This resulted over time in a gradual cross-fertilisation between these two professional groups, leading to a strong expression of sustainable transport policies in the EM RSS.

A third way in which consultation brought about a cross-fertilisation of ideas was the SA process. From the perspective of spatial planners the involvement of planning consultants in both regions created an opportunity for resource constrained planners to gain valuable expertise in relation to policy integration. This provided a touchstone against which planners could test the sustainability of their policies and therefore understand how the various pieces of the RSS policy jigsaw should be put together. The SA approach also proved valuable in relation to the involvement of



non-environmental sector policy stakeholders, which was observed in the NW. This provided an opportunity for planners and the consultants to educate non-environmental stakeholders regarding the reality of sustainable development and policy integration, along with the difficulties and complexities therein. Likewise, from the perspective of spatial planners, the involvement of stakeholders in this way provided an opportunity to gain independent perspectives on spatial policy integration.

In a conceptual sense, the city-region model and other sub-regional functional models, such as housing market areas or standard employment land allocations, provided foci around which policy actors could share ideas. In this sense, they were regarded by interviewees as providing concrete spatial realities onto which other more conceptual elements of public policy could be hung. In the NW the city-region model was particularly praised in this regard and received the greatest level of approval as an integrating device for policy, both at a regional level among the range of stakeholders involved and below this to local government, who preferred the integrative clarity that this spatial concept provided.

A further element of consultation that was widespread in both RSS processes was that of information sharing, which took several different forms. Many organisations, such as the environmental agencies, issued joint consultation documents and statements in relation to RSS consultation. In addition, there was also sharing of databases between organisations across the economic, environmental and social sectors. For example, the NWRA and the NWDA both shared their evidence bases for RES and RSS production. In a similar way, local government shared its information bases with the RAs in both cases. Such sharing is particularly relevant to RSS monitoring and review, which will be an ongoing feature between regional and local government, as most of the information for monitoring and reviewing RSS progress is collected at a local level.

Overall, one can see that despite many of the misgivings that participants had about their RSS processes, the extent of the linkages involved in basic consultation approaches illustrates positive signs about the quality of the networks that constitute the processes. As stated in Chapter Two, the quality of the process is also determined

by the willingness of stakeholders and planners to consult in a genuine fashion or by whether or not there tends to be a tokenistic element involved. In general despite some reservations there appears to have been a genuine attempt by both RAs to consult as widely as possible. But this was inherently restricted by time constraints on both organisations in the production of their RSSs. As a result, consultation was sometimes hasty and this may have created an impression in the minds of some stakeholders that in some way, their contributions were tokenistic. A crucial factor here, as discussed, involves the responsibility which RAs to manage stakeholder expectations. Part of the responsibility here also rests with central government who have helped to cultivate high expectations among different sections of society in relation to the new planning system (Tewdwr-Jones, 2002) and then insisted that spatial planners produce the new RSSs to very tight timescales. Part of this, also, however, can also be attributed to the newness of the system (Baker Assocs. *et al.*, 2006).

### **5.3.2 Informal and Formal Joint Working, and Formal Partnerships**

Informal and formal joint working and formal partnerships were also observed as a more established form of consultation in both cases studied. Such approaches had built on earlier experiences of dialogue and information sharing and the forms they have taken are defined by the degree to which they are embedded in the regional policy culture. Informal joint working relationships, are usually short term in nature and tend to occur between different organisations in similar policy areas (Hammond, 2003). In the cases studied such working relationships found expression in joint responses to the RSS policies being consulted on. For example, the environmental agencies in the NW, who had long established networks of cooperation, took this approach to RSS consultation so as to strengthen the weight of their feedback, against their perceived weakening of their representation on RA consultation groups. In this way, if for example the EA was attending a meeting as an environmental stakeholder, it would also make sure it represented the view of EN and the CsA.

Informal joint working becomes formal and integrated when implementation and delivery are considered on a more permanent basis between regional stakeholders (Ling, 2002). Initially in both regions this had developed out of an iterative process of aligning regional strategies and their respective targets and indicators. As

discussed, this happened in a number of ways such as requirements by central government for regional bodies to consider the wider impacts of their actions beyond their immediate remit, for example the RA monitoring of sustainable development. This approach has also been strongly influenced by the development of RSDF's in both regions and as stated had an influence on strategy integration, but not necessarily on the integration of spatial policy actors in the RSS process. When such formalised joint working arrangements become established on a more permanent basis to form partnerships, the organisations involved work together on a shared agenda, but keep their own purpose and identity. A clear example of a formalised partnership in both cases studied are the RAs, which bring together a strong representation of local government with a variety of other regional economic, social, and environmental actors. In this sense although the RSS is produced by a single organisation, this organisation is in reality a partnership of a plethora of regional interests that mediate each other in order to influence regional affairs. An example of an emerging formal partnership appears to be centred on the recent development of RFAs between GOs, DAs and RAs. This has provided a means for the key regional partners to agree, in principle, on regional priorities into which three main strands of regional policy have been integrated, to be delivered in a coherent fashion.

It is important to note at this point that the different styles of consultation, joint working, and partnership observed in both RSS processes have an important dimension in relation to whether they are centrally or regionally driven. On the other hand, the consultation process of the RSS and requirements for RFAs are set out in national government policy advice and therefore are centrally driven. On the other hand, the manner in which consultation is executed within a region offers opportunities for a distinct regional drive within the context of government guidelines. Irrespective of either view, there was a strong desire among regional stakeholders to join up, to coordinate spatial policy, and to integrate its delivery, which supports earlier finding by Hammond (2003). It is this strongly expressed desire that illustrates how both RSS consultation processes and associated RFA development were also regionally driven, both by the RAs, DAs and GOs who had particular end results in mind, and by other regional stakeholders who wished to ensure that their policy concerns were included.

### **5.3.3 Organisation Integration**

Organisation integration is a useful concept in this context because although it does not exist in either region, it was originally intended when the regional White Paper (DTLR, 2002) was issued. Although the failure of the regional devolution experiment did not appear to have any impact on the East Midlands' RSS process, it found expression in the NW, leading to local government taking greater control of the RA and thereby the RSS. As stated in Chapter Two, organisation integration involves both unions and mergers and while there were no mergers in either case there were elements of unions observed. Organisational unions occur when administrative functions, evidence bases, consultation processes, and policy delivery are integrated, but when organisations retain their individual identity (6 *et al.*, 2002; Tomaney, 2002b). In some respect the GOs operate in such a fashion, integrating the administrative functions and policy delivery of a range of national government departments. The degree to which the GOs were integrated, however, differed between both cases. In the EM, the use of virtual policy area based teams appeared to be creating a very close union between diverse policy perspectives. The union of GONW was much weaker, however, due to the tendency for traditional policy silos to persist.

Actor/organisation integration was also observed in relation to the functions performed by the RFA, which as a document clearly illustrates a regional union of transport, housing, and economic development priorities, with attached funding streams and timescales for implementation and a commitment from the three main constituent partners to deliver. In many ways, this type of union is centrally driven by the Treasury, although there is naturally a regional drive motivated by the level of funding involved.

## **5.4 CONCLUSIONS**

It is clear from the above discussion that both RSS processes operated to very tight timescales imposed by central government without any extra resources. This resulted in regional spatial planners experiencing a lot of pressure which has impacted on their management of integration in the RSS consultation process. Although

consultation brought together a range of stakeholders and their policy views, spatial planners were limited in the value they could take from such encounters; in essence their opportunities to internalise the potential lessons available have been severely curtailed. Equally, the value of the experience of those consulted was reduced somewhat because spatial planners were restricted in their ability to spend time with and inform respondents about the new planning system. Despite such misgivings, there was a general satisfaction with both processes and an understanding of the limits within which spatial planners were operating. Many of these consultation constraints suggest that perhaps there is a need to reconsider the big emphasis placed on consulting the general public at the regional level. A more elitist stakeholder focus could possibly make better use of time and resources available, allowing closer and more valuable engagement with experienced policy professionals.

There was a clear indication in both cases that the level of horizontal integration was tempered to a large degree by top-down and bottom-up vertical influences. This, for example, was observed in relation to government requirements curtailing the issues and options available and local government generally insisting through their respective RAs, that previous RPG content be carried forward or that particular spatial concepts should be utilised. The new planning concepts of city-regions in the NW case indicates this strength of influence of local government, as the use of such functional areas better serves their needs in a strategic sense. As a result there was a feeling among horizontal regional stakeholders that this domination of the process by central and local government resulted in the sidelining of their particular concerns. It is interesting to note, however, that these complaints were most common among longer established environmental policy networks that had already impacted largely on regional planning policy through previous rounds of RPG. This illustrates the inevitable tensions between the horizontal and vertical dimensions of influence on regional spatial planning and as noted by Healey (1998), this is a dynamic interaction that exists at any scale of spatial planning.

The typology approach to the integration of actors/organisations provides an interesting framing device to further understand the interactions in the development of both RSSs. Consultation is the essential driving force in both processes and exists in many forms and guises. Where these networks have been established for some

time, they have become more formalised in working arrangements or have allowed for short-term informal working between organisations. This was particularly noted in relation to the GO's, DA's and RA's work on RFA's; which were the most established statutory spatial planning bodies in the region and have access to the resources and budgets required for achieving this level of integration.

The impact of the experiences of spatial planners in both RSS processes is very much reflected in the changes within planning culture that have resulted and the drive for planning actors to expand their governance networks within the context of broader spatial planning. It is to these cultural and governance lenses that we now turn in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

# **GOVERNANCE, CULTURAL CHANGE AND THE RSS**

### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous two chapters have offered an analysis of the integration of spatial policy and spatial actors/organisations in two processes of RSS preparation. They illustrated a dynamic and changing context within which the two RSSs were developed, which has placed new and challenging demands on spatial planners and stakeholders to adapt to a new style of planning; a new way of doing things. Within a regional context the emerging RSSs have therefore required spatial planners to develop new networks of working relationships in order to address their broader policy remit and meet central requirements for delivery through partnership. This has challenged the culture of spatial planners, requiring a change in the way they do their job, in particular the further development of a regional institutional competence that has only re-emerged over the past fifteen years in England. With this in mind, this chapter sets out to consider the principal part of Objective Five: To assess through the prism of governance, the role of regional spatial planners and their organisations and culture, in developing and delivering the RSS. The secondary part of this objective, to consider future potential developments will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

This chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section examines through the prism of governance and new institutionalism the integration of spatial policy and actors in the two cases of RSS development previously discussed. This begins with a consideration of how governance is observed in both regions through the blurring of policy sector and actor boundaries, which is fundamental to the coordination and integration of spatial policy in RSS preparation. The complex web of networks that surround the emerging RSSs are then discussed in relation to horizontal and vertical, constraining and enabling forces that mediate each other to shape networks. This leads to an examination of governance in terms of the typological styles of governance that were developed in Chapter Two. The depth of governance relations

in both cases are then explored, which will assist in giving an overall indication of institutional capacity.

The second section of this chapter considers the cultural change experienced by spatial planners as they undertake the development of new spatial strategies. This reflects on additional interview material to examine the background of RSS spatial planners; their understanding of spatial planning and integration; the resources and skills required for engaging in regional spatial planning; their experience in dealing with other professionals; and their perception of cultural change. An overview of the barriers to cultural change is then offered, before returning to the 'change of culture' and 'change within culture' conceptualisations presented in Chapter Two. These lenses will allow for a consideration of the extent to which actual cultural change is taking place within regional spatial planning practice.

## **6.2 UNDERSTANDING GOVERNANCE AND THE INTEGRATION OF SPATIAL POLICY AND ACTORS**

### **6.2.1 Governance by Networks**

As discussed in the conceptual framework in Chapter Two, governance provides a useful lens to consider how spatial policy stakeholders relate to each other in the development and implementation of spatial policy (Roberts & Baker, 2006). In doing so it recognises the blurring of policy sector and organisational boundaries and focuses on the networks of dependencies and relations that have resulted. This lens of governance was tempered with a new institutionalism perspective, which recognises that the autonomy of networks is moderated by vertical and horizontal influences and controls that have spatial and temporal variation. In this way spatial planning actors can be both constrained and enabled as they attempt to integrate spatial policy, which over time can lead to path dependency. As the integration of spatial policy was recognised as a never ending process, so the governance through which this takes place is always evolving and changing.



Governance, tempered by a new institutionalism conceptualisation of the context in which networks operate, was observed in attempts to coordinate and integrate regional spatial policy and actors in the NW and EM. The existence of such networks is reflected in the way a range of policy sector stakeholders have come together to mediate the spatial aspects of their respective policies in the development of RSSs. The range and nature of such networks has expanded from those that surrounded the development of previous RPG, becoming more sophisticated and in many respects more complex. In this way both processes of spatial strategy development have also been episodes of governance development, reflected by the networks of relations that have evolved in tandem with the emerging RSSs. Both cases therefore provide a snapshot of the quality and depth of spatial planning governance relations in two English regions.

The blurring of policy boundaries that occurs within governance was very evident in both RSS processes. PPS 11 has acted as a driver for this, ensuring that RA planners consulted widely with SEPs on RSS policy content. The boundaries between for example spatial planning and, economic or transport or environmental concerns, were blurred prior to the development of the RSSs, due to previous experience in RPG, RES and RSDF development. This indicates that there was a relatively coherent governance structure already in place at the regional level when RSS development commenced in 2004. Building on this foundation both processes have facilitated a further blurring of inter-policy sector boundaries. As illustrated in the previous two chapters (Sections 4.3.2 & 5.2.2) the concurrent SA processes have been very influential in this regard. SA was noted as a sophisticated device in eliminating fine grain inconsistencies between spatial policies in terms of sustainable development, therefore facilitating the elimination of barriers to more coherent spatial policy coordination. In a similar way the SA process brought together a range of policy sector stakeholders from beyond spatial planning, who regarded their participation in SA as the most beneficial aspect of RSS consultation, as it assisted the development of mutual understanding and cross sector learning. In this way, it is possible that the SA process may have acted as a catalyst for the creation and development of regional policy and stakeholder governance networks.

To a lesser degree, the blurring of boundaries between spatial planning and health policies was also observed in Chapter Five (Section 5.2.2). In both cases GO health policy officers had worked extensively for the first time in their regions to create learning opportunities between spatial planners and public health officials. Through facilitating seminars and workshops, in addition to commenting on draft spatial policies and providing written scoping exercises to their respective RAs, both individuals assisted in cross-fertilisation between health and spatial planning. Although it was clearly evident that a lot of this work was not reflected in the final draft RSSs, the roles played by the health officers has laid the foundation for the development and expansion of health/spatial planning professional networks in future regional spatial policy development. The experiences of both health officials in RSS development has also raised awareness of the need to cultivate sub-regional spatial planning/health policy networks, with the intention of influencing the development of LDFs and the work of local government more generally. As such regional and sub-regional networks become embedded over time they will assist in mitigating the boundaries between regional policy sectors, therefore enriching regional spatial planning governance.

The development of both RSSs also exhibited strong governance features represented by the dependencies and relations between the stakeholders involved. One of the main reasons for this is that the regions' main economic, social, and environmental responsibilities are shared across a range of organisations. As a result, if spatial actors and organisations are to deliver their broad policy remits, they must depend on other actors and organisations that have the resources and ability to assist in this regard. Such interdependencies in terms of governance are therefore an important driver in the coordination and integration of spatial policies and their respective actors and organisations. This was observed in Chapter Four (Section 4.3.3) in the context of central government requirements for RSS monitoring, evaluation, and IPs, which many stakeholders recognised as being influential in encouraging public sector organisations to think beyond their own policy remits. RFAs represent a more sophisticated expression of such interdependencies, as they lock the main regional organisations into planning for and delivering improvements in relation to housing, transport, and economic development. And indeed, there was a desire in both the EM

and the NW to build on their interdependencies through expanding the policy and funding stream coverage of their respective RFAs.

The blurring of boundaries and the creation of dependencies and relations between actors in both cases has led to the development of complex networks that weave in and out of policy sectors and regional organisations. As discussed in the previous chapter, however, the strength and quality of such networks surrounding the emerging RSSs differed, depending on the policy sector from which they were viewed (see Section 5.2.2). From the perspective of regional spatial planners, RSS consultation provided them with the opportunity to interact with a broad range of existing and newly developed regional policy networks that came within their RSS remit. Planners viewed such networks favourably as they provided opportunities, although somewhat limited, to engage in cross sector learning and enrich their spatial policy knowledge. The RSS stakeholders consulted, however, had less favourable views of the strength and quality of such networks when outside the SA process, as their opportunities to learn about spatial planning and other policy sectors were more limited, due to time and resource constraints on RSS development. This indicates that the value placed by stakeholders on governance networks that permeated the emerging RSSs was higher when the engagement involved was mutual as opposed to one way. As a result, RA spatial planners and to a lesser degree GO and DA planners, were the only RSS stakeholders to conclude that from their perspective the RSS process had assisted in enriching the governance networks of regional spatial planning.

The impact of perceived mutual benefits on the strength and quality of networks was also observed above (and in Section 5.2.2) in relation to new networks such as those for health and spatial planning. This, however, is not the only factor that influences how successful new networks are at embedding themselves within regional spatial planning institutionally. Through a governance lens one can also see that the example of the health policy officers indicates that entrenching networks is dependent on a number of other factors. These include a key individual who is prepared to champion cross sector learning and cooperation even though there may not be immediate benefits; the communication and interpersonal skills they possess; and of course the

opportunity provided by the newness of the system, which emphasises gaps where policy requires joining up.

In an institutional sense the operation of networks in both regions, whether established or new, did not occur in a self-organising manner, but were subject to constraints, which mediated their form and function. These restrictions existed in many guises, such as the manner in which RSS policy content was dictated by central government; the strong influence of local government within the RAs; or as observed above and throughout Chapter Five, the time and resource constraints placed on RA planners, which precluded networks from providing mutual benefits to stakeholders. The role of time and resources appears to have been crucial in restricting consultation and therefore the quality of the resulting networks. This relates to earlier discussions of how central government, while failing to join up itself, has placed an onus on the regions to do so. In this regard it has raised expectation for an expansion of regional spatial planning governance networks, but has failed to provide sufficient resources to support such network development. It is this very fact that has been hugely influential on the operation and development of governance relations during both episodes of planning.

In the NW other mediating influences on networks included the city-region concept which framed the manner in which networks conceptualised spatial policy, or the role of sustainable development, which restricted existing environmental networks so as to provide better balance and access for social and economic networks. In the EM the important economic and spatial policy network was limited by very different professional perceptions between the DA and RA regarding how future regional projections should be conceptualised.

From this one can see that spatial planning networks, like any social networks, do not operate free of context. In effect, central and local government; time and resource constraints; and different organisations, spatial concepts and professional cultures; are capable of directing, steering or even inhibiting networks through influencing the context in which they operate and how the stakeholders conceptualise the policy they are developing. This finding assists here in gaining a more sophisticated insight into the manner in which governance relations were operating during the development of

both RSSs. A picture is revealed of how the formal and informal structures of interaction were operating in spatial policy development and impacting upon the behaviour of actors, organisations and on institutional outcomes. RSS stakeholders operating in different networks were constrained or enabled in the types of decisions they could make or input they could provide, which in turn influenced and impacted upon the decisions and input of others and the resulting draft RSS. In this way one can see the operation of path dependency pervading various networks. This was seen for example in Chapter Five through the use of the city-region concept or in the way sustainable development framed various debates. It was also observed at the beginning of both RSS processes by the manner in which issues and options were decided (see Section 5.2.2). These were strongly framed not only by national government policy such as the Sustainable Communities Plan, but also by the way RPG strategic policies were taken as a given and carried forward into the RSS processes. In essence, this is effectively a steering of the RSS process by central and local government and the RA. Such steering is not just constraining, it can also be enabling or certainly attempt to be so, as noted with the new health policy networks emerging on the fringes of regional spatial planning.

Having conceptually established how some of the main elements of the RSS process operated in the context of governance and new institutionalism, it is now necessary to consider the styles of governance that were observed through the networks of interaction in both cases. Following this, the chapter will proceed to consider the overall depth of governance in both RSS processes.

### **6.2.2 An Assessment of Governance Integration between Regional Spatial Policy and Actors**

The concluding part of the conceptual framework discussion of governance networks tempered by new institutionalism, was connected to the typologies of spatial planning policy and actors/organisations, through the establishment of a concurrent hierarchy of styles of governance. This hierarchy is revisited here, in order to bring greater conceptual clarity to the types of governance practices observed in the development of both RSSs, ranging from basic coordination to full integration.

At the very basic level of governance ‘taking into account’ was observed as the most common governance approach in the RSS process. The range of actors and organisations consulted by the RAs in spatial policy development (see Figure 4.2, p.122) and the manner in which the draft RSSs extensively cross-reference to other relevant national and regional policies and strategies (see Sections 4.3.1 & 4.4.1), are testament to the pervasive nature of this style of governance. Dialogue was also reasonably prevalent as a governance approach, although, as observed in the previous chapter (Section 5.2.2), the quality of this was very dependent on the networks and stakeholders that the RAs were engaging. While the big regional players such as local government through their respective RAs, and to an extent the DAs and GOs were generally positive about the value of dialogue in RSS development, many other smaller players such as the environment agencies were less favourable, stating that they were being listened to rather than being engaged. In this sense, dialogue as a style of governance gives one a better understanding of the depth and sincerity of consultation involved in RSS development. As with mutually beneficial networks discussed above, genuine dialogue therefore promotes a higher quality in governance relations.

Both cases studied illustrated episodes of joint planning within their RSS preparation processes. As discussed in Sections 5.2.3 and 5.3.2, this centred on joint policy work carried out by, for example, the environment agencies responding to RSS draft policies in the NW. As with dialogue and ‘taking into account’, however, these are weaker styles of governance that in reality impact upon policy coordination as opposed to integration, because they only involve occasional or temporary, short-term interaction. In a wider intra-regional sense, the RSS preparation process is also an episode of joint planning in that it only occurs periodically, providing a small window of opportunity for broader governance relations to develop further. This of course is not to say that such governance relations between the relevant stakeholders do not take place outside the RSS process, but rather it suggests that the RSS process provides a greater opportunity than other episodes in regional strategy making for mutual learning and the development and expansion of governance networks. The main reasons for this are that the RSS consultation process is broader in terms of policy and actors/organisations, is temporally longer and is more sophisticated in a governance sense, than any other form of regional strategy making.

Moreover, joint planning episodes like the RSS process can act as a catalyst for governance relations and encourage their evolution into more sophisticated forms such as joint ventures and strategic alliances. Strategic alliances, which are comparable to the organisation typology of formal partnerships, were described in the previous chapter as existing in the form of RAs (see Section 5.3.2). RAs are in effect a strategic alliance in the regions between local governance and a plethora of economic, social and environmental networks that come together and mediate a wide range of policies and resources in their own interest.

As styles of governance, joint ventures and strategic alliances enter the sphere of spatial policy being integrated with the intention of delivery. It is at this point that one begins in an institutional sense to see the steering power of the main regional governance bodies. As discussed above in relation to the strongest influence on the quality of networks, the main driver in creating integrated styles of governance is resources, or more specifically in this context, finance. In this respect, RFAs have resulted in the most highly developed integration of regional spatial policy and actors, within both cases studied. This has been strongly influenced by the Treasury with the view of prioritising regional spending across housing, transport, and economic development and has resulted, in effect, in a strategic alliance between the RAs, DAs and GOs. Related to this point is a common theme throughout this research which focuses on the interaction between the horizontal and the vertical dimensions of integration. In both episodes of RSS development it was typical to see strong central and local government influences in the vertical sense, which tempered and impeded regional integration in the horizontal sense. The RFAs support this point of tension between these dimensions, but in the reverse. In this case, one can see how a small relinquishment of central control, or at least a devolving of difficult economic prioritisation decisions to the regions, has resulted in a stronger alliance in terms of governance, sense between the three key bodies in both cases studied. The desire to establish these new governance relationships more strongly is exemplified by the unending support and expression of positive aspirations for this in the RFA reports of both cases (see Section 4.3.3). The fact that this devolved responsibility has resulted in the development of shared evidence bases, consultation processes, and policy delivery priorities suggests an emergent deeper set of regional governance relations, within which spatial planning, through the RFAs, is becoming more firmly

established. This supports the earlier contention that given the opportunity, regional spatial planning in England can indeed act as a site for deeper governance innovation in the institutional sense. It is to these considerations of depth of governance that we now turn.

### **6.2.3 Depth of Governance**

This final sub-section on governance is intended to complement the previous discussion of governance styles and considers the depth of governance that was observed around the emerging RSSs in the NW and EM. According to 6 *et al.* (2002), the depth of governance involved in public policymaking can be best understood through the consideration of four main factors. These are intensity, breadth, scope and exposure, each of which will now be considered in turn.

Intensity considers the level of resources that have been integrated into the governance process. In both processes of spatial planning studied, it was evident that participants had brought a large array of resources to their consultation processes. Many of these have been touched on throughout this study and come in many forms and guises. For example, during the consultation processes it was observed that at a very basic level, stakeholders contributed considerable time resources to spatial policy development. This involved the harnessing of their individual knowledge resources, which they pooled through consultation to assist in broadening spatial policy perspectives. In addition, RSS stakeholders outside the RAs also provided a large array of data and research, which in some contexts was more than RA spatial planners could digest, due to their own staffing and time constraints. Another beneficial resource that was integrated into the process was the network connections that participants brought with them, which is discussed below in relation to scope. In terms of resources, however, funding and timing constraints on the RAs meant that the quality of governance relations and networks that occurred was often lessened as a result, in particular regarding the aspirations and intentions of those stakeholders participating.

Breadth is also a good measure of the depth of governance and considers the range of policies and activities that are brought together. This has been another common theme throughout this research and indeed the wide range of policies covered proved



at times unwieldy for regional spatial planners. This indicates that although the intentions to have broader governance networks supporting the emergence of spatial planning were positive in intent, in some respects they turned out to be aspirational due to the lack of resources available. This barrier to the integration of a broad range of spatial policies suggests that there were also intensity issues weakening the depth of governance that could have potentially developed. Such issues of intensity and breadth have also been observed conversely, as was seen for example in relation to the RFAs. In this case, the integration of a high level of resources into the delivery of three strands of spatial policy allowed for a broader range of activities to come together, with the purpose of delivering specific goals linked to streams of funding.

In terms of depth of governance, scope addresses the ranges of actors and organisations involved (6 *et al.*, 2002). The governance episodes in both cases are testament to a wide scope that occurred in the making of the RSSs. There were, however, weaknesses observed in this respect in relation to the private sector and more peripheral policy areas. For instance, there was limited involvement by business and the involvement of the health sector was not without its problems. As was noted earlier in relation to the discussion of networks, it is inevitable that it will take time for regional spatial planners to build and firmly establish newer networks that can fulfil the broader scope that is expected of spatial planning.

The final measure of the depth of governance is exposure. This considers the extent to which the core business of each organisation adapts during the course of integration (6 *et al.*, 2002). In both cases studied there was little evidence that this had taken place to any large degree, although it was clear that this had been happening in a gradual way since the late 1990s. For example, the RSDF processes in both regions had assisted in embedding sustainable development principles in the RES, the RHS, and the RSS, and the general operations of their parent organisations. In many respects, however, this was a very gradual process and illustrates how developing depth in governance through aligning strategic policies and their delivery is an iterative process that takes time, particularly when there is no carrot of funding streams involved such as in the RFAs. From this, it is possible to conclude that although the RSS process did not result in any major adaptations of the core business of the organisations involved, it will most likely, however, have assisted in the

ongoing embedding of spatial policy perspectives, which should contribute to the gradual evolution of deeper and more effective governance networks in regional spatial planning.

This assessment of the depth of governance suggests that there are strong features of governance by network throughout the RSS process. These features are principally tempered in institutional terms through the control of resources by central government, which strongly curtails the context in which these networks operate. Therefore, without more resources, there will always be strong barriers to the development of deeper governance relations within English regional spatial planning. As a result, the government's desire for more effective governance relationships at a regional level, in order to ensure the efficient delivery of integrated public policy within a spatial framework, will not be realised until this issue is addressed. So although both RSS processes indicate the continuing development of regional spatial planning's institutional capacity in terms of governance relations, any genuine desire on the part of central government for a more sophisticated regional institutional competence. Such limitations on the development of spatial planning governance networks, among other factors, places considerable extra pressures on regional spatial planners, as they also contend with the professional culture change that the introduction of spatial planning has entailed. The next section therefore considers such cultural change in the context of regional spatial planning.

### **6.3 PROFESSIONAL CULTURAL ISSUES IN REGIONAL SPATIAL PLANNING**

The conceptual framework in Chapter Two discussed the idea that as governance and institutional structures open and change in response to the broader demands of regional spatial planning, the culture of spatial planners also changes as they develop new shared meanings and understandings. This influences how planners think and interact, leading to the embedding and internalisation of new ideas and practices institutionally and professionally, into their cultural capital (Tewdwr-Jones & McNeill, 2000; Vigar *et al.*, 2000; Healey, 1999). Culture was conceptualised in the metaphorical sense, concluding that strategy, organisation and culture are all

synonymous with each other (Bate, 1994). In this sense, a change from one strategy to another, such as from RPG to RSS is cultural change, which in turn alters the institutional context in which this takes place.

With this in mind, this section explores some of the facets of culture change that were observed in both regions. A brief overview of the background of RSS stakeholders is first offered, before progressing to explore the important aspects of culture change in planning that were noted in Chapter Two. These include stakeholder's understanding of spatial planning and integration; their perception of the skills and resource needed to engage in regional spatial planning; their experiences of dealing with other professions; and their acknowledgment of cultural change. This is followed by a discussion of some of the barriers that were observed in both cases. The conceptual framework typologies of 'change of culture' and 'change within culture' are then revisited in order to bring greater conceptual clarity in this regard to the cases examined.

### **6.3.1 Background of RSS Participants**

Almost all of the spatial planners interviewed in the NW case were senior planners, with many years of strategic and sub-regional planning experience and were related to large planning teams in their respective organisations. The few younger regional spatial planners interviewed existed within the environmental sector and generally tended to be the sole regional planner within the regional branch of their organisation. In GONW spatial planners operated separately from a range of different policy officers and only interacted with them to gain feedback, which they then integrated and fed into the RSS process. These other GO policy officers covered a number of sectors including transport, environment, housing, health, rural issues and economic affairs. This latter group, although not spatial planners in the professional RTPI sense, had considerable experience in planning issues, which they had gained through 'learning by doing'.

A very similar pattern of spatial planners and policy sector officers was also found in the EM case. Almost all spatial planners were senior, 'middle aged' and headed up large planning teams in their respective organisations. Senior policy sector officers, as with those in the NW case had learned planning 'on the job' over many years. In

contrast to GONW, however, spatial planners in GOEM worked side by side with a range of other policy officers in area based teams. Spatial planners as a policy sector, along with other policy sectors in GOEM, only existed in a virtual sense. Spatial planners within statutory environmental organisations were younger and were the only regional planner in the EM's regional branch of their respective organisations.

In both cases a crucial age and therefore skills gap was noted through the absence of spatial planners and other regional policy officers, within the age range of late twenties to late forties. This reflects the predominant absence of regional planning in England from the late 1970s to the mid-1990s. For example the NWDA noted:

“....events over the last thirty years have not strengthened the number of people with skills for regional spatial planning....There are a lot of qualified people in their late forties and beyond and then there are very young planners in their early to mid twenties....There is a whole gap of experience age wise. The system is working at the moment but we are on borrowed time. Those at the bottom have a steep learning curve....”

(Senior Spatial Planner, NWDA, 2006)

This brief consideration of the background of spatial planners involved in developing RSSs suggests that there may be a serious experience and skills deficiency institutionally within a decade, when senior regional spatial planners and policy officers begin to retire. The necessity of retaining and enriching the cultural capital they carry will require attention from future British governments.

### **6.3.2 Understanding of Spatial Planning and Integration**

In both the EM and the NW, RSS stakeholders expressed a broad and general understanding of the meaning of spatial planning and the relevance of integration. Almost every interviewee understood spatial planning at the basic level of broadening the understanding and consideration of land use planning to include a range of other policies (see Box 6.1).

A number of subtle distinctions in the way spatial planning was conceptualised were noted between the two regions and between different organisations and policy sectors. In the NWRA, RSS stakeholders also emphasised that spatial planning is about leadership and a long term view. For example:

“....spatial planning is also about having a longer term view of policies that impact on land....It is about providing leadership in the region....”

(RSDF Policy Officer, NWRA, 2006)

### **Box 6.1: NW and EM RSS Stakeholder Understanding of Spatial Planning**

“Spatial planning is about an overarching framework for how a place functions, it is not just land use, it is also about economics, transport, housing and other policies....[it is] about knitting everything together....and land use is just one aspect of this”

(Regional Transport Officer, GONW, 2006)

“Spatial planning is about working in a given area to ensure that key issues such as economic development, transport, housing and employment are tackled in an integrated way....in the context of land use,...so it is an issue of integration”

(Regional Transport Officer, GOEM, 2006)

In GONW there was a tendency among spatial planners and other policy officers to emphasise the ‘place making’ focus of spatial planning:

“Spatial planning involves critical thinking regarding space and place as a basis for action and interaction....to be able to use places as a focus for integrating policy....So instead of looking at policy silos and then place, you turn this on its head and look at place first.”

(Senior Spatial Planner, GONW, 2006)

Such stakeholder nuances in defining spatial planning were not apparent in the EM region. In both cases, however, there was a clear distinction in the environmental and health policy sectors, with spatial planners and policy officers here emphasising the joining up of their policy sector with land use, as opposed to the inclusion of other policy sectors more generally (see Box 6.2).

From this one can see that understanding of spatial planning has many different fine grained distinctions across RSS stakeholders, but particularly in the NW case as opposed to the EM, where definitions of spatial planning were more consistent

among RSS stakeholders. One NW RSS stakeholder commented on these intra-regional differences as:

“...you can see different understanding between regional organisations....The emphasis of different policy officers can be different, its a sort of Chinese whispers, everyone has their own emphasis on the facts and so the message changes.”

(Regional Environmental Policy Officer, GONW, 2006)

**Box 6.2: NW RSS Environment and Health Stakeholders’  
Understanding of Spatial Planning**

“Spatial planning covers spatial land uses....like environmental capacity....also agriculture and biodiversity....”

(Regional Spatial Planner, EA NW, 2006)

“Spatial planning is wider than traditional land use planning....It recognises objectives for the delivery of environmental issues such as stewardship of the countryside....”

(Regional Spatial Planner, CsA, EM, 2006)

“Historically public health is about spatial planning....”

(Regional Health Officer, GONW, 2006)

“....spatial planning is about including land use and building in health issues at an early stage....[It is about] the wider impacts of health in terms of transport and other policies....”

(Regional Health Policy Officer, GOEM, 2006)

The nuances observed can therefore be understood in terms of different organisational and policy cultures, which as with the regional institutional culture of spatial planning, set out particular norms and values that are internalised by those involved and recreated through their professional practice. Such subtle differences in understanding spatial planning between policy sectors and organisations can create difficulty in facilitating a coherent and common regional institutional understanding

of spatial planning, which can impede its integrated development and practice through networks. For this reason there was concern in the NW case that spatial planning needed a simpler definition like sustainable development, in order to ensure that all those involved in its practice at the regional level had the same understanding:

“Spatial planning is a difficult concept to get across.... We need a one liner to sum it up, like with sustainable development.... a snappy phrase that makes it relevant.”

(Senior Spatial Planner, GONW, 2006)

This view, however, forgets that sustainable development, although a ‘snappy phrase’, has come to mean many different things to different people. The subtle distinctions in understanding spatial planning in the NW case are therefore worthy of further consideration.

In both regions RSS stakeholders predominantly understood integration in terms of joining up policies. As with understandings of spatial planning, there were also differences in emphasis on what was being integrated. In the NWRA integration was emphasised in terms of sustainable development:

“Integration is about joining up policy.... It is largely about sustainable development, about mitigating conflicts between policies....”

(RSDF Policy Officer, NWRA, 2006)

Similar emphasis was expressed by environmental stakeholders in both regions. Other differences, however, were observed in the NW case, where the DA stressed integration in terms of alignment of the RES and RSS, while all GONW RSS stakeholders attributed the prominence of integration to strategy alignment more generally (see Box 6.3).

In the EM, as with understanding of spatial planning, there was greater consistency in the way integration was perceived. All stakeholders recognised integration as being synonymous with sustainable development and the alignment of key regional strategies. For example:

“Integration involves our many regional strategies going in the same direction so they don’t conflict.... The government requires alignment....”

all policies aiming for the same thing....Sustainable development is important in this context....”

(Senior Spatial Planner, GOEM, 2006)

### **Box 6.3: NWDA and GONW Understanding of Integration**

“Integration is very important....It is about making sure that the RES is reflected in the RSS....[It is] about the RSS providing the strategic planning framework and context for the RES....”

(Senior Spatial Planner, NWDA, 2006)

“Integration is about making sure that all plans are systematic, that they are supporting and complementing each other, to a collectively, mutually beneficial end....”

(Regional Environmental Policy Officer, GONW, 2006)

The consistency with which spatial planning and integration were understood in the EM appears to be connected to the region’s IRS. As stated in Chapter Four, the IRS was key to aligning spatial policy in the region as it acted as an overarching strategy for the RES, RSS and RHS, therefore ensuring a common spatial and integration narrative among the policy stakeholders involved. This point was emphasised by one EM RSS stakeholder who stated:

“The IRS is always lurking in the background of people’s minds....It influences how people think about policy.”

(Regional Housing Planner, GOEM, 2006)

The reason for this common narrative in the EM helps in understanding the absence of one in the NW, where AfS has had a much weaker role in assisting policy coordination and integration. As a result, it is unlikely that a ‘snappy phrase’ will bring greater coherency to understanding spatial planning and integration in the NW and that closer commitment between the main regional players to some type of overarching guiding framework would assist more in this regard.



### **6.3.3 Skills for Regional Spatial Planning**

All stakeholders interviewed in both regions felt that a broad range of skills were required for participation in regional spatial planning. This understanding was at its most coherent among RA and GO spatial planners, as both teams were the only RSS stakeholders who networked with an extensive range of other policy stakeholders during the process. This was discussed in the previous chapter regarding the manner in which RA planners benefited from one way exchanges of feedback through non-mutually beneficial consultation networks and how GO planners integrated feedback from other GO policy officers representing eleven different government departments. Another group of RSS stakeholders who had an almost equal understanding of the skills required for regional spatial planning were the non-planning policy officers in GOEM. This is very understandable, because as discussed in Section 5.2.4, these policy officers operated in area based teams working alongside spatial planners and so we more readily able to take advantage of the cross sector learning that this provided on a daily basis (see Regional Transport Policy Officer, GOEM quote p.219). The remaining stakeholders in both regions had a reasonably good idea of the skill set needed, but beyond generic skills, tended to emphasise skills directly relevant to their policy perspective, such as the environmental stakeholders who emphasised the importance of SA.

The skill set proposed by stakeholders and summarised here can be divided into two main categories, which are broadly concurrent with the spatial planning skills discussed in Chapter Two in relation to Shaw's cultural change LDF work (Shaw, 2006). The first skill area for regional spatial planning emphasised by RSS stakeholders relates to inter-personal skills, which as discussed above are crucial to the success of newer policy networks. Within this, interviewees emphasised the ability to communicate effectively; a talent for networking, collaborative thinking and partnership working; and a flair for negotiation and political sensitivity. Related to this are management skills, in particular the ability to lead people, prioritise, manage time and deliver. The second, but by no means lesser skill set required for regional spatial planning centred on technical and analytical skills. This included the ability to develop and use evidence bases; extensive knowledge of financing and other related policy areas, a talent for writing concisely; experience in thinking strategically; and knowledge of SA. Where an individual has gaps in either of the

two skill sets, stakeholders suggested the necessity of learning by doing; although this may be much easier in relation to technical and analytical skills as opposed to inter-personal skills.

In general there were relatively limited opportunities for RSS stakeholders to take advantage of training in spatial planning, as most organisations had very limited budgets in this regard. The only frequent training opportunities were open to spatial planners through RTPI continuing professional development (CPD). The planners who took advantage of this were very critical, stating that the CPD courses were simply reiterating perspectives that those in regional spatial planning were already aware of, suggesting that the RTPI should be focusing CPD on knowledge areas where regional spatial planners may be weak. For example:

“I have been to national CPD courses and have not been happy with them....As regional planners we are involved a lot in developing policy, but when we go to CPD we hear about policy that we already know.... How about up-skilling us with things we need to know, like implementation and financing....?”

(Senior Spatial Planner, GOEM, 2006)

In the absence of sufficient training opportunities, many stakeholders looked to supplement their knowledge and experience through exploring spatial planning practice outside their region. In both cases, other English regions were used as the primary yardstick for stakeholders to bring greater meaning to their own RSS work. This proved relatively easy for GO and environmental sector spatial planners and policy officers, who liaised with their contemporaries in other English regions, directly sharing experiences and/or seeking advice. The EE was by far the most popular benchmark as it was the first region to complete its draft RSS for EIP. Outside this the NW tended to look to other northern regions, due to their common relationship to The Northern Way. Similarly, stakeholders in the EM tended to look to their neighbouring regions, in particular the SE. RSS participants in the NW were also far more likely to look outside England for inspiration and in this regard the Wales Spatial Plan proved a popular choice. Within GONW, Ireland and Scotland were also often cited as sources of inspiration, along with Australia.

#### **6.3.4 Dealing with Other Professionals**

Despite many of the consultation problems discussed throughout this research, RSS stakeholders in both regions were very positive in relation to their dealings with other professionals, throughout the development of their respective RSSs.

In both RAs it was recognised that dealing with other stakeholders, although sometimes a difficult and challenging balancing act, assisted in increasing ownership of the emerging strategy. For example, from the perspective of the NWRA it was stated that:

“Professional collaboration has been generally positive. We have had a wide range of responses on policy issues and specific geographical areas....One of the strengths has been that participation has increased ownership....But at times it has been a difficult and challenging job to balance particular interests, particularly in the context of sustainable development.”

(Head Spatial Planner, NWRA, 2006).

Non-RA RSS stakeholders were also equally encouraging in relation to their engagement in the process. Even in the NW environmental sector, which had been relatively critical of how the RA had restricted their networks for consultation, it was recognised that the RA has been more receptive when environmental professionals had collaborated in their submissions:

“Professional contact with the RA was positive....There was an emerging appreciation among RA staff as strategy development progressed that consistent responses from organisations were welcome, especially if several organisations did so together.”

(Regional Spatial Planner, EA, 2006)

In both cases it was acknowledged that future professional interactions could be improved and enhanced through more clearly defining the roles of different stakeholders and the manner in which they could best feed into the RSS process.

There was also a general belief, as discussed above in relation to networks, that RAs needed to take more seriously the fact that not all stakeholders had a comprehensive knowledge of spatial planning and that future consultation should allow more time for cross sector learning.

### 6.3.5 Perceptions of Cultural Change

There was limited acknowledgement among RSS stakeholders of any cultural change within planning, as it has moved from a land use to a spatial perspective. It is interesting to note that this was particularly prevalent among non-spatial planning policy stakeholders. Within the spatial planning profession perceptions of cultural change were relatively more positive. One senior spatial planner explained that the general lack of acknowledgement of cultural change was due to the fact that most non-planners perceived planners as doing what they had always done and that within the profession only some were embracing the new system:

“Cultural change is true in a general sense, but it is very difficult to generalise about planners, most are doing what they have always done, while some are embracing the new system....Practitioners always disagree at the coal face....”

(Senior Spatial Planner, AGMA, 2006)

Another senior spatial planner also agreed that the perceptions of non-planners were crucial in recognising that some change was actually taking place in the profession:

“....things have changed and there is still a lot to do....Culture change requires not only how you do things, but also how people engage with you and perceive you and it this that has not changed....So while practice is changing, people’s perceptions of planning has not changed, so for them it is business as usual....”

(Senior Spatial Planner, EMDA, 2006)

From this it appears that there is a disjoint between the changes that have taken place in the planning system and the manner in which planners have engaged with these changes in any meaningful or ‘new’ way. This disjoint has in turn influenced perceptions outside, and to an extent, inside the profession that there has been very little or no change at all. One planner offered a possible explanation for this lack of coupling between system change and professional cultural change, stating that:

“....it [cultural change] is not happening as the planning reforms are running out of steam....There are not enough regional planners and so existing planners have to work harder and are therefore losing sight of their new wider objectives.”

(Regional Housing Planner, GONW, 2006)

In this way the potential for cultural change, although in existence through the new system, is being slowed down. This is primarily due to a lack of sufficient resources, which would allow existing planners the time and space to internalise and act upon the new spatial planning opportunities with which they are now faced. The extent to which this is mitigating cultural change in a conceptual sense is explored below, after considering in greater detail the barriers that spatial planners are experiencing in this regard.

### **6.3.6 Cultural Change Barriers in Regional Spatial Planning**

The above interpretive discussion of cultural elements within regional spatial planning institutionally, indicates that there was been some change within planning practice. All RSS stakeholders exhibited a broad understanding of spatial planning and integration, along with a general appreciation of the skill sets that are required for engaging and a willingness to work with a range of other policy professionals. In addition, while there were not many learning opportunities within the RSS process or stakeholders' organisations, almost all RSS participants took the time to look outside their region and draw on spatial planning experiences from elsewhere. This indicates that as the system has changed from land use to spatial planning, there has been a concurrent, but slow emergence of cultural change within regional spatial planning, as practiced by spatial planners and non-spatial planners. Despite these positive signs, perceptions of inertia still persist strongly. A number of barriers have contributed to this, which again tally with the findings of Shaw (2006).

Information and task overload have compounded the shortage of professionally qualified planners. As discussed above and in the previous two chapters, the basic requirements for RSS preparation have proved to be a very challenging undertaking. The ever-increasing weight of government advice, recommendations, demands, and requests, to which RSS stakeholders need to conform, have stretched their abilities to contribute to the process in a truly meaningful and useful way. For example, the government requires that the RA should consult with the general public as part of developing the RSS, even though it has long been recognised that it is very difficult to cultivate public interest at the strategic and regional level of spatial planning (Tewdwr-Jones, 2002); a view supported by many RSS stakeholders. This issue led to a discussion in the previous chapter that the resources used for public consultation,

which include a considerable amount of time on the part of the RA spatial planners, could be put to better use through more effective and meaningful consultation, with elite professional policy stakeholders. In this way, such stakeholders would be more capable of meeting the wide range of central government requirements, to comprehensively integrate the spatial aspects of public policy. This also suggests that there needs to be a commitment on the part of central government, not only to streamline the requirements for RSSs, but also to bring about more effective joining up at the centre, rather than constantly passing this buck to under resourced RSS preparation processes.

The cultural change barrier of information and task overload faced by regional planners has been compounded by procedural uncertainty with the new spatial planning system. Such uncertainty exists because it takes time for spatial planners to learn and execute new planning procedures and even longer for non-spatial planner RSS stakeholders. This relates to previous discussions of managing expectations within the RSS process so stakeholders have a realistic view of how they will contribute to strategy development and what to expect in the RSS as a document. Such an approach, however, can only partially assist in overcoming procedural uncertainty, as it takes time to cultivate understanding and familiarity with the new planning system. In effect it takes time to 'bed down', requiring a considerable amount of patience on the part of RAs and RSS stakeholders more generally. This relates to the issue of more effective use of time and resources on the part of RAs, allowing spatial planners the space to not only internalise the lessons of the new system; but also to educate other policy stakeholders about spatial planning, while in reciprocation taking time to make themselves familiar with these other policy areas. In this way the quality of regional spatial planning consultation networks could be greatly increased, assisting in the development of more effective governance and institutional capacity in the regional context.

Closely related to the issue of procedural uncertainty is the fact that the regional spatial planning process and its attempt to integrate spatial policy lacked any real tested models or precedence in the English situation. Although there were some older planners in both regions who had experience of planning practice during the previous phase of regional planning up to the 1970s, there are many differences, as discussed

in Chapter Two, between the approaches used then and the spatial concepts and tools that are used today. As a result spatial planners in both regions have had to take tentative steps in their attempts to integrate spatial policy, because although PPS 11 (ODPM, 2004a) sets out the requirements for RSS content and procedure, it does not actually instruct planners on how to do so. This task has been made more difficult for RA planners, as requirements that RSSs must be specific to their region, coupled with different spatial conceptual approaches in different regions, compounds their difficulties in drawing on precedence from elsewhere. For these reasons, spatial planners in both regions felt that they only knew where they were going with RSS development, when they actually produced the strategy, or in some situations where they still needed to go with RSS development as shortfalls became apparent during preparation. As a result, it gradually became obvious to spatial planners as the RSS emerged, that they were dealing with a very different document and process compared to previous RPG, even though this was not necessarily clear at the outset. An interesting parallel can be drawn here between those RSS stakeholders who recognised that there was a cultural change taking place in spatial planning and those who did not. In the former case, these stakeholders more readily recognised the lack of precedence for RSS development, while in the latter case stakeholders felt that the process was exactly the same as the previous RPG, requiring the same skill sets and techniques.

A further barrier recognised by RSS participants was the poor sequencing of government advice that pertained to RSS production. Additional planning policy was published by government as the RSSs were emerging, when their respective project plans had already been established and resources for production had already been allocated. As a result, in both cases, the draft RSS's were effectively out-of-date in terms of national government guidance by the time they were published for their EIPs. For example, PPS 3 (DCLG, 2006c) requirements to consult with gypsy and traveller groups in relation to the needs of these communities resulted in the NW draft RSS being deficient in this respect within months of the strategy's publication. Similarly, the EM RSS was out-of-date in relation to new government guidelines on sustainable housing (DCLG, 2006b), which were published after the draft had been settled upon. Both RSS's also experienced difficulties in relation to climate change

and carbon emission reduction targets, as the supplement to PPS 1 (DCLG, 2006a) was also published after both draft RSSs.

Another perceived barrier to cultural change was uncertainty regarding the scope and purpose of spatial planning. This was noted in both cases as RA planners were uncertain about the level of detail that would be permitted in their final RSSs. In the EM for example, there was an ongoing debate regarding the rights and wrongs of the RA planning team including locations for sub-regional urban extensions within the RSS. In both cases there was also an acknowledgement among most stakeholders that such confusion also existed at a local level, which related to the abolition of Structure Plans and part one of Unitary Development Plans. This created a nervous tension within local government and a concern that some of the detail that had previously existed in these strategic planning documents would be lost in the new RSSs. As a result of this, and the great weight of influence that local government brought to bear on both processes, stakeholders felt that the resulting draft RSSs contained sub-regional detail that would possibly be open to question at their respective EIPs.

The final cultural change barrier that was predominantly noted by RSS participants as restricting integration was the synchronisation of regional strategies, with different regional strategies being prepared at different times. As discussed in Chapter Two, the RES has a much shorter consultation period and a slimmed down consultation model in comparison to the RSS. As a result, although there was evidence in both regions that the RES was strongly represented in the RSS through for example cross-referencing, integral coordinating mechanisms and the use of common evidence bases, their full integration; in terms of policy and delivery was impeded by their lack of concurrency in preparation. In a similar sense, although the RSDFs were generally regarded as aiding policy integration and in the EM, in particular, the development of a common sustainable development narrative; their ability to assist in actor/ organisation integration was diminished, as these documents were generally regarded as being out-of-date, with no established timetable for review. Both the RESs and RSDFs are just two examples of regional strategy synchronisation inconsistencies that exist in both regions. The regional pictures in this respect are of course much more complex and fragmented when one considers, as illustrated in



Chapter Four, that there are a whole range of other regional strategies that are prepared to their own time scales, with differences in levels of detail and time horizons.

In Chapter Two, a common spatial planning culture was defined by the fact that those involved in it shared similar assumptions, values, attitudes and norms. In addition, spatial planning practice and the organisations and strategies that constitute it institutionally, were described as being synonymous with each other. Therefore any change in the practice of planning or in its strategies, was deemed to constitute a cultural change. The above discussion illustrates that despite barriers to cultural change, there were differences of opinion in both regions regarding the degree to which the RSS as a document and as a process had been successful at integrating spatial policy. Some stakeholders felt that the RSS was very much the same as the previous RPG and did not perceive any real degree of cultural change within the profession. In contrast, other stakeholders, who were more likely to be spatial planners, more readily acknowledged that there was a change in the way planning was being practiced and that the RSS was indeed a very different approach to regional planning than had previously existed with the RPG. This dichotomy in opinion and underlying assumptions would appear to suggest that in an institutional sense regional planning culture was in a transition from a land use to a spatial perspective; in effect, cultural change was taking place in both cases. It should be noted, however, that other factors may also play a part in explaining this discrepancy in opinion, such as for example the policy sectors and organisations to which RSS stakeholders belong or closeness to the actual preparation process and RA planners. As a result it is necessary to delve deeper and it is for this reason that that we now turn to the conceptual considerations regarding change of culture and change within culture that were discussed in Chapter Two.

### **6.3.7 Change of Culture and Change within Culture**

In Chapter Two change of culture was conceptualised in terms of four types, which were change by exception, incremental change, pendulum change, and paradigm change (Lovell 1994). Through considering each of these types in relation to the cases studied, it will be possible to get a sense of the degree to which planning culture in general is changing. Change by exception relates to the use of temporary

projects or programmes, perhaps in partnership with other agencies, which tend to leave no lasting impact after the experience, although a cross-fertilisation of ideas may have occurred. This basic type of influence on planning culture happens on an ongoing basis and has long been widespread within its professional practice. This was witnessed in both cases studied, through for example basic RSS consultation, which provided opportunities for stakeholders to comment on draft policies and make written submissions, but facilitated minimal cross sector learning, leaving no discernable impact on planning practice (see Sections 5.2.2 & 5.3.1).

Also common within planning practice over its evolution has been incremental change. This constitutes a gradual change in a practice culture and often the differences are so subtle over time that those within or interacting with the culture do not notice the change. In the context of both regions, it is interesting to note that the concept of spatial planning emerged before the PCPA, through the last issue of PPG 11 in 2000 (DETR, 2000a). This resulted in, for example, the EM issuing a partial RSS within a year of the new act. Similarly, although the NW at this time produced its final RPG, participants in the RSS process who had been active then, acknowledged that the previous RPG had strong spatial planning elements. This was observed in the fact that many of the core spatial features of the previous RPG were carried through into the RSS. From this one can see that the evolution from land use to spatial planning within both regions has been slow and gradual. For this reason, the concept of incremental cultural change helps to explain in part why many RSS stakeholders did not notice any real change within planning culture, perceiving the previous RPG to be the same as the new RSS. When both RAs and their respective stakeholders set about engaging in their RSS processes, planning practice in both regions had already begun to move into a mindset of thinking spatially. In this sense, the change from a land use perspective to a spatial perspective had been so gradual, so incremental, that many of the stakeholders involved were almost unaware that the change had occurred.

A pendulum change involves a noticeable change in mood or attitude that results in altered cultural practice. In both regions it was possible to discern that this was occurring to some degree. Many stakeholders acknowledged that a change in attitude or perspective was required for engaging in the RSS consultation, suggesting that a

mood change was emerging in regional spatial planning, in an institutional sense. This was seen for example in relation to the wide currency of the term 'integration', which most RSS stakeholders acknowledged had only recently emerged within planning in an explicit sense, even though to some degree it has always been a tacit aspect of planning practice. The term integration by itself and the public sector reforms from which it had stemmed, was leading planners and other related policy professionals to acknowledge the spatial aspects of a much wider range of public policy, than they had previously. The prevalence of 'integration' within the regional spatial planning narrative institutionally, was therefore an indication of a change in attitude that was driving the joining up of spatial policy, which was indicative of a pendulum change. It is important to note, however, as discussed in Chapter Two that regional planning has previously gone through cycles of popularity and decline. Within this typology Lovell (1994) recognised that moods can change and alter. This therefore leads to the question regarding the permanency of these emerging cultural changes in regional spatial planning.

Lovell's (1994) fourth conceptualisation of cultural change is a paradigm change. This involves a radical alteration of the values that underpin work cultures and leads to changes in the way people think about and perceive their practice, which in turn leads to changes in the way they operationalise their policy areas. A major theme of this research has been the fact that spatial planning is indeed a very different approach than land use planning. It requires broader considerations of policies and stakeholders, which have to be integrated in policy and practice, to ensure the delivery of sustainable development. In this sense one could say in light of the evidence presented from both RSS processes that the new spatial planning *system* is indeed a paradigm change. This is particularly so in regional planning, which has moved from a strategic land allocation advice perspective, to the integration of strategic spatial policy concerns, providing a statutory spatial framework for the English regions. The question as to whether there has been a paradigm change in the *profession*, as opposed to the *system*, is a more difficult one to answer. Although it is clear that the new system requires a change in professional culture if it is to be operationalised effectively, most of the evidence in the cases studied suggests at best an incremental and pendulum change towards spatial planning practice. For this

reason and in order to bring greater clarity to this clouded issue, we now turn to Schein's (1992) three levels of change within culture.

Schein (1992) suggests three aspects of culture, which should be considered in order to get a sense of the permanency of change involved. The first of these are artefacts which are defined as the organisational structures and processes including the physical environment in which policy actors operate; the language they express and communicate; and the technology they use. In both regions RSS stakeholders acknowledged that there had been changes to several artefact elements of regional spatial planning culture. These include, for example, the emergence over the last decade of new regional organisations with spatial planning functions, such as the DA and RA. New artefacts were also visible in relation to the new planning system and the new spatial plans which it is producing. In turn, this new process had resulted in the gradual dissemination of a new conceptual language; or in some cases, a re-emergence of conceptual language previously used in the English context; or an infiltration of ideas from European planning, such as city-regions and polycentricity. So in Schein's (1992) terms, the emergence of new cultural artefacts surrounding both RSS processes was clearly evident.

The second aspect of culture described by Schein (1992) are espoused values. These are defined as aspirational, but not necessarily what is, including strategies, goals, and philosophies. As a result, espoused values are often reflected in what people say, but not necessarily in what they do. In both regions the presence of espoused values was clearly expressed in relation to spatial planning. Such values were very strong in the sense that they were new and were really an expression of 'what ought to be', because the draft RSSs had yet to be finalised through their respective EIPs. In this way, the espoused values of the 'new spatial planning' were aspirational and although they involved changes in the strategies, goals, and philosophies of regional planning, this did not necessarily mean that these would be operationalised in the sense of practice or delivery. In both regions, however, as discussed in Chapter Four, it was clear that two draft RSSs of considerable spatial content and intent had been produced, which provided an opportunity to take the concept of spatial planning from being an aspiration to being a reality. This transition was further driven and realised by the fact that both regions had signed up to RFA's, which are intended to ensure

the delivery of, among others objectives, those that are contained in the RSSs. As a result one can see that espoused values were indeed being realised in the regional planning practice that surrounded both RSS processes.

The third level of change in culture described by Schein (1992) are basic underlying beliefs. These are the unconscious taken-for-granted beliefs, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings. They are regarded as the ultimate source of values and actions. Such basic underlying beliefs inform policy practitioners in their institutional context regarding how to feel and think, and how to approach their practice. As these beliefs are unconscious, they are rarely debated and are difficult to change. Despite the general perception of a lack of cultural change, particularly among non-planner RSS stakeholders, it is possible to discern some change to underlying beliefs. This change was predominantly unconsciously tacit in the responses of RSS stakeholders and relates to several aspects of cultural change already discussed. Taking account of the deficiencies of both draft RSSs observed in Chapter Four, spatial planners and other policy officers in both regions were involved in the production of new spatial strategies, implying that on the whole they were up to the task of spatial planning. This suggests that many of the skills required for regional spatial strategy making already existed among RSS stakeholders when viewed as a cohort. Where skill deficiencies did exist, there was a general acknowledgement of what these were, which implies that those participating in producing the RSSs were beginning to perceive planning practice in a different light. This was assisted through the time taken by many stakeholders to inform themselves of spatial planning practice outside their region. In addition, incremental changes were noted in planning institutionally, as most RSS stakeholders were almost unaware of the gradual emergence of a 'spatial' mindset. Moreover, other changes such as the pendulum change regarding the emergence of 'integration' as a driver for joining up policy; the transpiring of new artefacts such as a common conceptual spatial language; or the realisation of espoused values; all indicate that basic underlying assumptions were changing within regional spatial planning institutionally. Without realising it, RSS stakeholders have begun to gradually and unconsciously alter their perceptions of regional planning, which is beginning to influence and change their values and nudge them towards spatial planning practice. The fact that many stakeholders did not acknowledge this change is understandable, as according to Schein (1992), such beliefs are rarely

debated by the professionals who hold them. In this sense, the deficiency of debate results in the lack of a realistic touchstone for perceiving the actual cultural change that is emerging.

Schein (1992) suggests that if espoused values and underlying beliefs are concurrent, then there is a greater likelihood that the desired cultural change will take place. This implies that if changes in the practice of planning are consistent with the 'spatial' values of the new system, then the direction of change will be reinforced (Lurie & Riccucci 2003). In this context, the above discussion of espoused values and underlying beliefs appears to suggest that cultural change is indeed taking place and being reinforced within the practice of regional planning. The espoused values of the new system are gradually becoming embedded in the underlying beliefs of regional spatial planning stakeholders and this is revealed through their skills, their knowledge, their beliefs and their practice. This leads back to a consideration of Lovell's (1994) paradigm shift in cultural change and suggests there is indeed a change in paradigm of regional planning culture, as there is a change in the underlying values and beliefs that underpin it, which in turn is leading to changes in the way regional planning stakeholders are operationalising their policy areas. Therefore there has been a paradigm change within regional planning, practice as well as within the system; in an institutional sense, regional planning is becoming spatial.

## **6.4 CONCLUSIONS**

This chapter set out to explore the role of regional spatial actors and organisations and their institutional culture in the development and delivery of RSS policies, which was considered through the lenses of governance and cultural change. In both cases the blurring of the boundaries between economic, social and environmental spatial planning stakeholders was observed around the emerging RSSs, with SA being noted as a particularly strong driver in this regard. Both processes were building on existing governance capital from previous rounds of regional strategy making, such as RPG, RES and RSDF, which had developed inter-dependencies and relations in their regions, as policy responsibilities had long been shared by several different

regional organisations. As a result, a range of different networks, both old and new, were observed in both cases. The quality of these networks around RSS preparation was found to depend on one's policy perspective, with spatial planners having generally favourable views, as they consulted with a range of networks to their own ends. Other policy sector interests consulted by planners were less favourable in their view of RSS networks, as consultation with spatial planners was one way due to time and resource constraints. As a result, networks were found to represent a higher quality when consultation was two-way, proving mutual learning benefits to all stakeholders involved.

The emergence of new networks was also noted in both regions, particularly between spatial planning and health, which has laid the foundation for future work in this area. A number of factors were found to be influential in this regard, including the opportunity to do so, inter-personal skills, and a policy sector official who was prepared to champion policy links, even though there may not be immediate benefits. This led to the observation that networks around the emerging RSSs do not operate free of context and can therefore be directed, steered and inhibited, which mediates their form and function. Important push and pull factors in such situations comprised central government policy, local government influences, and time and resource constraints. The latter factor was found to be crucial in this regard, as it was fundamental to development of quality networks. Other mediating influences on networks determined the way policy was framed and related to the professional cultures of those involved, in addition to spatial concepts and sustainable development. Taken together, the mediating influences on networks were observed as creating path dependency, such as for example the way spatial elements of previous RPG were carried through into the RSSs.

Governance was then considered through a number of typological lenses. The quality of dialogue was noted as being particularly important in this regard, as it differed depending on who the RA was consulting, with big players such as the DAs and GOs gaining most in this regard. Joint working was observed as the most sophisticated approach to governance throughout the RSS process and was contributing to a gradual deepening of regional governance structures. This was occurring as a broader number of policy sectors and their respective stakeholders and resources were

coming within the sphere of RSS consultation, which in a gradual and iterative way was encouraging them and their organisations to adapt to new spatial planning approaches. The RSS as a process and a document was also contributing to more refined governance approaches, such as strategic alliances, through feeding into RFAs. In this latter context it was concluded that although most regional spatial planning networks were heavily influenced by vertical lines of control, when given the opportunity, the main regional institutions were very capable in governance terms of innovation and steering their own networks.

The second lens used in this chapter considered the institutional culture of regional planning and the manner in which this was changing from a land use to a spatial perspective. This firstly considered a number of cultural elements, based on interview material, that pertain to this context. All RSS stakeholders showed a broad general understanding of spatial planning and integration, although there were several subtle variations in emphasis in the NW case. This was found to be predominantly due to the absence of an IRS, which in the EM had facilitated the emergence of a common spatial planning and integration narrative across RSS stakeholders. As a result, the NW faced a potential barrier in developing a common institutional spatial planning culture. All RSS stakeholders were found to have a good understanding of the essential skills necessary to engage in regional spatial planning, although this was particularly so among spatial planners in the RAs and GOs. Non-planner policy officers in GOEM were equally knowledgeable in this respect, as they worked along-side their spatial planners on a daily basis. The skills needed for regional spatial planning were grouped into two broad categories of interpersonal skills and, technical and analytical skills. Where gaps existed in their spatial planning capital, stakeholders displayed a willingness to 'learn by doing' and supplement their knowledge by looking outside their region to examples of practice elsewhere. Despite many of the misgivings regarding RSS development that have been explored throughout this research, RSS stakeholders were generally positive about their experiences of dealing with other professionals.

A number of barriers were identified as slowing down the change in cultural practice from a land use to a spatial perspective. These included issues such as information and task overload; procedural uncertainty; a lack of any real tested models or



precedence; poor sequencing of government advice; uncertainty regarding the scope and purpose of planning; and synchronisation inconsistencies between regional strategies. The main cause of these barriers, as with the case of the inhibition of networks, principally related to time and resource constraints. This resulted in a situation where RSS stakeholders had limited time to internalise the new values and practices of spatial planning, leading to the impression, particularly among non-planners that no change had taken place in the practice of planning and that the RSS as a process and a document was very much the same as previous RPG.

In order to investigate the perceived lack of cultural change in planning, conceptual ideas around change of culture and change within culture were then explored. The incremental change in both regions from land use to spatial planning was noted as taking place before both RSS processes commenced, explaining in part why many interviewees were almost unaware of a spatial mindset emerging in their region. Additionally, a pendulum change was also observed in the attitude of RSS participants, due to the wide coinage of 'joining up public policy', which as a concept, strongly complemented integration efforts in spatial planning and in effect, has assisted in driving this change. A number of other changes to cultural elements were also found to be emerging in both regions, including new cultural artefacts such as spatial strategies and the transpiring of a conceptual spatial language that were feeding into and subtly transforming the institutional culture of planning. The realisation of espoused values was also observed, as both processes had not only resulted in the production of RSSs, but several of the spatial policies contained therein were going to be realised through RFAs. When taken together, all of the above subtle changes indicate that there was an emergent change occurring in the underlying beliefs to RSS stakeholders, which in most instances they had been unaware of. For this reason it was possible to conclude that a paradigm change is taking place in the culture of regional planning; in the beliefs, knowledge, skills and practice of RSS stakeholders. Therefore in an institutional sense, regional planning is becoming spatial.

# **CHAPTER SEVEN**

## **CONCLUSIONS**

### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

The original aim of this research was to examine the role played by the RSS as a process of integrating regional spatial planning policies and their respective actors and organisations. In order to fulfil this aim Chapter One set out a number of objectives. The first part of these objectives involved a consideration of spatial planning in the English regions in a historical and contemporary context, and the establishment of a conceptual and methodological framework suitable for studying the integration of regional spatial planning. The objectives then progressed to examine the development of RSSs in the NW and EM regions, through substantive policy and procedural consultation foci. As part of this, the conceptual framework was revisited to consider spatial policy and actor/ organisation integration in a typological sense. Following this the substantive and procedural elements were brought together through a discussion of governance by networks and new institutionalism, along with a reflection on the degree to which cultural change was observed in spatial planning practice in both regions.

Since this study was undertaken the *Review of Sub-National Economic Development and Regeneration* (HM Treasury *et al.*, 2007) proposed a number of changes to the structures of regional spatial planning, which are currently being implemented. It is important therefore that the conclusions of this study are considered in light of these developments. This chapter therefore begins with an over view of this current round of regional reforms, which will provide a contemporary context for reflection on the study's findings. The objectives of the research are then revisited in relation to the integration of spatial policy; the integration of spatial actors and organisations; the insights of governance and new institutionalism; and the context of cultural change. Each of these four sub-sections revisits their main findings and discusses these in light of contemporary practice. In doing so, this chapter meets the final part of Objective Five, which involves a consideration of potential future developments. The next section of the chapter revisits the case study methodology and conceptual

framework and discusses the value of these in respect to the research undertaken. Finally, in light of this chapter and the study as a whole, the last section considers possibilities for future research.

## **7.2 REVIEW OF SUB-NATIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION**

In July 2007 the Treasury, along with the DBERR and the DCLG issued the *Review of Sub-National Economic Development and Regeneration* (HM Treasury *et al.*, 2007). This report examined the administrative bureaucracy of English regions and local government in the context of globalisation and technological change, with a view to reducing spatial economic disparities and streamlining arrangements, to make regions and localities more adaptable economically. The reforms were based on a number of principles, including managing policy at the right spatial levels; ensuring clarity of roles, such as simplifying bureaucracy and coordinating strategies, policies and funding; and enabling places to reach their full potential, which included an inclusive approach to developing regional strategies.

The report suggested reforms in four key areas. The first area focused on empowering local government to promote economic development and neighbourhood renewal, while the second area emphasised supporting local authorities to work together at the sub-regional level. This suggested strengthening sub-regional management of transport and possibly in other policy areas where groups of local authorities wanted to come together to form statutory sub-regional arrangements. The fourth area of reform centred on relations between national government and, the regions and localities. Of particular interest here, however, is the third area of reform, which expressed a desire to strengthen economic and planning administration at the regional level. A number of changes were suggested to strengthen the role of DAs, such as establishing an economic growth objective for each region, streamlining the functions of DAs and a role for local government in scrutinising DA performance. Additionally, an expansion of RFAs was suggested that would possibly include skills, in light of the then recent Leitch Review (Leitch, 2006). It was also suggested that the RES and RSS should be combined to form

Single Regional Strategies (SRSs), which would set out the economic, social and environmental objectives for each region. DAs were to be given executive responsibility to produce the new SRSs on behalf of their regions, in tandem with local government and other partners. The new SRSs were to be signed off by both the SoS of the DBERR (now DBIS) and the SoS of the DCLG. The desire to integrate both strategies was attributed to a number of problems that were related to alignment. These included conflicts in timetabling, economic and spatial prioritisation, and evidence bases. As a result there was a need for clear regional strategic priorities and consistent monitoring, to overcome the strategic clutter and confusion that was experienced, in particular by the private sector. The content of the new strategy was set out as follows:

- 1). A clear vision that integrates economic growth, planning and housing in the context of sustainable development;
- 2). A single robust evidence base;
- 3). Clear and succinct strategic priorities;
- 4). Policy and spatial priorities for each policy area, aligned with strategic priorities and other policy priorities;
- 5). A delivery strategy with high level explanation, setting out how each priority will be delivered in relation to responsibilities, levers and incentives;
- 6). Spending information articulating how resources in the region will be aligned to meet specific priorities;
- 7). A consultation schedule to ensure that all relevant national, regional and local agencies are engaged in agreeing the strategy.

(HM Treasury *et al.*, 2007, pp.92/3)

Subsequent to these suggested reforms the government introduced the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. This act led to the abolition of RAs, which were replaced by Local Authority Leader Boards (LALBs) and the combining of the RSS and RES into SRSs. Under the legislation, both developments were due to take place by March 2010. LALBs were tasked with

assisting DAs in producing the new strategies. In the EM region the new LALB, known as EM Councils (EMC – officially established in March 2010) submitted a revised draft of its SRS to the SoS in March 2010, which had been consulted on over the second half of 2009. The NW region has taken a different approach, being the first to establish their LALB in July 2008, which is known as 4NW. Work began on this region's SRS in the same year. Part one of the NW's SRS, which contains a high level strategic framework, was consulted on in early 2010 and part two, which contains the detailed policies, is expected to be consulted on over the summer of 2010. In the NW, the 2009 Act has also provided for the establishment of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) in April 2011, which was suggested as a possible option under the second area for reform in the sub-national review. This will combine a number of previously existing single purpose joint-boards and other quangos. The Authority will represent the interests of the ten metropolitan boroughs of the city-region, through a non-directly elected board, with one councillor from each borough. GMCA will have strategic responsibility for a number of policy areas, including planning, transport, housing, regeneration, skills and waste management.

Since the empirical evidence for this research was completed in early 2007, the regional context for spatial planning has progressed somewhat and is now commencing another round of integrating spatial policy. Having established this current context, the next section will consider the findings of the research in light of these developments.

### **7.3 REFLECTING ON THE OBJECTIVES**

The first objective of this research involved a consideration of the coordination and integration of spatial planning in a historical and contemporary context. This was addressed in Chapter Two, which explained how land use planning has been recast as spatial planning, requiring it to integrate the spatial aspects of public policy and tie these together in the development and delivery of territorial strategies. The regional context for this new approach to planning was also discussed, revealing how it has long been used by central government to address national economic spatial disparities since the early twentieth century. This historical overview indicated that regional spatial planning is nothing new and indeed elements of this practice

occurred at different times over the last one hundred years, as different approaches have waxed and waned, each time returning to prominence with a stronger expression of intent and coherence. This was illustrated most recently by its re-emergence since the 1990s and the gradual redevelopment of a competence at this level, building cultural capital institutionally, with the help of senior planners who had experience of the previous era of English regional planning in the 1960s and 70s. Regional planning received a further boost in 2004 with the introduction of statutory RSSs, which coincided with the practice and its profession and culture officially adopting a spatial remit. This moved regional planning beyond its previously strategic advisory and regulatory role, which coordinated land use policy, into the realm of integration and delivery. Moreover, such developments have required the profession to adapt culturally, through new working arrangements, practices and skills, which have resulted in the evolution of more complex governance structures in its regional institutional context.

The current round of regional spatial planning reforms indicate how the regional level is still favoured by national government as a means of overcoming spatial economic disparities, as this is one of the primary contexts in which the sub-national review was placed. From a historical perspective, the reforms also reinforce the idea that each subsequent resurgence of regional planning has occurred with a stronger coherence and expression of spatial intent. The introduction of SRSs, however, presents spatial planners with a potential mix of problems and opportunities. The development of the draft RSSs in the NW and EM cases illustrated many barriers encountered by stakeholders. These predominantly stemmed from a lack of time and resources that precluded them from internalising the new system and operationalising it in the integrated and coherent manner, intended by central government, when spatial planning was first introduced in the early 2000s. For this reason, the move to a new type of strategy so soon after RSSs were mostly finalised around 2007/8, suggests that opportunities to internalise spatial planning by regional spatial planning stakeholders may be further delayed. On the other hand the introduction of SRSs offers the opportunity to overcome many of the problems encountered in the development of RSSs, as lessons learned can be taken into account. Additionally, the more integrated approach to SRSs in terms of spatial policy and actors/organisations, offers the prospect of enhancing the way regional spatial policy is both integrated

and delivered. A more detailed consideration of the potential problems and opportunities presented by the introduction of SRSs is now offered in the context of this study's findings.

### **7.3.1 Integrating Regional Spatial Policy**

The examination in Chapter Four of the integration of regional spatial policy through the RSS, set out to fulfil Objective Three of this research. This began with establishing a basic institutional map, which illustrated the structural complexity that institutionally constitutes regional spatial planning policy. It painted a picture of a dense mix of policies and stakeholders, along with their respective networks, that were involved in just one episode of RSS development. In this context, the current development of SRSs would be expected to constitute an even more complex institutional structure, as their development will involve bringing together a greater range of policies, stakeholders and their respective networks, which previously fed separately into RSS and RES development. There will, however, be opportunities for network rationalisation and removal of duplication of effort on the part of the DAs, LALBs, and other regional policy stakeholders, as all parties are now engaging with one, as opposed to several strategies. Ultimately though, the management of the SRS development processes will no doubt be the most complex task of strategy development ever undertaken by the DAs or the LALBs (regarding their former incarnation as RAs) and the impact of this on spatial planning institutionally remains to be seen.

The SRSs do, however, offer the opportunity to overcome many of the spatial policy integration problems observed in Chapter Four and should also present opportunities to take advantage of and enhance the strengths that were noted. The SRSs should assist in overcoming many of the 'teething' problems observed in the integration and coordination of spatial policy in both draft RSSs. For example, the separation between spatial planning and transport objectives observed in the NW case will be eliminated, as the SRSs will not only integrate the RTS, RSS and RES, but are also expected to set out regional priorities that draw these policy sectors together in a succinct manner. The spatial integration of these will be further enhanced through the establishment of policy and spatial priorities for each policy area, which will be aligned with strategic priorities and other policy priorities. All of these coordination

and integration efforts will be supported by a clear regional vision that integrates aspirations for economic growth, spatial planning and housing, in the context of sustainable development. The SA process, which was found in both cases to pick up on fine grained inconsistencies between spatial policies and overcome problems in terms of policy coordination, would also be expected to assist in this respect.

One problem experienced in drafting the previous RSSs, which the SRSs will not be able to directly address is the sequencing of government policy and advice. Just as both draft RSSs were observed to be deficient soon after their publication, for example in relation to carbon reduction targets, so SRSs may face a similar problem. Current wrangling around a new national policy statement on energy and the concurrent re-drafting and streamlining of PPSs, for example in relation to a natural and healthy environment, could place the SRSs in a similar situation. But it is important to note that the national policy framework for spatial planning will never be complete. It was always be dynamic as priorities and challenges for planning change all the time.

The IPs of both draft RSSs were found to assist policy coordination in terms of monitoring and review, but were generally scant in terms of delivery detail, beyond references to other strategies and organisations that would assist in delivery. The more robust approach of the delivery strategies for the SRSs should address many of the IP problems observed in the NW and EM. Such delivery strategies are expected to contain a high level explanation, which sets out how each of the strategy's priorities will be delivered, in addition to levers, incentives and a clear explanation of where responsibilities lie. Furthermore, the delivery strategies are required to articulate how resources in the region will be aligned to meet specific priorities. In this way one would expect that unlike the previous RSS IPs, the clear delivery goals of the SRSs and their alignment with delivery agencies and finance, will bring about a much more lucid connection to RFAs than has previously been the case. In this way, the next round of RFAs under the next Comprehensive Spending Review will be much more easily facilitated. Moreover, the next RFA may also serve to further enhance and complement SRSs, as the government are considering including skills as a key priority, in addition to the existing foci of housing, transport and economic development.



The discussion here of problems encountered in coordinating and integrating spatial policy in the RSSs is not intended to paint a picture of the SRSs as the saviour of regional spatial policy integration. It is important to note that the work in developing RSSs has laid a valuable foundation of regional spatial policy coherence, which the new SRSs will be able to build on. In the same way, approaches to the horizontal integration of the RSSs with the RESs, RHSs and RSDFs, observed through the conceptual typological styles, should also prove advantageous in this regard. The cross-referencing between strategies in the NW and EM has already established their clear links and this groundwork has been enhanced through the use of integral coordinating mechanisms that can feed into the emerging SRSs. Overlapping visions and objectives, particularly in the EM within the framework of its IRS; and the use of identical evidence bases (a requirement for SRSs) and spatial concepts such as city-regions in the NW; provide a ready policy framework for further integration. Furthermore, the coordination mechanisms used were found to have provided a basis for the emergence of a common spatial planning narrative in each region, providing a familiar spatial planning language that was being mutually used and developed by a range of spatial planning stakeholders. Each narrative demonstrated a common sustainable spatial conceptualisation of each region and how spatial policy stakeholders saw their region developing, which although somewhat contested, was increasing mutual understanding and reducing the likelihood of potential future conflict. In this way, the emergence of a common spatial planning ‘cultural capital’ institutionally in each region, should provide an invaluable context in which to develop the SRSs. Finally, placing the SRS framework within the typological approach discussed, illustrates that they are overarching in nature. This is evidenced by the fact that they not only coordinate policy across the economic, social and environmental spheres, but drive this into the realm of integration through expressing clear delivery goals and related resourcing. In this way, the SRSs will join the EM IRS and the RFAs in general, as over-arching regional strategies, but as with these strategies, will stop short of being truly integrated regional strategies due to the limits on their policy coverage.

### **7.3.2 Integrating Regional Spatial Planning Actors and Organisations**

The examination of the experiences of regional spatial actors and organisations in mediating and negotiating the RSS process in Chapter Five addressed Objective Four

of this research. This found that both RSS processes operated to very tight timescales imposed by central government, which was compounded by resource constraints. Regional spatial planners therefore had to work in a pressured environment, which impacted on their management of integration in the RSS consultation process. Two primary knock on effects were noted as resulting from this. Firstly, although consultation brought spatial planners into contact with a range of stakeholders and their respective networks, they were limited in the value they could take from such encounters, as their opportunities to internalise the potential lessons available were severely curtailed. Secondly, the value of the experience of those consulted was also mitigated as spatial planners were restricted in their ability to spend time with and inform respondents about the new planning system. As a result, opportunities for cross sector learning and cross-fertilisation of policy ideas and concepts were limited in the development of both RSSs.

Despite these shortcomings, all stakeholders were generally positive about the consultation processes, as they understood the limits within which spatial planners were operating. Therefore, in light of the above discussion of the SRSs building on the regional spatial policy integration work that has already taken place, the experiences of regional policy stakeholders in developing the RSSs, also offers a store of cultural capital that can be drawn upon and utilised in the development of SRSs. As DAs and LALBs set about consulting on the SRSs, they are required to draw up a consultation schedule to ensure that all relevant national, regional and local agencies are engaged. The success or not of these proposed consultation exercises will very much depend, as in the NW and EM cases, on the level of resources that will be available and the time that spatial planners and stakeholders have, to engage in mutual learning and the internalisation of these lessons. As the DAs have executive responsibility for SRS development and are much more resource rich than the former RAs, the integration of stakeholders into the consultation exercises would be expected to be more effective. Furthermore, as regional spatial planning stakeholders are now being consulted on a single regional strategy as opposed to several in the previous set-up, they can use their own resources more effectively as they attempt to influence spatial policy integration in the new SRS. The question remains, however, the degree to which SRS consultation will strive to engage the general public in consultation and the level of resources that will be

expended on this. Experiences of RSS consultation in the NW and EM would appear to suggest that there is a need to reconsider the large emphasis that was placed on general public consultation in these cases. For this reason, it is suggested here that the SRS consultation exercises would benefit more from a focus on elitist professional policy stakeholders. Such an approach would make better use of the time and resources available and should lead to higher quality engagements that result in more effective mutual learning and internalisation of lessons learned.

Chapter Five also considered the manner in which the horizontal integration of spatial planning stakeholders and their feedback into RSS consultation was strongly tempered by top-down and bottom-up vertical influences. This occurred in the way central government had curtailed the issues and options available or local government had ensured through their respective RAs that particular spatial concepts were utilised, which better served their own strategic needs. As a result, there was a feeling among horizontal regional stakeholders that this domination of the process by central and local government resulted in the sidelining of their particular concerns. In this context, the development of the new SRSs would be expected to take over from RSSs and have to continue riding these waves of tension, which are inevitable at any scale of planning (Healey, 1998). In fact, under the new SRS regime, the force of top-down influences would be expected to strengthen, as the SRSs are subject to a much wider range of central government policy dictates than previous RSSs. In this way, although the SRSs are integrating a wider range of policy, this is policy that has been developed at national level and is simply being localised to and integrated in, regional circumstances. This top-down influence is further strengthened by the moderating of the bottom-up influence of local government, as they do not have executive responsibility for the SRS, but rather as LALBs, share strategy development with their respective DAs, who hold executive responsibility.

These potential developments in vertical influences on the way regional spatial policy stakeholders will feed into the SRSs, has two possible implications in the sense of horizontal stakeholder integration. The first is that the relative curbing of local government influence should actually serve to strengthen horizontal integration between the main regional organisation stakeholders and overcome many of the conflicts that were observed between the RAs and their respective DAs and GOs in

the two cases studied. As the LALBs and the DAs share responsibility for strategy preparation, with their respective GOs advising, there is likely to be a far more cordial working environment than was observed in RSS preparation in the NW and EM. The second implication here is that as there is expected to be a greater number of stakeholders and networks involved in SRS preparation, it is possible that some more established stakeholders, as was the case with environmental organisations in the NW case, may feel drowned out, as space is created for other interests. In this way, the DAs and LALBs will have to carefully manage those established stakeholders that were respectively privileged by them in previous rounds of RES and RSS consultation. This point directly relates to the governance networks that surround regional spatial planning and it is to this that we now turn.

### **7.3.3 The Insights of Governance and New-Institutionalism**

The first part of Chapter Five explored through the prism of governance and new institutionalism, the role of regional spatial actors and organisations in the development and delivery of RSS policies, which addressed part of Objective Five. The findings in this regard offer a number of valuable contributions and important lessons that can be taken forward in the development of SRSs.

In both cases the blurring of the boundaries between economic, social and environmental spatial planning stakeholders was observed around the emerging RSSs, with SA being noted as a particularly strong driver in this regard. This blurring of boundaries built on existing cultural capital in terms of governance that had emerged in a regional institutional context since the 1990s, due to previous rounds of strategy making, such as RPG, RES and RSDF. In this way, the current round of SRS development offers an opportunity to build on and further develop this cultural store of governance relations. The most obvious opportunity in this regard relates to the range of different networks, both old and new, that were observed in both RSS development processes. In this respect, a valuable lesson that SRS development can take from this research, is that attention to the quality of networks is important. As noted in both cases, networks were found to represent a higher quality when consultation was two-way, proving mutual learning benefits to all stakeholders involved. In this way, it is important that spatial planners do not simply use networks in consultation to their own ends, but take the time to engage with other policy

stakeholders, so both can begin to gain a fuller understanding of each other's policy perspective. Such an approach will serve to enhance policy integration in the emerging SRSs and will assist in ensuring that those governance networks surrounding regional spatial policy are more likely to become embedded within regional spatial planning culture institutionally, therefore enriching it.

A number of lessons can be taken from RSS development experiences in the NW and EM that can assist in the cultivation and maintenance of networks. For example, it was noted in both cases in relation to emerging health/spatial planning networks that inter-personal skills and a policy officer champion appear to be crucial in this regard. In this way, networks do not simply happen or operate free of context, but are capable of being directed and steered, which mediates their form and function. As discussed throughout this research, time and resources are crucial in this regard and their availability has a fundamental impact on the development of quality networks. Other useful approaches constitute integrative framing devices, such as spatial concepts and sustainable development or SA, which focus attention within policy networks and increase the likelihood of cross sector learning. In this way, the DAs and LALBs in their development of SRSs can consciously create path dependencies that assist in producing and delivering a strategy that effectively integrates spatial policy.

From this one can see that an awareness of the importance of networks to governance and how they operate, can serve to enhance regional spatial planning institutionally. Working jointly with stakeholders and engaging in dialogue as opposed to just listening to them, should pay future dividends for regional spatial planning. It should assist in deepening governance structures, encouraging stakeholders to bring more resources to the table, and their respective organisations to adapt to new spatial planning approaches. In this way, as with the experience of RFAs, regional spatial planning can innovate in terms of governance, therefore maximising its opportunities to assist in delivering sustainable development.

### **7.3.4 The Context of Cultural Change**

The second part of Chapter Five examined the degree to which cultural change was observed in spatial planning institutionally, through an interpretative consideration of the views of RSS stakeholders and by doing so addressed the second part of Objective Five. This focused on the manner in which planning has moved from a land use to a spatial perspective and considered a number of cultural elements in this regard. It was observed that RSS stakeholders had a broad general understanding of spatial planning and integration, which should provide a promising cultural basis for SRS development. Some subtle variations in emphasis were noted, however, in the NW case, which was found to be predominantly due to the absence of an IRS, which in the EM had assisted in facilitating the emergence of a common spatial planning and integration narrative, among its spatial planning stakeholders. This could possibly create a potential barrier to developing a common institutional spatial planning culture in the NW and is certainly worthy of consideration as this region moves to developing its SRS. Despite this discrepancy, stakeholders in both regions illustrated a good general understanding of the skills needed to participate in regional spatial planning, although this was greatest among RA and GO planners. An important point was noted in this context, in that GOEM non-planner policy officers also demonstrated an equally good understanding of skill requirements, due to the fact that they worked alongside their spatial planners on a daily basis. This is an important lesson for GONW and other GOs in England who have not already followed this route and underlines an earlier point; professional policy officers who actually get time to work alongside and engage with spatial planners, as opposed to just being listened to by them, can gain valuable insights into spatial planning. Such an approach in all English regions would serve to facilitate ease of consultation on the new SRSs, allowing for the more effective use of time and resources available. Another promising insight into the cultural elements overview in both cases illustrated that where spatial policy stakeholders felt they had gaps in their knowledge, they were very willing to look outside their region to lessons from elsewhere. Each of the above points therefore demonstrates and assists in reinforcing the view that due to the experience of RSS preparation, a broad spatial planning knowledge exists among regional planning stakeholders, which should facilitate their ease of feeding into the development of SRSs.

An additional positive point in this regard, is that a number of barriers to cultural change that were observed in the previous chapter have now been overcome with the move to SRSs. The problem of synchronisation between regional strategies has now largely been eliminated, as the SRS combines the RES, RTS, RSS and RHS. In this way, the different preparation and renewal procedures for these strategies, which were not concurrent, can no longer act as a barrier to cultural change. In addition, the obstacle concerning the lack of any real tested models or precedence has mostly been removed, as the previous experiences of developing RSSs and RESs should not only assist regional spatial planning stakeholders in developing SRSs, but also provides them with a basis to move from a land use to a spatial perspective. Uncertainty regarding the scope and purpose of planning should no longer act as a strong hurdle to cultural change, as the test of soundness of RSSs at EIPs has provided valuable lessons to regions regarding the level of detail that is appropriate for such a strategic document. In essence, these barriers have now become opportunities that should assist in the easier integration of spatial policy and stakeholders in the SRS, as opposed to the previous RSS, and could also possibly act as catalysts to drive forward and embed the cultural change in regional spatial planning.

A number of barriers that were noted in relation to cultural change will still, however, have to be faced in the context of SRS development. The first concerns procedural uncertainty, as it takes time to learn the new system. This should not prove to be a great challenge, however, as previous experiences among stakeholders of RES and RSS development should help in this regard. Another hurdle concerns the poor sequencing of government advice, such as the streamlining of planning policy statements concurrent to SRS development, which as discussed above, could lead to deficiencies in SRS policy content, as experienced in RSS development in the NW and EM. The final remaining obstacle to cultural change is information and task overload. This is the only cultural change impediment that is likely to be exacerbated in the context of SRSs, due to the fact that they combine a far larger number of policies than RSSs and will therefore require the fulfilling of a greater number of government tasks. Moreover, the main problem with the latter two barriers is that there is little the regions can do about overcoming them, as responsibility for their removal or at least their mitigation, rests with central government. Furthermore, as observed in the NW and EM regarding the inhibition of networks, sufficient time and

resources are necessary to allow regions deal these obstacles. Despite these concerns, there were promising signs in both regions that an emerging change of culture towards a spatial perspective should assist in the development of SRSs.

Both cases considered conceptual ideas around change of culture and change within culture. Incremental changes from a land use to a spatial perspective were noted in both regions from before both RSS processes commenced. Additionally, a pendulum change was also observed in the attitude of RSS participants, due to the wide coinage of 'joining up public policy', which as a concept, had strongly complemented integration efforts in spatial planning and in effect had assisted in driving this change. A number of other changes to cultural elements were also found to be emerging in both regions, including new cultural artefacts such as spatial strategies and the transpiring of a conceptual spatial language, that were feeding into and subtly transforming the institutional culture of planning. The realisation of espoused values was also observed, as both processes had not only resulted in the production of RSSs, but several of the spatial policies contained therein were being realised through RFAs. When taken together, all of these subtle changes indicated that there was an emergent change occurring in the underlying beliefs to RSS stakeholders, which in most instances they had been unaware of. For this reason it was possible to conclude that a paradigm change was taking place in the culture of regional planning; in the beliefs, knowledge, skills and practice of RSS stakeholders. In an institutional sense, therefore, regional planning culture has been becoming 'spatial' for nearly a decade, which should provide a solid cultural capital basis on which the development of SRSs can build.

### **7.3.5 Conclusions**

This section has sought to fulfil the final part of Objective Five, which involves a consideration of future potential developments in regional spatial planning. Through revisiting each of the main research objectives, (apart from Objective Two, which is considered in the next section,) it has drawn together the main findings of the research and discussed them in the context of the current round of reforms that are taking place within English regional spatial planning, with the emergence of SRSs. Overall, despite some potential challenges, the prospects for more effectively integrating the spatial aspects of a broad range of regional public policy look more



promising than ever. The new SRSs offer an opportunity to overcome many of the problems that this research has raised relating to integrating spatial policy and its respective stakeholders. The experiences of developing RSSs have provided valuable lessons for integrating regional spatial policy and have served to develop and enhance the policy networks that surround regional spatial planning. Furthermore, the two episodes of RSS development considered, appear to indicate that regional planning has moved from a land use to an emerging spatial perspective, which provides a rich cultural capital to build on in future years.

## **7.4 REFLECTIONS ON METHODS AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

Having considered the main findings of this research in light of current regional spatial planning practice, this section turns to a brief reflection on the value of the methodology and conceptual framework utilised in this study. In doing so it revisits Objective Two which was to develop a conceptual framework and methodology appropriate to examining the integration of regional spatial policy and actors in RSS development, which were addressed in Chapter Two and Chapter Three respectively. This is set out below and will be followed in the next section with some final remarks in relation to future research.

### **7.4.1 Comparative Case Study Approach**

The use of the comparative case study approach has proved valuable in attempting to understand the integration of regional spatial planning. The two cases or RSS processes chosen were selected on the basis that this study's sponsor, GONW required the NW region to be included in analysis, which was also a region that had not developed a high level RSDF. The EM was chosen as a comparator case, as it was the first English region to develop an overarching RSDF (its IRS) and therefore provided an opportunity to compare and contrast the richer cultural resource base for integrating spatial policy that it had developed in this regard. Both cases showed broad similarities, but differences were noted in terms of policy and general understanding of spatial planning, which were attributed to the EM IRS, justifying the choice of this as a comparator case. Furthermore, the use of two cases helped to

provide greater validity to the findings presented. This validity was also reinforced through the use of a number of data collection and analysis tools within and between the cases studied which assisted in triangulating findings.

The use of institutional maps proved to be a very constructive tool in establishing the background for regional network relations between spatial planning actors and their respective policies. The broad brush strokes with which this was painted in a national, regional and RA context, provided the essential institutional map, within which to situate and consider the subsequent spatial policy documentary and actor analysis.

The approach to examining the RSS and its related documents proved fruitful and was influenced in part by Harris & Hooper (2004), who analysed the spatial content of public planning documents in Wales in the early 2000s. The documentary analysis utilised a number of strands, which assisted in triangulating findings regarding the degree to which spatial policy in both regions was coordinated and integrated. The first strand examined the manner in which space and place were treated in each draft RSS, providing an indication of how coordinated they were. These findings were reinforced by a consideration of the SA of both RSSs, which proved to be a sophisticated method in revealing the finer grained inconsistencies that existed between spatial policies in terms of sustainable development and therefore coordination. Subsequent to this, a consideration of both RSS IPs helped to reveal the difficulties that the RSSs were facing in moving beyond spatial policy coordination, into the realm of integration in terms of delivery and how this was being greatly assisted by RFAs.

Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with regional spatial planners and policy officers who were involved in preparing the RSSs in both regions. The approaches taken to executing the interviews proved very useful. The semi-structured approach allowed for freedom within the interview to move between topics of discussion, which encouraged interviewees to be relaxed and clear in their responses. This was assisted by the interview schedule, which ensured that all relevant data had been elicited. No differences were noted in the data collected by phone interviews, as opposed to those that were carried out face to face. The interview data was analysed

through its reduction into three broad categories of substantive policy perspectives; procedural actor/organisation perspectives; and professional spatial planning perspectives; which retained the data in the context of who made a statement and what their role was in their respective RSS process. This approach was very valuable as it allowed the data to be analysed in an iterative manner, where the data could be revisited as necessary to check assumptions and identify underlying factors. This also allowed for ease of triangulation with the institutional and documentary analysis, assisting in refining the analysis produced. In this context, the approach to dealing with competing claims, based on frequency of claim, centrality of role and level of experience also proved to be very useful.

The interpretative approach provided a bridge between the conceptual framework and methodology and a theoretical context within which to situate the interview analysis. This method helped to grasp the beliefs of RSS stakeholders from the context in which they had been formed and provided a better understanding of how the RSSs were shaped. The use of actors' self-descriptions, however, was acknowledged in Chapter Three as having potential pitfalls, such as the fact that individuals may not be fully aware of what is happening in the contexts in which they operate. As a result, it was necessary within the interpretive approach to not solely depend on participants' narratives to fully account for the policy processes that took place. Therefore, the synthesis of the interpretive approach with the other conceptual tools, such as governance, new-institutionalism and cultural change, has helped to overcome the potential pitfall of partial understanding. Used in this way, the interpretive approach has provided a fundamental underpinning to the analysis of this research.

#### **7.4.2 Typologies**

Of particular useful note have been the typologies that were developed in the conceptual framework in Chapter Two in relation to the integration of spatial policy, the integration of spatial actors/organisations, styles of governance, and depth of governance. Each of these typologies provided a valuable framework in their own right within which coordination and integration in spatial planning could be assessed and have assisted in bringing greater clarity, meaning and understanding to the data collected. This is not in any way to endorse these as definitive typologies, but simply

to acknowledge that although there are many other ways in which such integration could be conceptualised, the use of these typologies in and of themselves has assisted in bringing greater clarity to the discussion of coordination and integration, which as illustrated throughout this research, is inherently very broad, complex, and multi-faceted.

#### **7.4.3 Governance and New-Institutionalism**

The conceptual approach of governance by networks, moderated by a new-institutionalism perspective, provided an ideal theoretical lens through which to understand two episodes of RSS development. As discussed in the previous chapter, this enabled the coordination and integration of regional spatial policy to be conceptualised in a number of ways. For example it illustrated the blurring of boundaries between regional spatial stakeholders and their respective policies and the manner in which this has come to create interdependencies. It also allowed for a focus on policy and stakeholder networks and an understanding of the manner in which these had come to be created and embedded institutionally, while also being steered, directed and mitigated by horizontal and vertical lines of control that play out at the regional level. In this way, governance and new institutionalism have assisted in understanding the dynamics of how RSS stakeholders work together, the quality of the networks through which they operate and the policy agendas and narratives that are influential. As a result, the lens of governance and new-institutionalism provides an ideal conceptual approach that should be useful for any study of regional spatial planning in England.

#### **7.4.4 Cultural Change**

The utilisation of cultural change as an analytical lens in this research was prompted by the emergence of a new spatial planning system that required changes to the way spatial actors thought and practiced. In this sense, the lens of cultural change has assisted in understanding the implications of coordinating and integrating spatial policy and actors/organisations in two processes of RSS development. It should be noted, however, that a very particular conceptualisation of cultural change was used, which focused on the idea that culture is a metaphor. In this meaning culture is therefore synonymous with planning practitioners and their organisations, the strategies they produce, and the way in which all of these factors come together to

operationalise the spatial planning system. This conceptualisation of culture served to complement the approach of governance and new-institutionalism described above. In this way, the metaphorical approach to culture allowed for ease of fit between these two principal theoretical elements of the conceptual framework. The use of Lovell's (1994) types of cultural change and Schein's (1992) levels within cultural change have proved invaluable in unpicking the complexity of issues that surround the emergence of a spatial planning mindset within English regional planning. Both approaches have assisted in understanding the nuances of spatial planning stakeholder interview responses and helped to pull these apart; illustrating that a culture change had been taking place, even though many stakeholders were unaware of it.

## **7.5 FURTHER RESEARCH**

It is clear from this research that regional spatial planning and its attempts to coordinate and integrate the spatial aspects of a range of public policy, is a new and emergent practice in the English regions, which has developed iteratively over the last ten years after a break of several decades. The recentness of the system and the materialisation of new associated practices, all provide ideal fresh ground to research and gain a better understanding of regional spatial planning. There are many issues emerging from this research that are worthy of exploration, but rather than refer to them all, it is intended here to draw out a few areas that are worthy of further research.

The current round of regional spatial planning reforms through SRSs necessitates the integration of the spatial aspects of a greater range of public policy, than was undertaken in the production of RSSs. This will require spatial planners to develop and cultivate new networks in their efforts to consult with additional policy stakeholders. As a result, the manner in which spatial planning networks become established and embedded institutionally would provide valuable material for future research. Although the lens of governance by networks has become more popular over the last decade as a conceptual approach to the study of spatial planning and a lot has been written about it in the theoretical sense (for example Vigar *et al.*, 2000;

Healey, 1998), it has received little empirical attention. The previous chapter noted that inter-personal skills, time and resources, and a policy champion were crucial in establishing new networks. It would be useful academically, however, to delve deeper and try to understand what other factors may be influential in this regard. For example, how can new networks be established and cultivated? What makes a policy officer champion a new network? How can spatial planners steer networks to ensure that they become embedded institutionally and facilitate the closer integration of spatial policy? Such an area of study would assist spatial planning academically and professionally in gaining a better understanding of how networks operate, which can help in strengthening the governance structures that surround the operation of spatial planning

This research identified a potential future problem over the next decade regarding the age gap between junior and senior spatial planners at the regional level in England. This indicated that senior planners were predominantly middle aged, with many due to retire over the coming years. This group of planners carry with them a considerable store of cultural capital, with many having been involved in the previous era of regional planning in England up to the 1970s. Junior spatial planners, however, were predominantly in their twenties, having entered the profession over the last ten years, with the re-emergence of regional planning since the early 2000s. This group were facing a steep learning curve in relation to up-skilling themselves to deal with the ever growing number of tasks involved in regional spatial planning. In the age gap between these two groups there were a very limited number of spatial planners operating at the regional level. The challenges faced by this junior cohort are therefore worthy of further study, in particular how the cultural capital of senior planners can be retained by the profession at the regional level and passed on to the next generation of regional spatial planners.

This research has provided a detailed examination of the emergence of regional spatial planning in two regions in England; in particular the experiences of regional planning stakeholders in two different episodes of producing RSSs. The detailed considerations of the manner in which regional spatial policy and stakeholders were integrated in these processes and the professional cultural change that has been emerging concurrently, provides a valuable baseline against which to consider future

integration efforts in this regard. In this context, the current move to SRSs merits further research. As discussed above, the development of SRSs is expected to involve an even broader range of policies and regional stakeholders than the development processes of the RSSs studied here. One would expect that despite the experiences gained by regional spatial planners in the development of RSSs and the manner in which their cultural capital has been enriched in this regard, the development of SRSs should prove very challenging. As a result the development of SRSs provides an ideal opportunity to study ongoing efforts at the regional level to integrate spatial policy and stakeholders and the manner in which spatial planning culture is adapting to this institutionally. But rather than research this solely from a spatial planning perspective, there is an opportunity to undertake an inter-disciplinary approach, involving academics from other policy fields such as environmental studies, business management and cultural studies. In this way, the research presented here can be built upon and enriched through attempting to bring greater understanding to the integration of professional practice in general that surrounds the development of the new SRSs. This would assist professional spatial planners in not only understanding the integration of spatial policy and stakeholders from their perspective, but also from the perspectives of a range of other policy stakeholders, who they interact with on a daily basis.

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# **APPENDIX ONE**

## **SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

### **General Background Questions?**

- What is your role as a planner in the NW/EM region?
- How have you been involved in the preparation of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) – previous and present?

### **Understanding Spatial Planning and Integration**

#### *Spatial Planning*

- What do you understand by the term spatial planning? And what do you understand by the term regional strategic planning?
- In theory how do you perceive these activities as relating to other public sector policy areas?

#### *Integration*

- What do you understand by integration in the context of regional strategic spatial planning?
- In practice, how important is integration to spatial planning? Get examples.

### **The Regional Spatial Strategy Preparation Process**

#### *RPG Comparison*

- To date, in what way have the Region's RSS processes been different from previous RPG processes?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses in this respect?

#### *Issues and Options Papers*

- How were the 'Issues Papers' written (*i.e.* as part of the project plan) and to what extent were they based on previous policy agendas and/or newly formed ones?
- To what extent was integration of policies seriously considered at this point?

- Has integration been a central concern to the RSS development process and the draft document? Role here of SA?
- Who was involved in this process and how did they work together?
- Through which social and professional networks do they operate, internally and externally (*i.e.* types of consultation)?
- How did external social network links impact on this policy development process? How open was the process?
- Were there any tensions, conflicts or beneficial outcomes?
- How were the 'Options Papers' written and how did they compare to the experiences of writing the 'Issues Papers'?
- What role did policy integration play in this process?
- Again, as with the 'Issues Papers', who was involved, how did they work together *etc.*?
- What comments would you make about the subsequent consultation sessions:
  - Review of comments from the Options Papers;
  - Comments on interim draft of RSS.
- Are you aware of any under representation in the consultation process?

### *The Overall RSS Process*

- Have you considered the experience of other English regions, UK nations or other EU member states in relation to integrated spatial planning, in the context of RSS preparation?
- If so, what, if any, lessons have these illustrated?
- How are vertical links to national, sub-regional and local government, viewed in the context of the Regional Assembly and the RSS process, and how would you describe these links?
- In the context of vertical links, to what extent do you think that this has helped or hindered an integrative focus for the RSS's policies? The challenges faced?
- How would you describe the way in which the Regional Assembly has worked horizontally with different EM regional partners, through the RSS Process? (Included here are governmental and non-governmental organisations, citizens and business.)

- Has the failure of central government's proposals for Regional Assemblies in general, had any noticeable influence?
- In the context of such horizontal links, to what extent do you think that this has helped create or hinder an integrative focus to the new RSS's policies?
- Are there any other aspects in the RSS process that were influenced by integrative concerns, both in terms of approaches used and policy choices made?
- Would you say that the RSS through its preparation process, has become more integrative, as it has developed?

### **The Planning Profession, Training and Cultural Change**

- What type of skills do you feel are necessary for involvement in the RSS process? What would you describe as your strengths and weaknesses in this respect?
- Is there an opportunity to address your training needs through in-house courses or RTPI continuing professional development?
- If so, have these been sufficient?
- Moves towards a spatial planning process have placed the planning profession in contact with a greater number of professional groups, due to wider policy considerations. What has this experience been like for you as a planner – positive and negative – during the RSS process?
- Do you feel there is a cultural change in the planning profession? If so what are the positive and negative elements and is this reflected in your work during the RSS preparation process?

### **The RSS Document and Process – Overall Thoughts**

- Overall, do you feel that the RSS process will help create a final document that provides an integrative focus for the delivery of regional policy?
- How integrative would you regard the RSS process?
- Overall what would you regard as the main factors, actors and institutions that have influenced the degree of attention and importance given to the integration agenda as a whole and its expression in the RSS in particular?

- How do you think the RSS will differ in its role to the RPG? Will it be more or less effective?
- Has previous RPG experience helped in this process?
- Could the RSS process work better in relation to integration, such as more explicit policy guidance, greater collaboration, a central commitment to sustainable development or some other form of integrative delivery, like shared visions, overarching statements or an explicit integrated strategy?
- How do you see the RSS consultation process being improved in the future? (lessons learned).
- Has the RSS process to date provided beneficial outcomes to build upon?
- How do you think integrated spatial planning could work better in the context of the RSS?
- Are there any additional statements you would like to add, anything that you feel is relevant, but has not been covered in the interview today.